

SELECTED POEMS: 2009 - 2021



Gregory J. Furman

THE ALBUM OF IRIDESCENCES: May 4, 2008 – June 20, 2010

brief inventory of things truly seen by few

the sun the moon a rock a pen a wrench a wren
the seasons tied to their celestial hitching post
the stars a book a look the way the rain darkens hills seen from afar
the watchdogs of all clocks and the nagging hour's barks
the streaming video of memory and the lost socks of all our lives
pour and flow trip and tangle as silent riders in a subway car
things that disappear are spent go away and come back again
intrude conspire collude to show us some fleeting things seen by few
this intransigent reoccurrence of coincidences this album of iridescences
this earth this death this birth a lock a key shining in a single drop of dew

raw umber

in attics everywhere the wasps are teeter-tottering
on wire legs rickety as old folks about to die
outside the november rain and wind are raw
as an unexpectedly rude and boring guest
the season's cornucopia is a rotten heap of slag
a funnel for all that's decomposed funereal turned off

whose birthday is today is not to be reborn

somewhere there's a smiling sun but not here
not here raw umber even the drenched deer look resentful of the chill
filthy pigeons huddle like bowery bums on dripping window sills
there's nowhere to go but here inside where
the rotting pumpkin head-in-hands of here and now
would rather quit curl up and hide or just quietly die

whose birthday is today is not to be reborn

the snow's sestina

from behind the stand of cedars comes the snow
with frozen lake and low sky a gray conversation
each flake a filigree a finely-etched circle
a silent crystal army of albino angels progressing
implacable intent on keeping some promise
all the more mysterious for their shy silence

but what the nature of these wheels of silence?
how connected to the identity of snow?
who the beneficiary of this woven winter promise?
who the principals in this subtle conversation?
as orchard field and marsh are clothed in white progressing
what the nature of this glowing circle?

the circle of sky to tree to grass to earth the circle

the muted sound of cars whispering in white silence
the circle of the storm progressing
the circle of every falling flake of snow
all things engaged in a very quiet conversation
the circle of an ancient wish an old promise

but what the nature of this chilling promise?
but to blunt all angles soft all edges in a gentle circle
to remind us that time is merely a season's conversation
moving to a destiny a dusting of silence
moving to the condition of country cloaked in snow
a reminder of our little lives softly progressing

and what the nature of this fine progressing?
but the nature of a fine recurring promise
a gentle falling a mellowing like that of falling snow
a circle that is a promise a falling silent circle
that aspires to the state of a comfortable silence
a circle that is a muted conversation

each story a song line our true self's conversation
with that hero alive inside our self's progressing
beyond the monkeys of the mind to a silence
that has the character of a special promise
that is itself a calm circle within a circle
that is itself illuminated by this falling snow

and so we partake of this ancient conversation
of earth and sky and snow and mind of man progressing
and find ourselves but snow falling into our own well-earned silence

the sestina of forgetting

the dread of beginning or ending lives in the seed of forgetting
memories fondest or faintest all adding up to an absence
was it on full or empty who can recall?
we are all filled with a hunger to return
all wonder if we were born to be haunted
all mired each in our own little history

yesterday's lunch what we were once that's history
the failure to remember the persistence of forgetting
the slow disappearance of fact in a house haunted
the tortuous changing of presence to absence
the abscess of coming and going always ending in return
a carbuncle healed over the scar the only recall

what would it mean to have perfect recall?
to have an all-encompassing sense of history?
to never have to fret about a right return?
to never be deviled by cruel forgetting?
to never live with this strange sense of absence?
to not know what it means to be haunted?

it would be to be the reverse of haunted
to have a sense of total balanced recall
to never be held hostage by loss or absence
to escape the coils of the python – history
to know no form of forgetting
to gladly welcome every unexpected return

to find every memory a truer newer return
to bring light and air to the tomb of all things haunted
to reverse the relentless process of forgetting
and forge a brilliant form of recall
that holds the past in perfect history
so the absence of those we've loved is no absence

but the opposite of absence defying absence
making every memory a truly-lived return
taking the nightmare out of history
breaking the chains of all that's haunted
changing the definition and uses of recall
forgetting the very meaning of forgetting

so that there will be no absence in absence
no need to wish for a return to return
no need to parse history for there will be no history

success in marriage

don't lose your sense of humor
on bad days
stay away from sharp instruments
and firearms

reclining cows on pleasant valley hillside

to see their supine aggregation
piebald as magpies
kindest blacks and whites
against an emerald hill of summer green
all but one reclining side-by-side
all facing the same direction
like closely-parked vans
under the slate umbrella
of the old pin oak's shade

under the shockingly blue
eye of the sky
is to know
there is no religion no denomination
no pomp and dominance
to match the alleluia of their cowness
yet they are still righteous
still a fervent congregation

little oreo

door of horizon closed by sun on the run
even the brightest greens in the last light
took on a purple tone and cast
the belted galloways each end black
broad white stripe in between
all resting motionless but one
little oreo - we named him –
wired by the waning light
an alternating current of fight or flight
played attack retreat and run
exploding back and forth again and again
stampeding back to the magnet
of his mother placid as a massive wall
each time extending the distance of his run
by his own length or two until spooked
by shadow clump of mud small bird's call or tuft of grass
nostrils flared nose glossy as a patent leather shoe
possessed as a "claymation" cookie turned cartoon calf
trapped in his own game of judging distances
think feel fear think feel fear then run
back to his mom his sun

buffalo nickel

buffalo nickel of my childhood
worn smooth as old pewter
how many packs of bazooka bubble gum
did you buy in your lifetime
prized for bodacious bubbles the size of melons
which collapsed like punctured pink dirigibles
a sticky mask a second skin a scrim
over the blower's face and eyes and brow
now with a gullible wish and a flick
i send you spinning head over tail
on to the old face of our frozen pond
where you will be born through ice
by his eminence grand marquis exchequer and auger
his majesty the lion-maned sun
down and down to the muddled bottom

companion to sleeping turtles newts and frogs
radiate your glowing currents in the murk
and ask the distant warmth of spring to come
help us hold dear the currency of our pasts
save thanks for the wonders of our five senses
before the small change of our coinage is spent and done
flipped as we are like a bet flicked
by some mighty gambler's inscrutable thumb

the vulture

never say the vulture
displays a lack of culture
his tastes are gregarious
his palate multifarious
he'll sample every carcass at his roadside inn
he'll eat almost anything that's dead even kin
every size and shape of fare squashed or flattened
when they tried to trademark 'omnivore'
he already owned all rights and patent
his tastes range from contemporary modern
to old masters as long as they're good and rotten
his head shaved bald is very zen
he doesn't care who or why or how or when
what we throw into our garbage bin
for him's a gourmet treat to waste a sin
if he were a priest preaching at his rostrum
he'd say skunk mouse vole deer rabbit squirrel and possum
are way better than a Sunday *dominus vobiscum*

ember glow

remember how not long ago
we hacked and sawed the dead cedar stump
and just before turning in for the night
stacked the broken cedar shards and shakes
on the white-hot bed of ember glow
and aided by a light rain and lighter breeze
keeping the smoke smolder low
breathed deeply the old cedar's scent
which filled the campsite and the tent
to the sweet-sad loon's accompaniment
and we were hearing the cleverness
of raindrops falling on the canopy
manitou's waves a complement
their sleepy chop falling and rising
on algonquin's granite shores
as if lake and smoke and rain and we
were all deeply breathing calm as one
as if lake and smoke and rain and we

transformed dreaming we've won entry
to a long hall of doors opening slowly
unto a great healing which has no name
for **daniel arnott**

hummingbird

feathered helicopter
giant Liberate of a bee
blurred wing drone
small airborne hovercraft
long swooper longer swooper longest
triumphant glitter-archer
and arrow all in one humming one
rare to find him still in his red and emerald vest
sitting on a dogwood branch for a moment's rest
a flying flickering color blindness test
brilliance varnished with clear shellac
even lilacs' darkest purples seem pale
other birds envy his ability to shift
verticals horizontals ups and downs
right angle any angle all the same to him

once when the late day light was a liar
like a dart he bulls-eyed the screened porch screen
his twitter raging at the completely unforeseen
he threw it into full-throttle reverse
and was off ecstatic as if he won a big Las Vegas bet
when feeding he's very conscientious
as thorough as a good store clerk
sampling every purple trumpet
then zooms off in a sweeping arc
his other favorite colors pink and red
as he lives he shines opalescent iridescent
his a shimmering neon holiness
the deepest heart of summer's fire

watching the flooding ewaso nyiro

watching the flooding ewaso nyiro
rising waters the color of milk chocolate
with no trace of sweetness no hint of benevolence
as if some angry god's carotid was severed
by an even angrier one and from mount nyiro
worshipped mountain of the samburu gushes
as if from a cosmic hydrant chaos
vengeance and chance of sudden death
maleficent torrent of dark 'blood' intent
on drowning the great camps client and guide
the low-lying savannahs anything and

everything with the temerity to oppose
ill-fated enough to slip from melting banks
or so shallow-rooted to be sucked down and in
trees tall as buildings the width of thirty men
logs thick as sofas root bases splayed
dour palm umbrella acacia salt bush
rushing pell-mell to some muddled terminus
carcasses - jackal? baboon? impala? vervet?
but meat in a dark fondue uniformed in mud
swept on by some apoplectic prime mover
the sound a thunderous rolling fierce unceasing roar
everything as if fated for the brutal delectation
of some Gargantua's insatiable maw
elephant white rhinoceros cape buffalo leopard lion
ant-lion elephant-shrew rhinoceros-beetle buffalo-weaver
leopard-tortoise gerenuk cheetah ostrich oryx zebra giraffe
this dark flowering orchestra hurled down river
by this engorged river this pitiless ewaso nyiro
on this oddly-bright celebration of a morning
all serving notice stark reminder blunt wake-up call
that our all-too-human vanity of naming
everything and anything is but a tiny wish
our subtle classifications but fairy tales bedtime stories
that broach no order hold no control win no pity
find no gold in this angry timeless old-testament god of old
ewaso nyiro ewaso nyiro ewaso nyiro
for David and Isaac - Guide and Driver
Samburu National Reserve, Kenya
November 5, 6 2008

