

BROOK NO TITLE
August 2012 - May 2015



Gregory J. Furman

the expansion and contraction of time

did I take those white towels out of the dryer
and hang them on the back of the bathroom
door i don't remember the 'done' buzzer
ringing but have a tactile memory of putting
them on the peg or taking them off the floor
after my shower what was that last dream
overlooking a curve of beach out to the far
horizon and below there were schools of
large black fish predatory in the tide flow
and heart pounding feeling desperate and late
and needing to complete what was the task
and where is my other shoe and sock

the next morning we were talking about our lunch yesterday's
lunch we knew the restaurant but neither could remember
what either had ordered the day before the plane an on-time
landing at laguardia an entire week in algonguin sound of
waves and wind and ravens yet today thinking about landing
and that white puff of smoke of rubber burning as the tires hit
the tarmac seems as far away as our week in the wild and the
glass of water once full now empty on my desk or seeing two
red canoes on the far shore against a strong wind random gusts
painting white caps on the waves

ALGONQUIN 2012 Monday

August 20 2012

rain on open land vast
empty algonquin's cup
we drinking joy up

the white bird far shore is the
whitest white of all clouds
fly through sky's door the
fact of fire five small cedar
logs burning flames never
tire

cut wood and kindling birch
bark a kind of currency the
kind one can burn

sun rising through pines camp
fire smoke is roiling pipelines
of sun beams

the black oven mitt on the
log waiting to serve black
pot waiting too

towel and two socks white as
birds fly on clothesline not as
free as feathered cousins

campsite floor alive with small
creatures – spiders ants earth their
topography

morning light tip toes over
pine needles mushrooms
disturbing nothing

the fire crackles throws off small
sparks that vanish
as a briefly held wish

grass and bushes wave
semaphores bright with glee their
own private wheeeee!

white gull on green span of
old growth pine and cedar
on lake's blue canvas

a projection screen white
towel holds silhouettes of
pine branches and cones
silence its own sound
shattered like a breaking
glass by gulls and ravens

the red squirrel's chatter
apoplectic he sounds off muttering
he leaves

a bass at dusk leaps subsiding
rings a necklace strung by
setting sun

two canoes back lit by
sun two dimensional
black paper cutouts

distant voices soft paddles
knock on canoes' hulls then
the blue canoe

the waves acquire with the new
wind caps of white like polo
players

great gray clouds gather their
determined flotillas
obey winds' commands

the lone oven mitt on the
old cedar log bench
dreams of hot pot lids

sitting in the sun dan
reading *Infinite Jest*
i read nabokov

the loons flown off now having
fished the nearby bay
the ants not concerned

dragonfly hovers striped
blue and ultramarine
skimming the gnat clouds
only a few sounds flies
buzzing wind in the trees
we turn good books' pages

light changes so fast that
within a single day
no place is the same

the cloud of knowing is
rendered deaf dumb and blind
by algonquin's Mind

the little zephyrs winds' children
tease lake's surface
skipping round and round

each pine needle lit some
much brighter than others
people on the beach

just past noon loons breasts white
on blue of bay
they dive fish and play

two pine siskins – quick! female
and her hungry chick
mom chatters chick trails

three canoes far bay one
yellow one green slip by
gone like two books read

loons still patrolling hunting
down small silver fish
wings swifter than fins

canoe shoes drying full sun
on granite outcrops
silently sleeping

carrots on tin plate green beans
in seal-and-lock bag algonquin
caesars
ants on mocassins obsidian
gullivers mandibles alert

the pace of canoes the
pace of respiration
aspire inspire

cedar and pine married in
the campfire's burning

smoke their memories

as diamonds cut glass winds
engrave the lake's surface
fine intaglio

it all goes dove gray austere
pilgrim clouds pass by
mystical journey

mysterioso like most
beautiful women
stunning troves of charm

when the wind dies down the
song of waters near shore
can be heard again

the socks on the line are
resigned to their drying
not yearning for feet

Tuesday August 21 2012

the great blue heron without
a single wing pulse
glides smooth over bay

a sweet luxury instant
apple-cinnamon
oatmeal with a fork

very first cast – bass! rockets
off hangs up on stump
then his victory leap

on the second day wood
so dry instant fire
on first mostly smoke

canoe shoes rest on rocks where
we left them
like cats sleeping

the pileated his domain
his cry his cry
as morning drifts by

mink near granite shelf follows
us along his shore
gives a goofy grin

the birds more active the bass
splashing just off shore
alto and base lines

the arms of white pines reach up
to touch clouds but can't
clouds reach down to lake

clouds fire trees birds sun day
reflects upon itself
each reflecting each

voices far far off soft
echoes off umber hills
like dreams remembered

the hours the day like
a rodent at night
on a granary floor

red squirrel always mad vituperates
and mutters
swears at his brothers

eyes up from the page whatever
the document
rain! head for the tent

sudden squall sets in take
the towels off the line
pour a glass of wine

back in our chairs rain blows by
wind grows stronger

cut more fire wood

cedar you are god the
god of all fire wood
god of all fine scents

the nuthatches sweep tweep
tweep tweep for goodbyes
to a brief shower

the sun falls so softly the
light is like a whisper
of light on silver

waves laugh and chuckle they
never lose their fine joy
coming and going

the ax falls with heart with
the heart of the striker
the struck wood's heart halved

a bee buzzes by buzzes
buzzes buzzes by
buzzing off he flies

tiny black snake yellow ring
cadmium around his neck slim as a
strand of black wool below his
patent-leather head the rest of him
matt black making his way from
lake to dark across the rusty bed of
pine needles circling back pausing
only to inspect dan's matt black
kodiaks

black snake yellow ring around his neck below
the glossy helmet of his diamond head slim as
a strand of tapered wool
the rest of him dusty black the living
S of him snaking his way over the
bed of rust pine needles into the
dark stand of cedars circling back
pausing only to inspect dan's matt-

black kodiaks and then off on his
silent slither

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 and clonks 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
take off 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

Wednesday August 22 2012

spoon versus fork

a spoon
is just a fork without tines

when it comes to soups
and fancy sauces

i am so jealous
the fork whines

spoons do shine they
are my bosses

well past midnight
awakened by shouts
help! Emergency! again
a call and whistle
adrenalin surge

they have a cheap map dan
shows the best portage out
scary interlude

no moon total dark drifting
off to sleep
friend fell concussion

far far far from help true
vulnerability
night and distance conspire

dan's up and moving at shoreline
talking they're lost with long trek
to go 'till day break then
helicopter? float plane? darkness
time waiting

with sunrise a plane heading
to three mile lake
is our alarm clock

wrist shoulder aching too
much portaging paddling
works against good sleep

hard not to think of the
risk when just two of us
if something goes wrong

somehow the wind soothes the
lake flowing on becalms
fears for the future

like a well-schooled guide the
white towel on the clothesline
says do not live in fear

now the morning sun fools dark
and night have vanished
daylight rules the park

shadows of branches sunlight
dance dapples shines
gentlest mellowness

chemical orange Tang! How
could we forget you
and your friend - vodka

birch bark oh birch bark
you white pyromaniac chief
starter fire

chipmunk ignores us crunchy
peanut butter too pride? sees
it as goo?

one of the great joys of wilderness is
there that there is no difference
between an open and a closed door
and dog-like one can walk
four steps from living room
to fire side and pee on the
'living room floor'
no need for any repentance

to another site will there
be a place for us
camper neurosis

thoughts of the future no
present but present tense
no excuse just now

mind too far ahead causes head
to swarm like bees
better here buzz now

the mind ricochets off
walls of imagining
can banish all fears

voice silencing monkey
mind's din
special discipline

i toast our own blood true
singing of it in our veins
those loved now
those loved too-long gone

Thursday August 23 2012

red squirrel jays wake us cormorants
and loons take sky
rush of wind in trees

good defecations these
waters the beavers loo
their planned extrusions

fat brown boletus overnight
gift of the rains
algonquin's larder

five hundred meters more sweat
hill of gethsemane thinking of
basho

no mosquitoes thanks be to
whoever banished them
don't miss their high whines

chipmunk's piercing 'cheep!' high
pitched warning striped-fur chirp bird
call in fur suit

sweat and steep of trail soaked
at end of portage
lake's wide open blue

the carpenter ants curious
smell acrylics
insect art goers

Friday August 24 2012

high-pitched guttural night
heron patrols shore line to
chorus of crickets

manitou's surface shattered
into shards of light each
holds a crescent moon

carpet of diamonds that
grows longer and wider
culprits – moon and winds

even with crescent moon
ursus scorpio muted exit
moon stars blaze

one gull in lake's mirror long
trail of the blue canoe
white V on blue board

dragonfly hour working the
flats and pine tops
hungry for fat gnats

every soul worries lake so
quiet you can hear

your own nerves fine whine

only the dimples of small
fry taking mayflies
and one loudmouthed camper

a mackerel sky sun casting
beams of light down
on faraway hills

the night's first cricket beginning
his shift early
then changes his mind

the furious bees pop
silence's balloon
then they disappear

this a cathedral great vaults
reach up to the stars
there are no priests here

in all the years here never
a more quiet day
hear the dragonfly's wings

mosquito decoy i'm on the
front line downwind
they just bite and whine

denial soon and soon as the
september moon rose red in the
sky as blood on a file the crickets
all said she's a liar she's a liar but
they were all in denial in denial of
cold october in denial of her
harvest coming in cold and soon
in denial of frosts and winter's bed
on the horizon on the horizon in a
while in a while coming in cold
and soon as the september moon
red in the sky