an afternoon with hippos

below the high ravine red-clay banks crumbling
into rising river the color of Nestle's Quik
there they are twenty-six or thirty of them?
their backs shiny dark gray as their cousins porpoise and whale
their bellies and ears lighter a bruised rose-pink
and they solemn and comic in their breadth and hulk
and i having seen them only captive and sullen in zoos
feeling eternity in them free as the very first explorer
to encounter them wild trying with difficulty
to count them as they so leisurely submerge and rise
submerge and slowly rise inscrutable whale-like
their puffy eyes slit as a too-many-times-punched boxer
on their own ancient clock of river ravine and sky
their little comic flippy ears ever erratic feverish
silly as propellers on kids' spinning beanies
telegraphing their pecking order their worries or intent
with grunts and snorts and burps and chortles and 'plosions

harroongh hungh hungh hungh hungh
hippopotamus hippopotami hippopotamus hippopotami
placid stolid immovable floating in bliss
like picasso's massive mediterranean swimmers
harroongh hungh hungh hungh hungh

in tuba tones when miss-judging log for crocodile
or asserting or challenging dominance in their 'bloat'
their 'pod' ever-shifting alpha males up and down river
on guard protecting adolescent females and babies
surprisingly curious serious-eyed searching as when
at top of ravine the maasai in bright plaid their children smiling
mother bent under burden of kindling and cord wood
their goat flock's cast bells clanking at ravine top ambling by
the whole 'dale' turned and looked up as if to say a tribal "hello!"
a daily much-awaited occurrence? expected diversion? a welcome?
spouting spitting shooting gushes of water like whales
from their flapped nostrils then yawning as if to swallow all creation
their teeth a menace canoe crushers greatest killers of humans
rising spouting napping sinking spouting sucking air expelling water
they repeat the cycle and repeat the cycle and repeat the cycle
as they play musical sofas surreal in the rushing currents
they have much in common with refrigerators pianos
stoves small trucks and all massive immovable objects

yet the roman's 'river horse' surprisingly right
their underwater trot like triple crown winners in slow mo'
for in the water they are gigantic thoroughbreds
light on their feet adroit preferring the shallows their paddling
an ascending descending gentle ballet bounce off bottom
the choreography of them a study in hierarchy
always an alpha up river always an alpha down river
the females and bumbling babies innocent and funny as clowns
the adolescent challenger males pushy testing their metal
in mock combat harshly rebuffed then the alpha's triumphal
harroongh hungh hungh hungh hungh
harroongh hungh hungh hungh hungh
as if to confirm and broadcast the outcome
any floating thing smallest debris a source of instant concern
friend or foe testing friend or foe testing friend or foe

moving from distraction to submerged sleep akin to cat naps
communicating not unlike geese at night
the state of their nation's security telegraphed to all
in grunts and honks and burps confirming reaffirming settling down
their lives a floating dream in a dream of floating
sometimes only their imposing backs visible as boulders
the alpha male's nightmare head long as a big first grader is tall

and the babies the babies frisky even at half a ton
rolling on their backs practicing their yawns
yawning and more yawning piano-lid mouths pink as bubble gum
cuter than disney's fantasia could render in tutus
heads on their mother's backs content and fearless
confident that any challenger will only win papa's jaws
their only true enemies cunning croc and drought
their sweat red as blood their hides crack and burst
and slowly they die swell and melt
in hundreds the stench haunting empty riverbeds for weeks

samburu and masai gather your bleached bones for trade
they know no fear or worry their calm eternal
in the cool of night they move fearless inland for a nibble
and cover miles in forage for tasty greens
in the cool of the morning from the hot-air balloon
you can see the line of their tracks filling with water
like zippers zipping the soaked trousers of the savannah
leading back to the eternal dream of their river home
who is the king? who dares challenge their canines?
even simba touted king ruler imperator emperor of all
tail between legs steers clear gives them serious berth
hippopotamus hippopotami hippopotamus hippopotami
harroongh hungh hungh hungh hungh hungh
http://www.soundboardcom/sb/hippopotamus_hippo.aspx
to hear their alleluiahs their messiah-hippo-chorus
for chief kennedy and mores - guide and driver
mara safari club - maasai mara
november 7, 8, 9 2008

woman with umbrella

in a pink raincoat
a woman locking her car
seen from a train
all alone in the parking lot

her umbrella yellow
and beyond her
the great gray Hudson
and one white yacht

yo yo

as i am flung
i fling myself out
with desire to go farther
farther than my farthest dream
only to find myself
on the way back in
pulled back trick after trick after trick

back fast as a second hand can tick
and for whose amusement?
and by whose deft hand?
very soon to tire of me
would that i could be cut free
and wind up rolling down
the black top
or floating in some pond
or on some great green lawn
where i could be a small cog

in a large wheel going somewhere
instead i find myself in a dark drawer
with some cats-eye marbles
dull penknife a pee shooter baseball cards
sling shot and a few shiny stones
until loop-the-loop rock-the-baby walk-the-dog
around-the-world sleeper-over-the-falls
returns so quick they're dizzying
with the manic showmanship of it all
yearning to be cast into outer space
with no chance of return
to run up on the way
way up on the way to the sun
or freeze-suspended in silence
catapulted to the moon
the possibility of either
could never come too soon

gnats

thy fine name - *nematocera*
so swift your helter-skelter
soft dun in the morning sun
hard to imagine a life
in such a tiny casement
brilliant in your parapatetic jumpiness
ziggy and zaggy
zig up zig down zag left zag right
in the shooting gallery of the morning
more than one a difficult target
a fittingly soft-shifting flittingly evolution of them
way of many small equaling an intimidating one
en masse to clock of new day's light
there's no there there to any single one of them
not at all about a chance of fun
certainly not like us about any single one
something altogether too determined
premeditated collective drift and fall and lift

some serious flicker of intelligence
in their delicate arc and airy tangos
shifting with ease in the warm breeze
a high wire act with no trapeze
a communal cloud startling in their being
so center-less yet how not
some tribal computing intelligence
moving them each collected individual
not all for one but a one for all
theological proof who could ask for more
dust mote with intent tribe all-important
from out of winter's door
hatched from what smallest source
how can there be no eternal power
given their joy their bliss in the eternal now
when even their friend the tiny pepper corn
casts a shadow with diligence
an homage to grand projector the sun
and then as sun sets low
they glow as if a flock on fire
behind their tornado of life
the hills and cedars are red
against their midge browns
and swirl on swirl on swirl
as day goes slowly down
a majestic vortex of tiny-ness
soft as a flock of micro-sheep
the conscious might of their collective
how different from us who say in god we trust
and we alive are swarming together too
glad of a day with them simply grand
gnat to gnat in the great funnel of creation
me and you me and you
sharing the swarming air waters and land

hi ho silver

every time i hear the william tell overture
or mussorgsky's a night on bald mountain
i'm suddenly seven and the lone ranger and silver
and tonto and his palamino scout
and mickiey mouse are invincible
and instantly i believe in heroes again
and i'm wearing a white cowboy hat
and red kerchief blowing out seven candles
on a white frosted cake shaped like a six-shooter
with plastic cowboys and indians on horseback
aiming rifles waving tomahawks shooting bows
surrounding a little circle of covered wagons

and i'm praying to god in heaven
that the roy rogers ranch set
barn ranch house bunk house and corrals
will be there for me under our christmas tree
complete with plastic roy and plastic trigger
dale and buttermilk their dog bullet
pat brady and his jeep nellybelle
all singing happy trails to you
and roy saying welcome buckaroos
and the sugar crisp bears singing
and mommy and daddy smiling
uncle joe filming the whole shootin' match
and all things are right with the world
i'm wearing my davey crocket
who-killed-him-a-bear-when-he-was-only-three
coonskin cap made from a genuine raccoon
and the long-ago sons of the pioneers are singing
and on another channel the lone ranger rising up
on his valiant steed gallops on to aid folks in need
warning bad guys everywhere with his rallying cry
brought to us by friskies dog food tootsie rolls
post grape nuts flakes sugar crisp and nestle quick
hi ho silver

ON THE BACK OF GARGANTUA: August 7, 2010 – August 11, 2012
on the back of gargantua

after the afterbirth of the planets stars and all the moons
after the first planetary bombardment and first life
then photosynthesis paleozoic and proterozoic noons
after mesozoic and cenozoic time's rifled tunes

on the infinite sled of that galactic beast
our laughter and tears ride on the back of gargantua
that implacable turtle on turtle on turtle unstoppable
un-moved relentless mover on which the universe rests

mosaic-shelled mystery that plods so slowly along
long-impervious reptilian juggernaut moving on
growing like a comic cosmic baker's song
horny scales infused with always-exploding yeast

we mites can only do our best to hang on tight
to the rhyme and track of our puny lives
scurry on hoping mini-we excel on our test drives
or at least win the evolution of a passing grade

come day come night come heaven come hell
come summer fall winter spring

what choice but to continue to sing
riding on the back of gargantua

when my cat rolls over

when my cat rolls over
and stretches his tiger paws out
chocolate and black
on his ample persian back
belly-up belly the color of ashes
as the Italians so precisely say

mi souvien l'eterno

in this for him a simple act
i suspect he knows how
when i say OH
his italianate simplicity
gives me a moment of eternity
in him in his eyes

mi souvien l'eterno

the bee

how and why the bumble
in the bumble bee
where there's no bumble in he
summer cell mate of open cell of blue
soaring in his black-and-yellow prison duds
gypsy dizzying in his pollen-laden arc
under clouds as white as suds
his GPS was flawless as his energy
centuries before ours in cars
he drives all wild blossoms wild
in manicured gardens and parks
hot house flowers temple when he dives
assiduous furious meticulous
he's a mellifluous thelonious
jazz soloist of pastures orchards glades
he's the busiest of royal breeders
who in every deft swoop
joins the a-list of country-club takers givers
giving all stamens and pistils the shivers
without him there'd be no flowers fields or trees
always at play king of spring and summer days
lord of pollination implantation symbiosis synergy
baron of levity defying gravity
purportedly a drone a prisoner of the hive
in truth the freest roaming prisoner alive

there is no bumble in the bumble bee
the flowers say he's all stud service and utility

what kafka's dog said

a few scraps of meat and a bone
a word of praise a pat on my head
my favorite spot near their blazing hearth
my embroidered comforter near their bed
a master and a home of my own
these made the axe that hacked

the cold wolf's heart out of me
in the end turned my snarl and me
from wild beast to man's best friend
very first in their queue
truest love in the retinue
of their coldest hearts

for franz kafka and his dog - "Literature is the axe with which we break the frozen sea within us."