as blood on a file the
crickets all said coming
in cold and soon
soon and soon

over and over again
and again again
jail then escape

loss and victory one and
the very same thing
a bit gold and shit

the same old vessel new
waters pouring through
glass empty then full glass
full then empty

waking and dreaming the
stories always different
and somehow the same

the so observant white moon
shines its metal blue light
those few who see swoon

crickets silver tones their
ebbing flowing chorals
fills small cathedrals

rise up each morning moon
replaced by sun crickets
silent on the run bird
songs in a race
to greet the new day

crickets sing rise up up
rise up rise up they sing
up rise up rise up

he's a memory now
just a memory now
never to return

coyotes howling their
crazy wild crying
mirroring our souls

the nights they rise up hope flies
owl like on night's breeze cool
bouquet of earth

it's all it was

it's all it was it was just a sneeze to be
expelled particulate as dust mote or
fluffs of fuzz if you feel weak in the
knees a bit of a buzz there's real
reason just another day in just another
season please we pray before being
nosed out exploded to the great
beyond tweaked here's to – achool! -
me and you as fleets of drying drops
of dew

it's all it was it was just a sneeze not
quite cracked up stacked up for all it
was meant to be or dreams that might
have been like a black and yellow
bumble bee in flight defying and
redefining gravity as knowing better
we each say it'll be ok still
is it not grand to be to be

about painting

the beauty of painting
is always making one's
self over never crazy
about ever repeating or
longing for all those
yesterdays when one
can only see what's
hazy tip of mind and
maybe be a bit happy
that another sees the
beauty you see

for it is never going to
be that painting again
whether sky blue or rain
never the same river in
the same son never the
same sun in the same
river before you for you
for wanda - on first sale of 'feathers

why i hate styrofoam peanuts

peanuts' less crunchy salty analog they
ridiculous resemble them least unlike the real
ones on them no squirrel or mouse can feast
their ghostly plastic smell is odious faint but
worse than wet and skunky dogs when rubbed
the squeak they make is hideous you wish the
chemists that invented them had been a lot
less studious they static-cling to our skirts and
pants like giant stubborn albino ants they
make us nutz on windy days when as you
finally send them to hell packing for all their
environmental sins damned as the chintziest
form of bric-a-brac to the gehenna of the
trash outside bin four or five always gust
away and you wind up chasing them down the
street when you're tired old and gray
and mottled as a toad

leaves and tears plodding
through a long dank tunnel of
mushroom oak and tannin my socks
and shoes are soaking as i walk
through leaves and tears when i try
to stop counting them i could not
cut through the knots the gouts
that are known to all as the song of
swifting years
the melancholy funnel of fall

the safe and wile e. coyote is it a
consolation that so many things are done and so

many yet to hatch? not really rarely yes that the
dun caddis that has been cast perfectly near the
quiet banks of dragon river floats fine readied
to catch

is this a goad to some greater goal or
some mixed-up invented notion an
instinct that will always be bitter sweet a
few paw prints in the sandy mud
of some mysterious creation

that smells trouble starves and begs rest or
just scrambles blind from den to dusk in
the ever fickle weather no matter what
cell mate celebrant of the chum of chance
wanders around the wondering now done

ideas like mouse tribes scurry in november
surging from the cold outside to the
shelter warmth of within somehow
knowing or not traps or no traps
the souls' migrations must continue

like so many surprise visitations - a
black safe dropping from the sky that
WHAM! flattens wile e. coyote and
morning star he un-hurt peeps out
from under the joke and the cartoon rolls on

this ever-present hunger is like aging
the always same but each day different
with some calm grand thing central
that important part apart a breath that
is all taken as it takes all in

as in our dreams reunited with our fathers
mothers and all the old ones from afar
together we struggle to transcribe translate the
stubborn rune to find the illusive key
that will end all suffering and unlock death

cat and catalpa leaf

the cat heard the single dry catalpa leaf tumble
down branch to branch down to earth and the

wish of the breeze hushing the trees and if not
the last one of the last and final trills of the
red-wing's call small feathered thrill
something so gentle around and within it all
though a kind of death a kind of relief the cat
needing neither dogma nor belief

bubble-wrap

bubble-wrap
is air-filled crap

tolstoy's answer

live in the needs of the day find
forgetfulness in work
in your deepest dreams of life

and if this no longer plays in
night's tide-sweep
find health find wealth

a new energy a new way float
deep rest deep
in stronger reefs of sleep

black mirror

the river is a black mirror its
frame fall's grandeur
our world shouts pay attention

crow flying so close to river surface a
hundred yards out from shore
in disbelief the river shudders

at his dark reflection crow's
bas-relief
this 'either' this 'or'

now

let the rod go to war let
the brush do the work
lead the way and breathe
my friends and sisters
sons and daughters

mothers fathers fellow drifters

narcissus mystery
that 'me'
to me

i stare in wonder reflecting
that other self

in the water's mirror
who shimmering elf

stares fondly
back at me

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 and we the most soul-less of
fate's toys
will always be the last to laugh

the conductor

i used to work at sears
uncles ran elevators
standing standing our
varicose veins
now my life is trains

proofreader

i believe in tears i read
the saddest novels
dread the passing years

old ballerina

once i leapt swan like making
them think i could fly now i
teach and cry

the surgeon

i am the scalpel master sometimes
my deepest cuts heal sometimes
they shriek
sometimes disaster

the philosopher

to be not to be why oh why
oh why oh why do we live
and die

the chef cut chop dice
mince slice colors textures
smells all nice
dark greens pastas rice

the priest i
absolve all men of
all infamy and sin
that's the business i'm in

history

one tile in a million miles of tiled mosaic
outside and below a line of topiary
trimmed hedge a single nun in a habit of
blue and cream chaste madonna walks
slowly down the cobble drive past a
single fountain the waters singing the
hymn of ages of all waters gracing
sacred places echo in the cloisters
cunniculum the roman air reborn and
baptizing the vatican and the sight and
then mirabile visu the scent of burning
umbrella pine

thanksgiving on christmas

deo gratias for soft hair on the bellies of
beasts we love for each dust mote roiling

and rolling moonlight on the tooth of the
cat blood light on glint of saber's edge the
eyes gluttonous and imperious
of the pope and his court at table after eleven
centuries of gilding embroidering carving
burnishing living chiseling on rarest stone through
an open window admitting roman flies who fly
cultured through the vatican halls on the tide of
fresh air's nuance in one bright shaft of morning
sun for the right number of fingers that fit the gift
of a well-knit woolen glove for the head and
matching hat that go with that for a whisker on the
nose of your cat or dog for a preying tick on the
bark of a log for political prisoners' hopes alive and
echoing in the suffocating cells of their screams for
all actors staged miniatures authors' toys against
culture's always-falling curtain for those distraught
confused certain or uncertain for our eyes and all
we see or refuse to see for all we've been and try to
be for all our travels right or wrong route for all
things lost for all things found for all geometries
triangle rectangle square or round for birds fishes
dogs cats turtles boys and girls for every bubble in
the flute of champagne for fog wind snow sleet ice
heat cold and rain for each letter in each love note
for every lover's complaint for every cantor singing
the billionth chant for all the faithful and their
faithful rant for every dream of the stubborn
dreamer told by the world that one can't for saying
it plain with no 'modern' irony for summer winter
spring and fall for each grain of sand on the beach
of the all for the sun the moon the sky the stars for
clouds and oceans lakes rivers rocks and trees and
all things magnetic sympathetic and planetary for
our trying to keep our feet on the ground for every
sinner every saint for you and me

deo gratias

starving artist's boast i wake
up raving dust on my tongue
shaking sad ache in one sad lung the
one on the side of my heart in all
i've tried and all i've sung knowing
in my art i've never lied

the locomotive death

the locomotive death do you hear its
roar its call inevitable as the sun does
rise will flatten each of us in our turn
like copper pennies flattened on steel
rails dumb and wise rocks to gravel to
crushed stone fine for a moment fine
fine fine like cedar in a hearth glad to
burn the only reason to be joyous as we
breathe each breath is to know we are
not the first none alone in all of time
one consolation in our obliteration of
our little self and wrong imaginations
for the we that are religious for the we
that know eternity in song for the most
optimistic mystics for those who say it
plain no irony for those faithless
hoping a ray of light one slim reason to
be joyous is the notion that we all
is it not pretty to think so who
knows who knows
as old spirituals go we all are
going home going home

no expectations and yet to
have a great dream
grasshopper has both

his chirp's urgency gives
no clue to size of bird
siskin in pine tree?