postcard

one november afternoon among all november afternoons of all time

looking at a postcard of one giant-antlered moose of all the giant-antlered moose of all time
he standing staring bold-photographed free in front of two white birch and maple trees gold and
red as chardonnay and cabernet

lily pad roots like linguini hanging below his bulbous nose his grinding jaws defying gravity and
all human laws

purchased in algonquin and inserted as a bookmark into "*jorge luis borges on mysticism*"

by chance i opened his essay '*on salvation by deeds*' which ends "...because of a haiku the
human race was saved."

and i remembered once in algonquin a great bull moose stared at me and my nephew dan in a
canoe we less than ten feet away

in very much the same way as the one captured in the post card stared at his photographer long
ago

then this so still world was ours alone shining with subtle mystery and awe among the many
moments under the algonquin sky

and i thought i heard a camera click of all the camera clicks of all time

captured and made into a postcard for some reader among all the readers of all time to one day
here and now find

for daniel arnott

small present

i am giving this to you because i love you
because this ink is my blood holds my touch
i have made it with my breath and best considerations
as if building a small interpretation
of what in the end it might come to represent

an exhalation a lifting and a flooding of a silken tent
swaying in the wind's decisions and indecisions
from somewhere beyond mundane mind a gift felt then sent
from some place quiet and very hard to find
from an inspiration a step away from day-in-day-out time

even if this thing that flew that none would pay a penny for
this shadow this exultation this representation of an open door
i offer it to you also as a kind of solid floor
that you can walk on from time to time
when the shallow ground beneath your feet begins to shift

i am giving this to you because we can hear wild geese call
a hope assembling on our pond this cold november day
and because tonight the old moon looks kindly down on us below
and soon i well know how well we all will know
it will be time for us too to fly away time for us to go
*thanksgiving poem for wanda
on leaving shanghai
november 22, 2011*

photo of penguins listening to a gramophone during shackleton's 1907 expedition to antarctica

on the last page of an essay by george steiner (cambridge 2006)
mourning the loss and ever-shrinking multiplicity
of 6,909 languages spoken in the world today
how hopi grammar is attuned to our physics or relativity
how tribes in the andes see their future as their past
since they can see what's behind them never what's ahead
how eskimos have a hundred words for every tint and state of snow
how argentine gauchos have words precise as our color charts
for the many-colored pelts of wild horses in their herds
how even dreams have their own surreal syntax
on the last page of his essay is an image of shackleton

he far right and on his left the great petunia of a gramophone
amid the treeless scree and slopes the ice and snow like rags
the frozen sea in the far beyond and front and center black and white
leaning forwards huddled all in a semi-circle like farmers at a fair
a gathering of king penguins astonished at what they see and hear
leaning in disbelief intent on what they never saw or heard before

shackleton is much within himself and mesmerized as they or more
an interspecies rapture a moment of shared mystery and play
who more mesmerized by whom by what? the penguins or the man?
a questioning captured by those that mock us today when
strange species - the i-pod or the i-phone - do not speak to the pen
and one wonders who gave the cue to let those crazy penguins in

rabbit

to your den shy rabbit
to your den
the hunter's hour is upon you
a raptor's moon is on the rise
be glad for your bed shy rabbit
and the comfort of dreams
be glad for the blanket of night
for those with fangs and talons
and even sharper eyes are searching
starved for the scamper of warm blood
for those above your burrow
the foolish betrayed by starlight
the not-wise trying to hide
in the new-plowed furrows
who scurry for their lives
and will not see a new sun rise
to your den shy rabbit
to your den

sow

pink pink pink piggy pink
her name might be petunia or daisy
like haystack calhoun jackie gleason or other fatsos
for a massive sow she's very light on her feet
when her owner at last drives up the drive
she's like a dog who's languished all day long
a mona-lisa smile - yes, smile - ear to ear that beguiles
her joy her master's return best buddy best friend
her pig body language all "hip hip hooray"
her curlicue corkscrew tail wagging gaily away
her trotters prancing so light and daintily
she shakes with joy she's all "o boy o boy o's"
she knows she's cute her trust in him is absolute
no fear not a care glad to be here glad to just be
she thanks her owner that her life will not end
that he'll never send her to be rendered
into bacon sausage ham barbecued ribs or chops
sadly for her whatever her name she's wrong

BROOK NO TITLE: August 2012 – May 2015

loon

in your voice the sadness of all things solitary
the twilight of all dusks and mornings
the blood amethyst of your dark eyes
your directional ha your flight laughter
your calls are algonquin's voice
without you it would be silly
the twittering of little cartoon birds
the jays' cacophony the raven's glunks and gutturals
it is you that is the lord of this vastness
you who translate its cryptic rune
gives it voice distill a great whiskey of bracing
melancholy like rain on cool days in early fall
your voice that speaks now and immortal
in groups your curious heads like baseball caps
right left right left in almost unison
all forward three forward one backward
having second thoughts back paddling
distracted by trout or bream
your slapstick running takeoff
all in a queue one then next then next or
parallel together the water dappled
by your wide wing tips
and then a squadron to behold
bellies white so low to the water
wings almost surface touching
veering to a distant bay leaving a gasping silence
embarrassment of air and sad blue hills missing you
brilliant diver porpoise-like contradicting
your size with grace in your swift and
ripple-less dive below down in dark waters
to depths sun columns like stalactites
shining down you tack and turn surprise
and seize the most agile perch trout bass
or fingerling your wings more adroit than
their fins your great black back purple
opalescent blue-emerald the inspiration of
the shifting sun your black and white
herringbone against the wide whiteness of your breast
the alert turning of your ivory beak
and your red eye your blood red eye
searching scanning finding all you seek

the bureaucrat

i'm the whipping boy of that pompous
judging class i know they think me an ass
they think it an existential gaff for me to

stand firm by my desk by habit
like a prisoner trussed day after day
at my boring station
mindless task after mindless task
oblivious in my robotic joy
knowing that a multitude of me's
when they are all long gone
downed a peg all humpty eggs
from their selfish self-elevation
i the most soul-less of fate's toys
will always be the last to laugh

**on my father's heart and the notion of 'heart' (for
stanley vincent and my family on his birthday)**

I

i was thinking about my father's heart and the
notion of 'heart' in general and how in year
sixty-two his gave out betrayed him left him
eyes rolling back his head in my mother's arms
she heard his cry upstairs his fall he was warm
gone before she held him not the worst exit
for yet another departing guest
different story for my mom

II

i was thinking about my father's heart and the notion
of 'heart' in general on the plane home from beijing
to manhattan about the chasm between the haves
and the have-nots while scanning air china's wine
selection AUC Fronsac 2005 France Cote de Blaye
Chateau Pacquet 2008 and the champagnes go to
Brutprivilegee@destined.com and looking at the
photos of the sommeliers xavier buato bald in glasses
kind eyes gray vest "academy of chemistry and
physics school of paris" sniffing a glass with
profound attention looking the reincarnation of
Samuel Beckett and his Godot god aught
an aging joan of arc holding a peony like our nun
who taught grade-school piano minus big white bib
oversize rosary belt black habit

missing my father so long gone
in our bathroom where he fell
the floor white with inch-wide octagonal tiles
sitting on the toilet nothing to read
if you stared hard enough eyes slightly askew
optical illusion the floor would rise up

hologram-like alive by your own willing it
as against all reason my hope for him

III

i was thinking about my father's heart and the notion
of 'heart' in general and good stress and bad stress
and their impact on the heart and the hearts of
societies and nations and our individual births into
the great vegas wheel of life in bayonne or paris
london new dehli or nairobi the elsewhere of chance
and station in life and overcoming limitations and
growth and the limitations of personal growth given
the card we've each been dealt and how much can
a person's heart a nation's heart withstand
given the heart's need to love and dream
which can be destroyed by loving too hard
or dreaming too big or dreaming too small
and my father's love for my mother and the four of us
he always said he would die for us
and what is right and what is wrong
and what is just and what is unjust

IV

i was thinking about my father's heart and the notion of
'heart' in general and my father's working dreams and big
love and being four again and the phone shattering his
sleep and my four-year-old dreams and the smell and sound
of him rising on call 24/7 and his first smoke good sulfur
burst of new-lit match first sweet tobacco smell – unfiltered
lucky strikes the sound of cold rain in the alley the hard
slam of the door as he left for 'the hook' exxon's bayonne
refinery - manhattan looking down the irish lorded over
the 'pollacks' who were thankful for an extra shift any time
they could get repairing wax plant conveyors paid for new
fridge or brakes double time messing his system into chaos
of what time to pay for new linoleum that wouldn't stain
the mop red night melding into mid-afternoon into day into
what? What? shift exactly? asked the beasts of burden
three to eleven eleven to seven seven to three repeat until
the moon becomes the sun until within his body
one was as harsh as what