crows call from afar morning
dove roo-hoo-hooing who can
ask for more
fireflies so long gone that
planes on the horizon
flashing remind us

chitinous cellos colorless
in pitch of night
their bows a thunder

insect' night chorales carnival
ebbing flowing
acoustic flowers

great blue herons

sometimes at rivers edge they
stand in the gray light like ebony
african sculptures and startled by
the train its roar of iron on iron
rail they rise up a magnificence
some great all-embracing psalm
and the still river though very still
in its deepest current flow in
seeing them finds its truest self
and reason to rejoice

a few more imaginary birds

the inebriate link warbler the
crumpet cassowary the pop-eyed
pirate pipit the rectilinear sludge
sparrow the ovation osprey the
silver cesna creeper the brisket bee
walloper the pugnacious pulpit
peeper the octopus oriole the
delirious dungeon darter the juicy
fruit junco the ebony-plated
evangelist the anal retentive auk
the avuncular antagonistic tick eater
the monk dunker the toenail turkey
the synergy wander blotter the
willow weeping commodore the
vast and massive stasis
the great juice mocker the
undergraduate exam slammer the
Belgian beer burble the pestilential
poke pewee the intransigent ochre
doubt the sullied checklist hen the
chipmunk cuckoo the nefarious
nestling nougat finch the never-say-
never grouse the titillating titanic
dove the chalkboard chicken the
ruminating rug rooster the teal-
winged testosterone tit mouse the
chirpy lurcher the tweed twist swan

the gregarious gronk swan the
coronary clock auk the sedulous ornk
oinksters's ostrich sir Adrian
Toodaloo's trumpet blaster
the shy don't do woo woo

somewhere a vacuum cleaner

somewhere a vacuum cleaner is
putting its entire soul into
a whining determined whir

picking up the evidence in its
electric-fire clean-up dance

the shards of a broken clay pot
or was it his-or-hers pieces of
a broken heart

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 colleague anaselfa dressuppe
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 and missing my
father so long gone in our bathroom where he fell
the floor white with inch-wide octagonal tiles while
sitting on the toilet nothing to read if you stared eyes
slightly askew hard enough 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
vegas 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 or a nation's heart withstand given the
heart's need to love and dream and can one 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 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 bulls-eye 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
at 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 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

secret of all great art

don't dally we are all on
fire all candles burning
know it or not so just
begin

with one miserable one
wonderful thing with
something firm suspect
all things hollow start
with one small thing put
it down

get it down that
glimpse into what
take a hard heart to it
a hard head to it
discard the dross
and build on that

postcard

one november afternoon among all the 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 maples red as wine

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

bought in algonquin and inserted as a bookmark into jorge luis borges' 'on mysticism' by chance i opened to his essay 'on salvation by deeds' which ends "...because of haiku the human race was saved."

and i remembered once like yesterday in algonquin a real bull moose looked at me and my nephew dan in a canoe less than ten feet away

in very much the same way as the one captured in the postcard looked at his photographer long ago

suddenly THEN this so-still world was ours again alone shining among all the shining worlds of all time

shining with mystery and awe among all the many moments of mystery and awe 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*

ANDY

His boogey men: vacuum cleaners, garbage trucks, the sound of aluminum foil new-torn from the roll.

In the end, the real boogey man, so I mistakenly thought, was his love of dried hydrangea flowers that were his doing in of him.

Like those pastel-colored (pale-pink, lime, lemon, orange or tangerine) shrimp-flavored , deep-fried, puffy, (air-inflated ?) bar snacks served in fancy hotels in Tokyo. Or so, anthropomorphizing, I imagined they tasted to him.

In his ardor for the dried blossoms, in the heat of his gourmand joy, I thought he gobbled a twig made sharp as he severed it with his incisors, lodged first in the back of his throat then with his every yacking try to expel it, each futile heave driving it further down, it riding down his throat deeper and deeper.

That was my theory as I woke to the sounds of his trying to vomit out the punishing invader. Three a.m. a week before Christmas eve. So loud and so beyond any hair ball retching the sound of him retching pulled me from deepest sleep to a darker dread.

Thinking, still half-awake, this thing would make him soon dead, I feared for him. Slowly past the esophagus into the intestine the sharp thing perforating many times down, causing the stomach acids to poison his blood, his bleeding system leaving him already dull-eyed, listless. It was his love of dry hydrangea flowers, I thought, that was his real boogey man.

Three a.m. Three a.m. I still relive it. Like an evil, reoccurring dream. From my sleep I heard what for him was the last of a series of heaves that left him shaking his palpitating chest cavity exhausted. No hairball-retch deeper, louder, more pathetic. I woke with this vision of him dead, went to the bathroom, saw him in the hall. There, not dead, but prone, limp, chin so flat to the floor that I thought maybe I was wrong, maybe he is dead. But his chest rising and falling breath by breath said, "Alive." I lifted his paw. He had huge paws even as a kitten. No resistance at all, falling back pressed, distressed with a heavy, soft thump to the floor.

Whatever IT was, the spell of it had ripped some core and vital thing out of him.