V

i was thinking about my father's heart and the notion
of 'heart' in general and wondering if it was too
many marbled meats the butter the pierogis too few
dark greens the smoking (he was never much of a
drinker) and how uncle joe – a mostly-functioning

alcoholic – who had seen the flag raised on iwo jima
and what the marines called ‘action’ what part of
uncle joe that never came back – how he was always
telling my father he was going to get him drunk
never happened high balls seven-and-sevens bloody
marys too-sweet wines physical stress plus or minus
too little money or the stress of a boy and three girls
or my mother and the catholic rhythm method ‘birth
control’ for (large) families or genetics destiny or
will of some almighty scribe

VI

i was thinking about my father’s heart
and the notion of ‘heart’ in general and
once after a blizzard he and i
adventuring out to shovel the drive and
sweep the car and the snowball fight we
had rare and spontaneous just us and
throwing snowballs in glee laughing
against the storm we two my dad and
me totally free school cancelled a snow
day snowflakes falling with a vengeance
and thump i bullseye hit in the eye not
his intent his instant regret one-eye
blind i was terrified running inside
crying he thinking to my mother to
squeal i thinking to restore and bathe the
blinded eye i thinking then and now how
one moment of transcendence turned
into a cruel dance he thinking i was a
moma’s boy and weak i thinking i was
blind how after we never played this way
again i thinking then and today so broken
was his heart by my cowardice by my
youth of nine my being what i was - a
boy in my eye my ‘I’ of icy pain knew at
nine as i ran inside that some special
thing was lost that could never be regained
not his fault not mine and now the memory
of this broken trust this fluke this
unjust thing no fault his no fault mine
a swipe of circumstance a snowball
curve of chance still churns
rancid in my heart an episode
turned vinegar from first new wine

VII

i was thinking about my father’s heart and the

notion of 'heart' in general and one early october
evening light waning refinery smoke rising over
bayonne bridge after my first sister justine was
born standing by my mom and grandfather by her
basinet witnessing her bath and feeling a joy
rivaled by few since she was a slippery naked
pink and kicking alien everything smelling of
johnson's baby shampoo everyone smiling
warm water and warm terrycloth
not too young to feel even then that this was rare
perfection was I four? and thinking then and now
remembering thinking the only puzzle part
missing was my father and that throat-hitch now
of knowing his absence then the villain another
double shift to pay for our shoes the shampoo
paying then and now for this doing merely what
i knew he knew was what he had to do never
seeing us as burden or blunder a simple wonder

VIII

i was thinking about my father's heart and the
notion of 'heart' in general and his life in the
military the signal corps where he learned the
art of the spit shine sulfur burst of match to
kiwi black or brown the blue flame the wax
melt the moistened rag to polish to shoe allow
for dry time then rag buff then brush then repeat
you'd see your vague reflection in the humble
loafer or formal brogue he made sergeant saved
his medals signal corps northern africa france
germany saw the liberation of one of the camps
saved small-format photos of the dogs the
ovens the skeletal bodies stacked piles of
glasses and shoes and watches and like
everyone came back broke part cracked
four years service (he volunteered)
black and white photos of him boxing
holding rabbits they shot for stew
post cards from morocco a few mementos
fez rifle nazi helmet nazi flag
then to bing crosby's 'i'll be home for christmas'
he was home for christmas
kids and work never looked back never talked
about what he saw he liked the order of the
military appealed to his perfectionism a sense of
control and order that helped made things make
sense

IX

i was thinking about my father's heart and the notion of 'heart' in general and how after his first heart attack in 1952 when he fell from massive oil tank missing being impaled on an upright pipe cushioning his boss's fall four of his ribs broken the thing that bothered him the most he said it made it hard to laugh he 'retired' on medical disability never sued the company and for ten years became a house husband my mother back to work he became an great baker snuck a smoke (filtered) every once in a while glass or two of wine a beer now and then ten years after with a clean bill of health doctors telling him he'd live a normal life dropped dead a few weeks later and in that decade of reprise we knowing he knew seeing his eyes fill up knowing the gift of time and the ticking clock never losing his love of us and life never falling into self pity or bitterness or rage just living and suddenly dying not betrayed for want of heart but flawed heart betraying him and us

X

i was thinking about my father's heart and the notion of 'heart' in general and how when forced to retire my father my mother changed roles like changing pajamas she went back to work he worked the home way it had to be just or not just they kept at it accepted keeping at it toward the end they took some real vacations puerto rico vegas? some theatre in new york atlantic city to play a little people watch a lot my mother always said if he were alive today i'd kill him for dying never forgave him or his traitor heart marinating in rage kept her alive dying two days shy of 90 telling the same story to the end his cry his fall his head in her arms as if the retelling in some way could make her wish come true and change the story's end in her heart make her believe or make her hope come true

a handful of jonquils

tonight just cut they rest mundane
in their crystal vase a soft dusk light
glows so common but also rare their
yellows whites but one sigh

an old oak armoire an old woman
slouching or sleeping in the ghost
of an old armchair
quiet as untouched dust

outside one dour admiral cloud above
the rusted weathered vane navigates
the range of darkening sky
peoples all below now hushed lay still

this evening's breeze in no rush
sings, "vanity, vanity fair! these hours of
ours upstaged by a handful of jonquils..."
for Edward Hopper and his *Room in Brooklyn*'

downed hawk

this winged god lives with us in silence
broken only by his sharp hunting scree he
who perches high on power lines deadly
his talons and striking his yellow eye
behind him shadow-less a blinding sun
rests blazing gemlike incarnadine

against the light-teal chamber of the sky this god
who scours the road's vanishing V for smallest
crossings of smallest living things now lies quiet
at the sad road's dark edge his wings like
tethered kites rise and fall flap up and down
blown by gales of traffic's rush

i saw him as i was speeding mindless by stopped and
placed him in a stand of orange hawk weed his final
nest near a patch of bluest chicory to keep him
from being crushed a small victory this still god now
impervious to our madresses field breezes
through his wings whisper "hush! hush!"

now that the rabbit of her heart is still

now that the rabbit of her heart is still
may she rest gently beyond all desire and all will

may she join those well loved who have gone her way before
may her journey prove to be the opening of a shining door

may the spring birds that prayed in song around her grave
sing to and of her and all she was and all she gave

may she embrace her son who died too young too soon
may she join joe her spouse to live on as sun and moon

a second mother to me she owned no rage no parsimony
may she rouse us all to find in death a breath no final page

for phyllis dworzynski

april 16, 2013 – her burial day

pennies

pennies are such a total mess
a population explosion we must address
their copper faces out of place as the
big bopper's or arctic grasshoppers
let's change this smallest coin into
nothing at all stop retailers from
making one cent shy
of any even number seem like 'what a buy!'

pennies are our enemies let's
exterminate them
they're redundant superfluous not needed moot
let's make them scarce as dodos or chimney sweeps sweeping soot
they should not be minted or polished but abolished they gather
dust and when not in circulation some weird form of smelly rust

think of all the coffee cans and mayo jars chock full to overflowing
that could be put to better use and all the bored and slaving kids
stuffing penny rolls on rainy days surely a form of child labor just
short of child abuse turning the little wankers into shekel counters
or worse yet baby bankers

among their few redeeming graces here's three: they can be placed face up
upon their backs and then pressed flat into the thinnest oval cakes by
locomotive number 508 on railroad tracks and held like gems or flung like
tiny discs by boys and girls and made to skip like inexpensive toys across the
surface of farm ponds and lakes or found and saved as lucky charms to keep
the deluded or the plucky from all harm

pennies are our enemies
in them we must not trust but banish them from our midsts make them
evanescent as adirondack mists this would make the phrase 'penny
pinching' obsolete and our homes and cars and drawers and piggy banks
much lighter and us much lighter too of mind and spirit and lighter on our

feet retailers would be forced to find some other pricing scheme or phony
levy

pennies are a form of inert surplus a form
of existential dread a metal fungus let us
lobby treasury and mints to annihilate this
strain of monetary pestilence to
exterminate them like plagues of bedbugs
termites roaches rats or ants

pennies are such a total mess without their presence the
economy won't be any worse let's eradicate them take
them out of circulation soon smelt them down and turn
their molten mass into sea walls or bridges across
rivers oceans lakes or even bridges to the moon

cartoon

out of the darkest circus-canon-barrel shot a man is but a
reckless hurtling canon ball a stick-legged half-full glass of
water spilling a hairless wiley coyote always looking up and
waiting for that monster mesa verde boulder from on high to
drop half stunned and goofy with that porky pig smile puffing
out his piggy chest wishing all the while the almighty
animator will draw him in another mile grant him a petunia of
his own and daily bowl of slop at flicks end eyeballs popping
a clownish pretend-praying fool knowing there's no omelet
without broken yolks with a toothy daffy-duck indentured
grin hoping he can say he played his technicolor part good as
he got then he does this hippo swan dive into an empty pool
and still clueless stutters "tha-tha-tha-that's all folks"

the flatulence of cows

the flatulence of cows is an anti-
environmental "Ka-Pow!" that might bring
us not-so-sapiens down when fart by fart
they expel tons of methane for us reminder
of the troubled Dane's
"to be or not to be"

most credible tout sheets hold that the
rising of their collective gases is enlarging
the ozone hole served cold who'd've thought
way back when that from their relatively
small anal apertures would come a form of
bovine vengeance
for all those burgers roasts ribs and t-bones

no wonder in the wee hours when

oblivious we all snug in bed at home no
gadding journalists out recording after
each and every ponderous fart
'cows' (lads and lasses) do a little karmic pirouette
a dainty them-or-Whimpy-us vendetta dance and
then get back to revenge and rapture
devouring tons on tons of grasses

so from their ends will come the toxic gasses
that in the end will kick our asses their every
fart subversive art gas graffiti their every
prophetic "Moo!" a "just you wait!
you bloody meat eaters you!"