His usual searchlight-yellow eyes mere slits. Oddly, exhausted, not seeming to be in pain. Or, perhaps, just quietly enduring, accepting the pain like one drained by a great physical stress - a marathon or extremely hard and sapping toil, a slave whipped, drained from hard and unjust labor. I petted him. What normally would have evoked a soft, rumble purr was a timid wheeze. Droopily he struggled to his feet. Listlessly, slowly he followed me into the bedroom where he drank like a creature possessed from a porcelain bowl of fresh water. A desperate survivor of a desert crossing. Massive gulps. Each as vital as his every next breath. Deep draughts. Deeply lapping. Seeing him drink I falsely hoped, "Food poisoning from a can of cat food that was off. It will pass. First thing, well get him to the vets. They'll bring him back."

Knowing sleep was out I got back into bed. He finished drinking. Clawed up to join me. Strong enough for that. Rested his cabbage head on my shoulder, heart side, as he would many early mornings. This time, though, something in him limp, listless, failing, feeling final. In denial, I was playing make-believe, repeating a mantra-like series of thoughts, prayers even, that everything was going to be all right. Everything was going to be fine. The vet would give him something. He'd be fine.

But while thinking this, I knew otherwise. Not with the kind of knowing that you can say, even to your self, you know. Not with kind of knowing that makes you get up, get dressed drive breakneck at 3:30 a.m. 80 mph to the emergency vets half hour over the Kingston bridge for help. Thinking, thinking it would be all right. He was calm. Not in pain. He'd be ok by first light. Such was my hope.

LOOKING BACK I

The first sight of this starving black kitten lead to love. He was a silhouette, a palm-in-the-hand-full, all night-black, negative space with blazing gold-to-copper, moon-yellow eyes, always, as if by some good fate, great destiny; round lasers beaming out from his dark

body - as a flashlight from deep within a stack of cordwood in the woodshed or from a stone wall at dusk or dawn at the far end of the lawn or from the tall field grass late at night peering through in the crescent moon light. He was eyes, all eyes, only eyes.

Beacons or headlights and he, the shy owner of them. If you really looked hard, even through binoculars, you would see the cutout of the scrawniest aspiration of a cat you could imagine. Take a Minton (circa 1798) china bone white saucer, put him on it and he had room for a saucer mate. He was even smaller than he appeared. An illusion created by a great deal of hair. Somewhere, way back when, there was a happy mingling of Persian, Angora or Maine Coon ancestry. If he was a pound and a quarter, which he was at eight weeks, shaved he would have lost a quarter pound. The cat part, the skin and bones part, came to a pound soaking wet. The fur part wet one fourth of him.

His chest looked like it had been lightly dusted with cinnamon and his belly and rump and the underside of his tail like he'd sat in a burned out campfire, all ash gray. He was mostly black. But "black" doesn't really do his pallet of blacks justice. He was a blend of coal, ebony black, dark mahogany and chestnut just before it goes to dark-stained oak, pitch, tar or deepest night.

This had the mystifying effect of making him mostly invisible day or night. He was totally un-photogenic, near impossible to capture.

Looking at a photo of him, you had to already know it was a cat because he was a phantom, as a kitten all eyes, skin and bones. All negative. Someone had to say to you, "What do you think of that cat?"

And then you would say, "Oh, yes, it's a cat."

No matter the backdrop, every photo revealed a tiny black silhouette and this blazing dominance of two transcendent, burning eyes.

Even as a starveling, when it was questionable as to whether he and his bony band of refugees had been weaned, he had, despite his lack of size, a frame that promised, with proper care and grub, the makings of a massive cat.

His paws as a kitten large as many full-grown cats'.

Panther-like, his nose was black as a tiny, patent leather Chanel alligator purse. In the very brightest of lights it was impossible to discern even the hint of an expression, his face being the closest to true black. His aura was not a tiny cat's, but a tiny, baby gorilla's. He moved with that same slow sweetness of gorillas in the mist in those Jane Goodall documentaries.

Beneath his coat of thick angora fur, his skin hung on his scrawny frame like a bad suit on a once-large man gone suddenly sick and thin. His lower lip on his right side was nearly hairless giving his face a one-sided look. He seemed to be just slightly smirking, not arrogantly, just humbly, bullied by but ok with life's absurdities, or, as if he was always amazed at whatever was occurring around him, his mouth comically mouthing a silent,

“Oh, OK. Oh, OK.”

Reading his epic eyes was another story. Their degree of dilation was the true clue to what he might be feeling. Wider for relaxed. Narrow and harder for scared or scrutinizing. He was by nature so calm that his placidity might be mistaken for stupor, or worse, a mild, pre-catatonic state. He was mainly unperturbed, unflappable, rightly slow to get too worked up about anything. but also quietly undaunted and intensely curious.

Of the original four he was the bravest, the most able to trust, the most interested in and the least threatened by anything new. He was always the leader, always the first. When they migrated from the open fields to an abandoned woodchuck den to the nooks and crannies an old stone wall, he was the one who lead them. He was the one to stand watch; courageous, even as a kitten, the last to take cover.

He was the first to rush to food or to respond to a friendly call. He dominated the food plate. The other two – the fourth, sadly, never returning – deferred to him and quietly waited until he began to eat, then joined him before it was all gone. He was such a fast eater that the best comparison for his speed and efficiency of ingestion was a midget industrial vacuum cleaner, the kind that lifts bowling balls sucks up lug nuts like dust bunnies.

His enthusiasm for food was limitless. There was nothing from kitty kibble to chicken soup gristle that he would reject.

LOOKING BACK II

How we met: As a kitten he was leading a motley crew of four lollygaggers out of the wilderness to our field, to us.

A gray and white one, two with white-bibs, white socks, rugby-stripped legs, and, as the Irish say, ‘HIMSELF.’ Andy.

Hard to say who was most startled.

When they saw me, like marines on Iwo Jima next to a live grenade, seeing me, they exploded, scattered instantly into the tall grass.

Later that day they regrouped. All but one. The gray and white one - never to be seen again. Lead by Andy, they took up residence in an abandoned woodchuck den at the base of an old maple not far from our house and three barns. Two female tabbies and Andy. Their heads popping up from the den at dawn and dusk like prairie dogs. They were beyond shy and cautious. We’d leave cat food at the den entrance and come back to find the ground licked clean looking like a well-polished riding boot. We kept feeding them.

When they outgrew the den, they moved to a cave-like space in the stone wall out back near what was once a chicken coop behind which ran a small stream within sight of our house. Half a football field away. When they outgrew the crevices in the stone wall, they found shelter in to our woodshed, part of an old hayloft and tractor barn, no more than thirty feet from our screened porch and our kitchen where we could watch their comings and goings from our window. There they'd ball up for warmth against the early spring cold in the spaces between the cut wood. At first light he'd be the first out to take kibble or canned food at edge of shed.

He was the first to be coaxed onto our screened porch. We'd leave the door to the vestibule open and the door to the porch open and move his food deeper into the porch every day. Finally, knowing the doors were open, escape assured, he'd eat, then nap, then sleep on the porch, then let us touch him. Then, at last, all doors closed, he moved in, a resident.

Much more timid, the other two kittens stayed in the woodshed only coming out to eat and drink. at dusk or dawn when the light was low and they less visible

Tutu and her never-named sister, were twins: snow white chests, paws white as ballet slippers, long snake-like tails, a daintiness, a quick-to-scare wariness that bordered on paranoia about anything new, unknown or unfamiliar, extreme timidity and faces, especially in the early weeks when their bodies had not yet caught up with their heads. They were bat-like or lemur-like. They had huge and comical ears. Cat Dumbos. They looked like they could fly with their ears. Tutu's ears were the closest to "normal." As if in compensation for her ears, she had an elegant Egyptian profile like those the ancient Egyptians worshipped like those carved life-size in basalt or in the hieroglyphs in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Egyptian wing.

Tutu was an exotic beauty. There was something Bengal, Burmese, Siamese, Abyssinian about her. She was part tabby of a rich mahogany brown-to-black, stripes of rusts and calico-orange on her flanks, tips of each paw snow white, and chest like a nun's bib.

Her front legs were striped brown, mahogany, tan, orderly as stripes on a rugby shirt. Her tail was banded like a Madagascar bandicoot with a tuft at the base. Her belly cloud white.

She had a pretty and intelligent face. She was "an easy read." Her expressions were as legible as the subtitles in foreign films. A strange sound and her subtitle face said. "Very worried."

Her eyes against her fur coat were perfectly matched as if planned by some sophisticated Parisian couturier. They were the most exquisite shade of foam green. A gemologist might say, "Opaline."

Everything about her was quick and nimble and feisty. Her expressions precisely calibrated to what was going on around her. Her ears were radar dishes collecting and deciphering a hostile world. When sorting out two conflicting, possibility threatening sounds at the same time, particularly comic. Then one ear would go back so far it looked like it might leave her head; the other doing the same but in the opposite direction. She'd get this funny look on her face, a cross between puzzled and short-circuited, as if stymied by the effort of sorting out which sound posed the greater threat to life and limb. In that moment of not knowing she'd look paralyzed, flummoxed, stunned, even goofy, the caption of her face reading, "Now what?"