the absence of delis in heaven: a saved soul's lament

o world o life o infinite time o delis
o pickled dills o garlic brine for holy
of holy you i pine a great corned
beef on black-seed rye a pastrami
extra lean on an onion roll (in
heaven there is no cholesterol) the
thought of you makes me fly
to the great take-out menu in the sky for all
its heavenliness for all its eternal glory if
there's one thing about heaven one
resounding thing that i detest it's that there
are no delis here no plain or garlic bagels
with a schmear no scallion cream cheese
salmon or lox no smoked whitefish chopped
liver or herring no cherry cheesecake or
rugelach for all the joys of functional wings
where no one off-key ever sings given the
dearth of deli takeout and year-round delis to
please our angelic palates heavenly bellies o
world o life o infinite time o delis o pickled
dills o garlic brine to hell with heaven i pray
o god send me back to earth

ASYLUM FOR MY AFFECTIONS: May 2015 – July 2017

wish i were there

O three blue folding chairs
O lapping Lilliputian waves
O barking gulls stick-fetching dogs
prancing in the surf like happy seals
O snoring sunburned nappers sawing logs
Copping Zs or are they zeds
radios playing bach cantatas
or funky ghetto gangsta rappers

O copper-toned babies
producing messy sandy diapers
or copper-toned babes
winning five-star bikini raves
O trashy novels junky snacks
O slimmest sliver of a daytime moon
pale as a fingernail clipping
O great bronze gods of summer
your beach chorus august keeps singing
whoever wherever take me back
for lacking the iodine ocean air
or ocean fragrance of rugosa rose
i fear my pale nose might despair
please fly me to the outer banks
where all our woes so quickly heal

lily of the valley

smallest of the small
in You lily of the valley
like some lost land
i relive my childhood long gone
my mother and my father call
you tiny grand perfumier

your fragrance stands
the titanic tests of time
small but most elegant of all
mighty in may's fragrant rhymes
on you so many springs have shone
eons-lasting as quarry stone

woodchuck's resume

woodchuck groundhog whistle pig
meek easily spooked and smaller
than bruin-brown grizzly
lawn beaver no waffle tail
shy chary wary
scared of all shadows
including birds' and my own
won lifetime van winkle award
(*marmota monax olympic gold*)
for good hibernation habits
stands soldier tall in summer sun
runs with a waddle fast as rabbits
but don't be deceived
runs faster than you
claws like front end loaders
moves tons of earth

big rocks small boulders
when guarding young or home
fierce and totally fearless
can swim climb trees but rarely
has two coats of fur
appears beauty-parlor frosted
whistle-warns chubby cubs
footballs with no-gel mohawks
to all gardeners a terrorist
best friend of the NRA
best marketer of rifle scopes
and cartridges in the USA
(deserves a monument)
all their munitions and double barrels
aimed right at 'em dawn to dusk
global positioning system tuned
to burrow with two doors
gives a fighting chance
of surviving their killer blasts
face washer extraordinaire
in the manner of squirrels or men
clean mean clover mowing machine
sometimes seen outside the den
standing tall paws on old oak stump
a brown-robed preacher
at pulpit prepared to preach
to a bored and squirming congregation
of little birds and blindest of men
wood chucking rodent family
could chuck would chuck wood
fence your tomatoes carrots and flowers
what's yours is truly theirs
every woodchuck prays
night or day: "I find and fill my bliss
in every gardener's plot. I invade.
I blow every perfect vegetable a kiss
as I devour like a ravenous dog
every entry in Burpee's seed catalog.
I, woodchuck, groundhog, whistle pig."

the wild one

oh to be the wild one who nests poised at the tops
of weeping willows and the wild cherry trees
the one who doesn't give a holy cheep
the one who looks so calmly down
with compassion on the clowns
of gaudy fad and silly fashion
one not haunted by irony or jest

sun shining brilliant on his wings
the one whose truth is go never stop
the one who flies high above all others
who shows how to soar and call and sing
like the arrow's feathered fletch that drives
the arrow's razor head swift to hunted hearts

spot of blood on our window

red evidence that things conspire are deceptive
or in a trance when the evening light is low
our fine-winged friends ravenous for mulberries
who in their frenzied feeding mistake the darkness
of our unlit living room for an open door
and against the clear permanence of window glass
are hurled into a darkness of their own
the only telling marker a single spot of blood
warning all that in our hungry flights of fancy
a darkness can sometimes lead to deeper darkness
and instead of welcome be passage
to something darkly more

feel bad for god

feel bad for god
it's all his fault
being in charge mostly sucks
spelled backwards he is dog
even worse he rhymes with clod
fraud flawed scrod and sod
invisible invincible infallible
never needs to wash or pay a bill
doesn't bleed is never ill
he's never wrong always right
can never be just here or there
because he's everywhere
always giving or taking
(who knows if or what he eats)
grand chef et piece de resistance
a cosmic groundskeeper
direct reports: angels and seraphim
only enemies: devils and grim reaper
he never takes a nap or sleeps
our souls he's always raking
not known to laugh or cry or dance
will-o'-the-wisp always ghostly
he's all seeing yet never seen
doesn't break never begins or ends
never kowtows or bows to the lash

being at once more and less
one and many yet never stressed
our dire last-minute prayers
may serve to ignite his ire
or make him feel badly used
no present past or future
he's stuck in the infinite
his own design and making
his breath moves the seasons' sparks
shooting stars' planets' sails he fills
so when he fails to take your call
put aside frail human reason
stay calm! it's not his fault
his truths most ancient of all
fire's maker grand olympic vaulter
no land no galaxy he can not vault
the world his ark from bugs to ducks
(who knows he may have claws and fur
if things keep up we'll soon call him 'her'
end to White Beard though still to be feared)
given arcane dogma and holy esoterica
trumps cash and lucre He The Mighty Buck

starling on top of radio tower outside rhinecliff train station

how he held his perch in a strong winter wind
on the needle tip of the antenna was one thing to see
how he drew his mates and family there another mystery
his eye on the mighty hudson and upriver kingston bridge
his gaze on the shawangunk their smoky blue and silver haze
six fuel-oil storage tanks below like giant pepper shakers
we small passengers shivering on platform in wooly bunches
bright scarves waving flag-like in the cold to greet the train
and his flock shinnying up the guy wires like black beads
an ad-lib live abacus doing what all starlings do best
watch the morning sun wake from dreams the sleeping clouds
their crazy-quilt recitals of virtuoso cheeps chortles and mews
masters of mimicry the only time they regress to Starling Voice
(the precise sun casting rectangular shadows on the tracks)
is when less operatic near their nest at dusk they quiet down
for their day's-end oratorio and crazy-quilt ska-fest colloquy
their tower standing tall from thin to thinner telescoping up
in the blue early evening light they rest more blue than black

here's to

here's to naysayers, game players, idea slayers
bureaucrats hiding in their computer vaults
vicious cynics their dismissive assaults

those that answer the phone rude as bots
the ones that keep you chilling your heels
closed in the comfort of their tiny cubicles
hiding behind the boulders of tried and true
cozy in their offices with no respect for Time
(or you) the ones that lord it over 'little people'
and kiss the bums of those at the ladder's top
the smug humorless self-important icicles
control freaks who look down their noses
on the untried the innovative and the new
sticklers who live by letter not spirit of the law
those who rule by title fear and petty politics
safe in finding fault and always saying NO
ever suspicious ever suspect dead in eye
to any spark of enthusiasm energy or joy
the know-they-know-it-all too closed to learn
do nothings who pass the buck and still they earn
those who have misplaced their moral testicles
the arrogant takers too cheap fat or lazy to give
there must be a favored spot in hell for them all
where white-hot coals to their thin skins stick and
cherubs sipping sodas watch them burn and stink

when first ever i held you close

when first ever i held you close
a V of geese winning true north
made gray sky their canvas
a grateful moon watching down
on us showered the grateful river
with softest stalactites
tier on tiers of waning light
on a wandering april day
wondered who to thank
might warmly listen if not reply

when first ever i held you close
an ancient gate creaked open
to fields of new alfalfa and sweet grass
lambs rams ewes and their only-weeks-young
rushed out in a dance of such exuberance
the young ones leaping and head butting
running in silly circles to and from the ewes
as if crazy for approval and demented with joy
such a dance with you

when first ever i held you close
a hearth fire flared in a first salute
to the perfection of our embrace

that our cats sedated by the warmth
failed to see sheets of rain pouring down
demanding silver windows pay a tariff
daffodils bow their gold heads down
pay tribute to the rain's transparency
an honoring like violins and cellos
a showing of respect and even awe
a following of some brilliant score

when first ever i held you close
a new sun greeted this new day
the demented chorus of birds in spring
their crazed tweets chirps and warblings
shaking the dawn waking the world
made Morning Light wonder if apple blossoms
forsythia and little leaves of baby green
or old white flowering pear could see or hear
time was braked bracketed and broken
no such thing as past future days months or years

when first ever i held you close
to an imperial city of imperial dreams
our train on shining rails
rode beside a shining river
to the choruses of far hills far on
and their oratorios of spring greens
their nettle-purples blues and roses
gave the dry point of the land's engraving plate
a fine intaglio etched by pine needles and burrs

when first ever i held you close
i saw us in the mirror of my mind
each seeing each seen in seeing
a single point as in donne's compass
that served as proof that no matter
how far our souls our fast feet move
so like the pursuit of moon by sun
we are one center ending and starting again
at this true plumb point from which we run
and now matter mattering not a jot
we in one another's arms have just begun
for Wanda - April 27, 2016

ant

you can never criticize him for not being determined
on a pheromone track invisible as the power source of Lionel trains
with a fluidity of intention not to sun or moon or stars beholden
the filament of his legs devoid of musculature rapid as living twigs

defies all gravity and picks up speed in bright summer's friendly light
his three bony segments his wasp-like hind black as brogues well-shined
helmet head a symmetry a scary mimicry of a samurai warrior's
battle mask fierce mandibles feathered feelers furious with intelligence
often seen carrying a dead companion or lugging a too-heavy moth
dried worm or crumb of bread applauded by softest breeze back to den
to mother ship to colony to the congratulations of the telepathic swarm
formicidae hymenoptera in May nestled deep in peonies drunk on their scent
his ability to snuggle into summer's warm hundred-petal blossom-bed
how smartly his ebony disappears into the opiate center is a tiny wonder

in autumn in wet woods holing up 'round mushrooms or in rotting logs
underground colony super organization exoskeletons compound eyes
soldier worker drone something about him reincarnate never dies
like a pinewood derby racing car he moves with gravity and gravitas
formicidae hymenoptera close to a fourth of our planet's biomass
i watch him cross the tightrope edge of pool and try to calculate
the speed at which he runs hell bent on getting past a dandelion patch
proportionately faster than any man yet thrown off by a strong breeze
more a diversion than a pain he never will be seen walking in the rain
relative of wasps and bees in spring hitchhiking indoors his varnish
dark stark against country white-pine kitchen floors so pick him up
his pincer nips telegraphing "set me free to my great outdoors!"
a delicate alien sci-fi subterranean union leader of his working class
wingless he can fall from great heights light enough to glide and sail
hard not to admire his ability to land unscathed and soldier bravely on

and then there's his unwelcome family and their battle cry: "*Picnic Well!*"
they send out one small scout one sneaky little beast and then they start
an unbroken line of confident black confetti sneaky creeps zoning in
peppering chicken cakes and cobblers seething on crème brûlée or custard tarts
that they herd and milk aphids little insect cows is unlikely as it is ant art
"dairying ants" a dogma-free sort of mutualism or symbiotic dualism
in the fall they gather aphid eggs and in the spring place them on plants
they and aphids both like to eat so summer long they can milk and feast
he is a wanderer tight-waisted as a corset-bound victorian dowager
he is a gypsy voyager a hardened gladiator a tireless investigator
curious hiker he walks under arbors of pachysandra and bowed blades of grass
through jumbled jungles of violets and wolf spider's webs like trampolines
avoiding his nemesis voracious cannibal green knight Sir Preying Mantis
nearly erased by a pallet of shadows he is camouflaged and disappears
and escapes smaller than the smallest bean into a tunnel of umber green

oh ant when you see grasshopper play and sing all summer worry free
you must hate Aesop and his moral tale of *Provide!* when you talk to your shrink
when you give it a think grasshopper grasshopper must be a thorn in your side
while you and your hoard remain obsessed with labor in the heat of summer
grasshopper grasshopper sings and eats and naps like a fat-cat lottery winner

sure you'd like to take a break like grasshopper grasshopper and enjoy enjoy
he sits back legs crossed carefree while you work like fools to provide for winter
come the cold why not be contrarian old boy and invite grasshopper grasshopper in
(neither of you were ever enemies or jealous of who you are or in the wrong)
feed him well then over cigars and port you can both tell Aesop to go to hell
praising the fruits of industry and the merits of art poetry idleness and song
lastly your nightmare glass-and-plastic prison The Ant Farm (food and 18 ants)
cruel science lesson taught by heartless no-soul white coats to voyeuristic kids
their punishment to live forever trapped like the ancient ant trapped in amber
seeing happy you and grasshopper grasshopper free on the outside staring in

buddha and the beetle

against all inhuman cruelties
against history's Shoah car
of the dying and the dead
against eternities of infinities
the Buddha cries
Compassion!
toward all struggling beings

flailing in the ocean
of the suburban pool
on lone raft of cherry leaf
the beetle silently cries
"forget the Buddha
forget all theologies and philosophies
wake up Gautama! save Me!!"

on pee-wee herman

just 'cause he got caught with his pants down
avid onanist wanking in the dark in a seedy theatre
to a porn flick in 1991 in the company of other fans
tuned in to many members in members' avid hands
is no cause to discount or dismiss Pee-wee's Playhouse
where all things inanimate live joyfully animate
and that time of childhood when every day is new
when a magic mr. sun smiles and tantric clouds sing
and skies sparkle and are bluest robin's egg blue
and the toaster warmly welcomes the perfect toast
and breakfast is a Rube Goldberg engineering wonder
of interconnected weights pulleys and levers that leave
a perfectly fried egg sunny side up on a perfect white plate
and with one fastidious bite saying goodbye goodbye
to globey, dog chair, mr. window, clockey and mr. kite
Pee-Wee mounts his beloved beach-cruiser bike
his red-and-white royal steed 1941 Schwinn charger
and with his inane signature explosive zen-clap laugh
skinny knight cloaked in a cloak of innocence and bliss

bravely cycles into the cold-war terror of each cruel day
so naive and radiant with joy that he actually is protected
and greeted by grocer baker tailor banker candlestick maker
as the embodiment of Christ tomb-risen or Bacchus at play

a piece of sun

my only baggage

through the window
of the ancient glass
of my dream
i still can see
above the line of trees
against the planetary map
of night's great sky
the handle of the dipper

and like a piece of bread
in the pocket of my memory
i carry a piece of sun
for my journey
to another day

i still can hear
the loving thread
of my father's voice
ursus major
so clearly say
son
look to your heart
to always know

that though
beyond this line
which i cannot cross
my eyes like the stars
shine down upon you
bright to bright
voice to voice
heart to heart

to join you on your way
beyond ursus minor to me
dreaming of my father (stanley vincent)

portrait of my father as a young man

before returning home from the war
before mommy and daddy married
before my three sisters and me

never dreaming what should never be
the ovens the skeletons borne living and dead
barbed wire louse-ridden barracks guard towers
the dull eyes of the well-fed dogs
blood tricked and locked in the bloody
stew of the jackboot steel-winged nazi clock

in this worn black-and-white photo
scalloped edges going yellow
no fear in his eyes this new recruit
shoes spit shined to a soft glow
khakis pressed to a razor crease
standing self-possessed at parade rest
he private first class signal corps
smiling with a kind of uniformed pride
dreaming of coming home before he left
anticipating the good life oddly unafraid

then and still now fresh joy in my father's smile
as if knowing the Spite of all that he would see
could not poison his faith in the good life
hard work love sacrifice and family
would set this his greatest generation free

strangely calm as if he saw his own return
behind him massive rolls of telephone cable
a jeep and eyes still bright
three dead rabbits (hasenpfeffer) on the hood
fur glistening not a drop of blood
k-rations and dehydrated mystery meals
hanging on a fence a stack of boxing gloves
he no lightweight with a bayonne-bayonet-jersey jab
the only fight the men enjoyed fighting

africa morocco rome the camps not-so-gay paris
attic souvenirs – a fez a program from a cabaret
braless belly dancer overly posed clearly bored
german helmet dagger luger arm band with swastika
and twenty small-format images smuggled in
bergen-belsen buchenwald chelmno dachau flossenburg
(forty thousand more 1933 through 1945) tombstones
of hitler's for-all-time-incomprehensible insane sin
piles of hair eyeglasses watches teeth of gold
bulldozed bodies on bodies just bones and skin

sniper shot won purple heart
promoted to sergeant first class
his Chopin smile lit up rooms

a gentle man a gentleman
no hint of macho
no fear of tears in him

permission to feel Granted
how he loved to say
“we’re Polish not foolish”

in this our small plot of time
in this worn photo
father’s days and father’s days
being born and reborn
reappearing and disappearing
slowly as memories yours and mine
that all our fathers be here now
my fondest foolish wish
for Stanley Vincent Furman
father’s day 2017

pine beetle

shell shining like shellac in the morning sun
the mahogany pine beetle transfixed in my hand
much smaller than the tip of a knitting needle
small intelligence to giant! Einstein? me
instinct kicking in he knows enough to flee
i appreciate his panic so i set him free
to the diamond dew of the just-mown green
if the smallest of our brethren like he
created and reincarnated so street wise
in the hands of God how vain are small we
to ever imagine a more sinister enterprise

THE EFFECT OF TWILIGHT: August 8, 2017 to August 29, 2019

the effect of twilight

how fine and well-long-gone the long-leisured-honeyed afternoons
when young sun slow in the arms of his pale days-end moon

made bright their sky bed their nubile twilight shine brighter
how now old-recalled the gone hours seem never-occurred

though blown as the sunset’s flower or the flown-south bird
and the back-thinking it a sharp knife cut never to heal righter

and the back-wanting it futile as a misspelled misplaced word
and the back-writing it just old-bent as a rusted typewriter

let it not be said

let it not be said that
we failed to see the white bird
spread her wings to soften her landing
on the dark waters of the Hudson

and then The Immediacy
of the swerving curved T

of a chimney swift almost black
flying low with hidden motive
over the great river seeking
shelter on the far fetching shore

heart wood

find it
it was born to be found
chop it
it was born to be chopped
split it
it was born to be split
mill it
it was born to be milled
sand it
it was born to be sanded
polish it
it was born to be polished
love it
it was born to be loved
burn it
it was born to be burned

egg

each time i place the dozen eggs
whitest white ovoids entirely compact
in their stunning rotund eggness
whiter than the egg tray in the fridge
how is it that Brancussi suddenly appears
admiring how utterly photogenic they are
in all transformations their symphonies
of cracked shells scattered on counter tops

inspiring top chefs to nouveaux culinary heights
sunny side up over easy yolks still creamy
shirred soft boiled scrambled hard scrambled soft
the shape shifting omelet's unifying elegance
the shadow of fingers darkening the slope
of their sides as lopsided they dawdle and roll

porcelain white and jolly as bubbles in a bevel
on any kitchen surface gauging the surface level

think of the poor hens in the Gulag of factories
or the idyll of old-farm chicken coops of the lucky few
doing their duty industrious clucking their clucks
meeting quotas day by day eggs waiting in clean hay
or head over heel rolling down chutes of stainless steel
once carried in woven baskets burlap sacks or boxes
now held harmless with the invention of the carton
(still saves farmers losses from cracked and ‘brokens’)

chameleon-like their shades of white are wide and varied
their flavors reflect their hens’ free ranging their feed
worldwide an egg is not an egg but always changing
in London collectors love this dealer in rare antiques
whose shop sign reads “**EGG**” (set in Apple Chancery)
next door the smells of baking bread just-brewed coffee
a rasher of crisp bacon farm-fresh eggs browned in butter
side of bubble and squeak make gourmet tourists’ stutter

boxer

confined within
this rancid ring
this beaten dog
this mongrel cur
this cowering whelp
shaken by each
blow on body blow
pummel to heart
club to kidney
punch to rib and spleen
without a whimper
without a yelp
without a sound
pain added to pain
asking no quarter
expecting no help
fears his lord’s sovereign reign

most grateful does lick
his cruel master’s hand
glad his god’s stone fist
was wrapped and gloved
then when released
from the torture place
and warmed by the sun
would leap and run

and breath the gentle
open morning air
how hard he does train
with blind devotion
with pathetic love
with forgiveness sick
for another round
confined within
this rancid ring
a dog yet still a man

the magi's visit and the ineluctable mule-stubbornness of god the father

to a total eclipse of pain tear-floods and endless airport queues
of incomprehensible flight delays opprobrium and callous news
to scarifying intestinal bags leaking yellow streams of dolor-grief
not metaphysically speaking still streams relentless under a cross on a hill
onto an unreceptive earth and too few idiotic unrepentant ground gawkers
standing around inured to wounds of piss shit or crusted blood on wood

yes said baby yes said daddy yes said mommy and the Father
and the trinity the gods tripartite kings of The Vast Incomprehensible
said in chorus yes to their own design of the ever-unfolding cycle
the krill in the belly of the whale the newborn seals in the jaws of the orca
grasshoppers in claws of mantis the suicidal terrorists or political dissidents
at the mercy of their torturers the flying souls leaping from towers

and god the Father proclaimed we are each and every all blessed

world trade centers' best deaths those distraught birds driven from their nests
to impala's throat in the lion's mouth to fish on the fisherman's hook
to the mother aborting her life to save her new one cord-cut motherless
to the baby fresh from the womb of the virgin in a stall smelling sweet
of cow lamb pig and horse shit their tails like metronomes swishing
to keep battalions of flies off his hot pink little face three cats one dog

at his feet fascinated by his button nose twitching too young to foresee
smell and taste his own sweat and blood yet even the baby jesus said yes
jesus! yes not knowing vaguely what he was in for and yes said mary
and said joseph yes not knowing what they were in for (where did joseph go?)
staying the course surrounded by grouchy wise men doubting that damned star
that orb of "what in tarnation!" leading us to a sweaty bairn and a leaky barn

and god the Father proclaimed we are each and every all blessed

beauty

beauty is the counter
to the ferocity
of the feather and the flower

autumn gnats

they are bits of embodied frantic sun fluff
tiny angels backlit by sun's down-dimming day
above they flit across the surface of the lake
like black notes hope to dance on blank scores
or Vermeers in the low light of old museums
who alert alive could envision a better display
a more intelligent collusion a more complicit 'more'

as they roil in the freedom of the fading now
their small algorithms in this finite bit of time
one by infinite one their kingdoms own no greed
fragile as the spider's web in multiples as tough
below them looking up schools of silver minnows
swarming anticipate in shoaling an ample feed
in the air of their abundance lives the finest rhyme

peregrine

sometimes the miracle
merely is what is
some small surprising thing
that suddenly is born
as when the peregrine
broke from top of silo to open sky
with the whole valley far below

lakes ponds rivers creeks streams
a dream of a hundred shades of blue
red barns farms gullies hills and rise
green fields on waves of green fields
wheat oats barley corn and rye
large creatures ambling
small creatures scurrying

his silent regal glide
his rising with the rising thermals
something very close to Love
no hurry in his timeless soar
above all living traffics' roar
everything his keen eye knew
he owned was his and only his

afternoon in early august

I

blue sky-blue faintest hint
light-silver sliver of a moon
cardinal jay chickadee and finch
deerfly carpenter and honey bees
still stinging the fickle breeze
with their territorial runes

II

the pool is a gargle of turquoise
its shimmering ribbons its chains of light
brothers aspiring to a forest spring

III

the mourning doves in the cedars
go coo coo and coo coo coo
two clouds two high up pretend they are
giant kangaroos leaping higher than high

IV

chipmunks scurry from feeder
to their tunneled nests and homes
repeat repeat again like tourists
putting clotted cream on toasted scones

V

in deep of night through teaming rains
the crickets and cicadas restate their names
not one in this salubrious chorus
even vaguely considers fame

VI

antiphon to gun shots
are closed screened doors
far-away rusty lawnmowers try to start
sputter alive to their customary roars
blue-ruckus military jays make their mark
prelude to crows' strident caws
in green shadows the mottled sycamores

sometimes God happens fast

we played throw the stuffed panda
flap its fuzzy paws count down to launch
a game of catch her dad and i
she'd wait for panda paw flap and flight
hit ceiling fluff-ricochet to our hands

next the chick that peeps when petted
hatch and re-hatch from a golden egg
brief rest in her plush elephant chair
panda and sponge ball her courtiers
attending their Princess her every whim

sweetest marionette gentle puppeteer
he towered over Natalie circle dancing
to choruses of *ring around the rosie*
pockets full of posies ashes ashes
again again the glee of *all fall down*

outside ninety-in-the-shade yard golf
able listener learning how to putt
sixteen raspberries from a prickly bush
her cheeks flushed to a raspberry red
backyard putti blond curls wet from sweat

inside a cool glass of ice water
an i-phone viewing of very silly cats
then off to a family dinner nearby
teaspoons of rice or kernels one by one
just two her table manners quite advanced

best of all after a fine Thai feast
was our dance to the gelato way
good friends hours-new she took my hand
hers lost in mine then it was i knew
sometimes God happens fast
for Natalie Arnott (doodlebug) on turning two

this

a male song sparrow he the alto
high on this his bay cedar branch
sings out fearless gallant bold defiant
looking down on this his lake's blue "oh!"

the Algonquin wind conspires
to serve as an intermittent choir
not a drone not a murmur tireless
time measured in ever-open whiles

hazel clouds exponential in a mackerel sky
on a trajectory that seems designed
a form of fate unpredictable
somehow exquisitely predetermined

the many voices of the intrepid wind

the dry grasses opulently hushing
blue stands of cornflower and chicory
the surprising echoes of waves on shores

the many masques of the wavering breeze
dreaming their way through balsam and pine
declaiming the vast canvas of the day
shy sparrow spry sparrow sings sweet sweet sweet

what unseen shepherd herds this his flock
guides the woolly underbellies of his clouds
sheep-like in their silent white submission
to this his vast holding pen of wilderness

all shapes all forms all bright fractal pieces
the bell-like ringing of the gallant waves
upon the striate granite shore
sunlight's shadows dappling the forest floor

shy sparrow raising yourself stalwart up
mottled chest brave head held up high
whiling away your insignificance
contradicting flawed notions of Power

as if this your feathered life so light
your voice so clear and haunting
your sweet display of innocence
might briefly claim a perch of dominance

song sparrow small imperator ruling
stout heart looking down on your lake's blue "oh!"
your song eclipsing diamonds on bold waters
your kingdom does passeth all understanding
for Daniel Arnott
Algonquin 2018

song for wanda

the sky is open
an open slate of blue
save one cloud's dimple

my love is simple
i live to live for you
my life bespoken

God's fleas

if God were a dog
spelled backwards

would he be
a she or he?
mystery inscrutable
for all eternity
sometimes amiable
sometimes rabid
what are we
sometimes rabid
sometimes amiable
lost in His fleece
for all eternity
but God's fleas

whoever said of the moon

whoever said of the moon
that she was the most celestial host
of the lemon meringue pie of childhood

whoever said the black sky-pointing fingers
of the graceful trees and their complex filigree
of branches were above-ground roots drinking air
and sun susceptible to every silly smallest breeze

whoever said the moon was sky's cuticle
a fingernail aspiring to become a thin lemon slice
a born-again porcelain bowl on the potter's wheel of night

whoever said beauty is so needed that ugly doesn't count
as Queen Luna descends knighting new stars that rise
above the charcoal carpet of clouds in procession
and her high whiteness shines in subtle ascension

whoever dumbstruck from darkness of barn looking up
witness to old palomino clouds in horsetail formation
said the sky's a sliced orange in a black cup on a dark shelf
cup broken and re-broken that by design reassembles itself

and is it not most peaceful when night is so gently struck
like the baritone ringings of soft Kyoto temple bells
or the gentle alarm calls of red wings in the marsh
how sweetly they glance up at the swelling red planet mars

whoever said of the waving limbs of the weaving trees
an elegant ballet early starlight and dusk the stage well set
an unflagging ever-unpredictable stubbornness means more
than our opening of the book of interplanetary dreams

whoever told of the darkest darkness of the moon

that she was the last bird in an ancient aviary shuttle
defying the plucked grouse of rust senility and old age
governor of all end games ruler of every small fire's rage

against the great empty

against the great empty that engulfs us all
sparrow wren and thrush still build their wattle nests

and forever do their very feathered best
to ensure the forever forward moving All

and sunny fields and glades on summer mornings
still ring strong and echo glad with their joyful calls

green dragonfly

how just in the last days of august
a surprise of pears on gnarled pear tree
continue to ripen as they must
how on the slate-gray cobblestone
a lone dragonfly length of a thumb
four wings clear as old leaded glass
green new-pear green in summer trusts

old wheelbarrow

old wheelbarrow empty
save the falling snow
nothing to do
nowhere to go

kabuki blue

in the kabuki blue drama of night
when behind his glowing scene
The Stage Manager of sun's descent
mutes light's curtain to reveal the cast entire
the black hills topped by naked trees
on horizon their silhouettes laser-cut
the already-risen enchantress moon
huntress all in white enters stage right
considers her face in lake's mirror
the stars made weak by her lunar parlor
the bored court-jester clouds look down
on owl fox coyote on their silent hunts

a quiet play where almost nothing happens
or almost everything once written will
shrill of rabbit cry in talons of owl
vole snatched from snow tunnel by fox
deer sleep under arbors of white pine

no words spoken just one coyote's howl
all players thrust on stage yet again
must answer the prayers of constellations
rhyme the same rhymes night after night
as Diana draws her bow high above them
diadem of a crescent moon in her crown
all things do aspire to the condition of fire

occupation: housefly

we don't seem to draw the same vicious ire
as mr. roach who explodes in cartoon grenades
in fire storms of doom blown to smithereens
shrieking "RAID!" that mr. roach a total ponce
more intelligent we flies live to regurgitate
our meals for a second course just like cows
methodically less dramatically chew their cud
half-digested tasting better twice than once

our resume is scurrilous and infinitely replayed
no shame being born to lay eggs on the dead
our maggots proudly earning all the rotten parts
which is from time begun how we've survived
we flourish in early spring when do pardon us
your screen-less windows invite our tribe inside
for a bit of sweet a crumb or splash of bacon grease
best yet we breed twenty for every one you slay

firefly

head red as the tie of a diplomat
back maroon and black as a carnival

barker's striped jacket at a country fair
being a beetle doesn't take away the glory
of your cool light on lilting wing at night

you only have two months to mate and breed
your children a year from egg to larvae
wait charismatic under rotting logs and leaves
your light yellow to yellow green to ghostly white
bright toys enlivening sultry summer nights

disdaining flight and mid-air conjunctions
your mate waits eagerly in the shadows
on branches and leaves to meet your destiny
you fly upwind following her perfumed trail
signaling on and off phosphorescent

an ancient tribe's code of an ancient tenor

lampyridae (lamp-PIR-i-day) *lampyridae*
like lamplighters of old you bring true fire
you inspire your friends to live with your joy
you small flashing Courier of Forever

A FINGER POINTING TO THE MOON: August 31, 2019 - May 22, 2021

old wooden milk box

i miss my milkman delivery days
and the clip clop of his horse
leaving full bottles neatly at each door
the clink of empties on the milk cart floor
now that i am no longer

now i have another role
a quaint and faded thing to neatly hold
splits of kindling cleanly chopped
my frame a beggar's wood compared
to royal maple cherry hickory beech and oak

soon-to-be-burned reborn into warmth
my only hope in my next time around
will be to match their joyous conflagrations
once rust and rot soon take their toll
when then again i'll be no longer?

the paw

calm cairn of field stone
was guardian to his remembrance
hovel half sheltering what once was him
from each season's knives and shovels
indifferent their elemental inconsideration
indifferent to us and what was left of him

when the violation of it dawned
it first appeared a broken twig
then one mummy of a desiccate paw
fractured at first joint of wrist
dried muscle rawhide strip clinging
to bone paw pads shrunk yet still intact

clawed out from under tomb of stones
by instinct of some starving raider
what framed it was a sense of sacrilege
as if Nature chose to swear in the fact
prove to jurors the horrors hidden there
as a Virtuoso rehearses a favored hymn

beauty & love

beauty
is love

a shadow at first glance
a horse at the end
of a curved black path
sun day or no-sun day

love is
beauty

the moon

the moon the moon
a brown sugar cube
on a bright silver spoon
in the coffee cup of night
a coffee-light-cream cartoon

record buck

a shotgun shot rang out
gut-punched the deer midleap
and startled by the sound
a covey of mountain quail
exploded from the underbrush

a fifteen-point record buck
dead before he hit the ground
his eyes still open halos of blood
in the snow around its head
his one and only crown

in no rush to confirm his kill
the old hunter all in camo
takes his sweet time climbing down
from his well-built hidden blind
in his rifle loads another round

cheep chirp

cheep cheep chirp chirp
never know'd a bird to burp

epitaph for all cats

i was a good cat
taught them all how to obey
come go feed me play

the landscape of the face

the landscape of the face
as in portraits of the land
always leaves a truthful trace
and a most important AND...
memories in skin un-erased

geese early november

to see them hurtling southbound
to hear their hundreds in ragged V's
their loud in-flight encouragements
their winged chorus of exhortations
each heartening their flock on and on
loudest on a quiet dull gray day
their black formations' ragged lettering
looking down on eons of us

who at season's end looking up
in awe of their air-bound genius
seasons on seasons on centuries
guided by some cyclic appetite
can fail to feel a pilgrim kinship
with all that squirm crawl walk swim or fly
a gratitude for each soul that survives
a humbly chiseled *gracias*

when my cat rolls over

when my cat rolls over
and stretches his tiger paws out

chocolate and black
on his ample Persian back

belly-up belly the color of ashes
as the Italians precisely say

mi souvien l'eterno

in this for him a simple act
I suspect he knows how

when I say "Oh!"
his Italianate simplicity

gives me a moment of eternity
in him in his oceanic eyes

mi souvien l'eterno -for Andy

medusa in autumn

her venomous snaking
her branches' power now exposed
in the shedding of her mask of green
which bleeds out in blood-rust reds
orange-yellows scarlets and fool's golds
she freezes all living as they fall
from her paralyzing gaze
into an open october grave
of decomposing earth and stone

monarch

don't cry don't worry butterfly
when cold autumn winds start to blow
just because it's time for you to go
south on the wing thousands of miles

few know how skillfully you fly
when you land all flowers will smile
colors aglow you'll understand why
you'll live and shine a monarch king

talking to myself

move these black socks here
to a more organized there for laundry
search for that vagrant felt-tipped pen
realize it can't help you think or write
scoop out poop from the cat litter
listen to the house sparrows twitter
better yet go to Youtube find Avro Par
think about the true meanings
of cats poetry laundry and art
chop onions for tonight's dinner

consider the Catholic definition of sin
all these things heading entropically
headlong perhaps to some fickle garbage bin
dice some sweet pickles for the tuna salad
answer the impudent unrelenting phone
order Marie Howe's *Magdalene*
try to keep top of mind
the hackneyed well-worn wisdom
that perhaps the tiniest glimmer
into the scrim you've been given

might just be the exploding ticket
that will take you through the end of time
remember to try and remember

that change doesn't hurt half as badly
as always stubbornly trying to resist
pray for a friend whose cancerous cyst
right now is being cut out of his jaw
stop over thinking take a few deep breaths
all that's left continue to savor
how luck and chance two golden fish
have been mostly kind still are so far

ocean sunrise day ten

the sun has serious intentions
first rays shy as mourning doves
dye the waves from gray to blue
as waking birds queue up to sing
and clouds flock white above

sunlight peeks under each closed door
as the glorious All-Inspiring
begins to stir once more
rabble rouser of reinventions
flaming engine of the new

ant at sunrise

the shadow of the ant
on the rim of the white kitchen sink
says that things go on and on
proceed move ahead quite quietly
the rippling path of moonlight
on unwalkable atlantic waters
night's horizons reaching out

the hide and seek of speeding stars
the ever-optimistic nomad clouds
the climb and bloom of morning glories
the banalities of small shore birds
their delicate tracks erased
by pink-pearl eraser of high tides
insist this just might be the miracle

toes in the sand

white gulls flying high
low tide arrives

as each wave dies
new ones come alive

our toes in the sand
our own promised land

with a kiss

how we've grown old
my dear one
lifelong muse

rub sleep away
and welcome the day
the new sun's gold

this i offer
always true to you
our life together

your eyes still blue
well knowing
good things come in twos

watching a fire

the way the eager flames lick
the dry and seasoned wood
cut to fit the hearth's dimensions

it's not difficult to see in nature
there's no such thing as half intentions
her crackling flames snap and spark

fly up the ever-drawing funnel
of the all-creative all-destroying flue
hard burning oak and cedar not immune

to the flares of fragrant memories
the hypnotic blaze of half remembering
the fading shapes of long lost faces

in an all-consuming living conflagration
which leads to white-hot pulsing coals
warm cinders ashes then an all-forgiving cold

the homicidal snowman

he's got miner's coal for buttons
no pants so needs no belts
winter comes he's on attack
in one twig hand he holds an ax

the other holds a broom-handle spear
so come winter watch your back
let's hope that fiery candle
the winter-sun crime stopper melts

his frozen zombie carrot nose
let's hope the homicidal snowman
thinks twice about coming back
next time there's killer snows

hope he thinks twice about attack
and fearless we go snow after snow

possum suicides

when cruel winter rises to 65 Fahrenheit
possums not too bright try as they might
bumble out of their burrows late at night
thinking strolling around is all right
and frolicking with their pals is ok
until the high beams made them blind
perplexed now no place to play

paralyzed now no place to hide
brains too small their judgments blurred
on cold roads they sleep the big sleep
tongues and curlicue tails made still
wish they had listened to the poet's words
and instead had chosen to "Abide! Abide!"
at the end where was *their* Good Shepherd?

ducks after downpours

after flush rains it's common knowledge
that ducks are bewitched by plush puddles
frantic in their wire pens and cages
beguiled brains and beaks all a muddle
web feet greedy for a new day paddle

finally freed they make like feathered bees
for dewy just-born lakes all it takes
to make them happy as the cartoon Daffy
hind ends twitching with merry shakes
for this they don't need to go to college

the pumpkin

the pumpkin
that once sat proud
on our highest step
autumn orange
lit from within
beacon eyes and teeth
avatar of eerie nights
its bright toothy grin

outlived tricks and treats
outlived October's leaves
outlived the harvest moon

this ghost of Halloween
braved winter snows and sleet
late February soon will be
but a fallow memory
a waxen flattened sack
of mold and slimy seeds
its otherworldly skin
a sickly burst balloon
no turning back
no difference now
between its out and in

january

the zipper tracks
of the snowy plover
swept away made older
by the janitor waves

the disappearing years
the ocean's tears
few things colder
come back come back