For a while Tutu and her sister, would sit together at the top of the wood pile in the woodshed. Fifteen or twenty feet was their threshold. Get any closer and they'd disappear like two miniature woodchucks into the labyrinth of nooks and crannies created by the random stacking of four rows of split and cut cord wood, chest high on a tall man, in the shed. A week after they had migrated to the woodshed for safety, Tutu's sister broke her right leg just above the paw. It looked as if she had another joint so severe was the break

We knew she was badly injured. The woodpile her nemesis. She must have dislodged a heavy piece of cordwood which broke her leg. She held the injured limb up, limped about, the paw dangling down pathetically. She made a brave effort to keep on. But her fear of being captured by alien beings - us - was greater than her will to survive. Every time we tried to coax her out, however gently, she'd run back into what she thought was home and sanctuary that had, in fact, betrayed her. Then she disappeared.

Days later one of the lawn guys came to the door to tell us they had found a kitten's stiff, emaciated body in the grass. A raging infection killed her.

With the death of her sister, Tutu went from alert to hyper-alert, from already scared to paranoid scared, much more dependent on Andy, even more wary of everything. Now more than ever she was dependent on him. The minute he was out of sight investigating a cricket or exploring, she would become so visibly distraught that her piercing mews could be heard inside the house even with the doors and windows shut.

With Andy inside, so alone was she that she put her fear aside, held vigil for him outside the screened porch when the light was low early and late in the day. There, inconsolable, she would cry for him. We'd leave both doors open for her and place food just inside each, but she was too frightened to come inside. If we tried to approach her, she'd flee, sprint like a creature possessed for the wood shed. A sanctuary of dubious safety given the fate of her littermate.

We'd let Andy out to see her. Then it was old home week. A lick and head bumping festival of great and frenzied joy. Like long lost friends, they'd sprint, chase, leap and scamper themselves to exhaustion. And, tired out, lie side by side in the grass and sleep in the warm sun together.

At the end of each visitation it was clear that Andy had come to understand the comforts of home, good food and human company. No persuasion needed.

Weeks went by. Tutu outside still. Andy inside. And then it was like someone turned the 'I'm terrified' switch off in Tutu's timid cat brain.

One fine day, there she was – to our astonishment - on the recliner sleeping snug against Andy. After that she feared the outside more than she did being in. Tutu, named after her graceful, very feminine, ballerina-like daintiness in her demeanor and movement, joined us.

Toward summer's end Andy suddenly couldn't hold his food down. The vet said it was a blockage, a genetic deformation of the esophagus that manifests as some cats grow. The vet said we should put him down. We refused. Time and Andy proved us right. Whatever it was, the condition went away. Or he outgrew it.

After this there was no stopping him. Days, months, years flew by. He came into his own as a lion-pawed, cabbage-headed giant. The ailment did leave one scar. It affected his voice. He'd open his mouth to meow. Pause. Nothing would come out. Then the smallest, somewhat pathetic sound approximating in range and tone something between a peep and a squeak; the very best he could muster. Comical because the sound was so disproportionate to his size. Not unlike being in the presence of Mike Tyson. Then hearing him speak.

Only when he was going to the vets or preface to ridding himself of a hairball would Andy muster some volume. Then he'd open his mouth, lion like, great ivory canines, curled tongue pink as a peony and out would explode this plaintive, mournful belly yowl as if there was something deep inside him clawing its way out without the benefit to him of anesthetic.

Andy was dog-like. Most un-cat-like, he'd fetch and return until exhausted. He was particularly fond of little, tightly-rolled aluminum foil balls or slick magazine paper balls (never newspaper stock).

When Wanda and I were at either end of our kitchen table, he'd announce his entrance with his trademark squeak; do what we called the 'shaky tail.' We thought this was a sign of happy excitement. Then jump up on the table and visit Wanda. Then visit me. Then visit Wanda. Then jump down. Roll around like a black-robed Pulcinello. Clown rolling for our amusement, we were sure. Then jump up again. This time in his return visit repeating the same game with a funny nuance. He'd flip upside down and look at us upside down.

When Wanda got up to make a coffee or some toast, he'd immediately commandeer her chair and refuse to budge (the dead-weight technique) so that most times she'd wind up

sharing her chair. He always took the part of the chair closest to the window where he'd watch the birds and the squirrels at the birdfeeder or the wind in the trees or falling rain or snow.

Andy was fascinated by all bathroom doings and when you were in the bathroom you'd hear the soft thump of his big paws coming to visit and savor the exotic olfactory goings on.

REALITY

We were both drifting in the early morning light.

Andy isn't dying, spoke HOPE.

Counter to fearful me and my dull 'knowing.' Petting him, his wheeze gave rise in me not action but some powerful paralyzing waiting and hoping, fueled by unjust sadness and not knowing. And what.... The way one feels when a loved one is going to die and there's nothing you can do, nothing to be done but hope that the worse will not come.

But knowing it will.

He seemed relaxed. If not asleep, not in pain.

In the morning, to the vets, the vets, the vets.

I watched the dark outside grow lighter in the cold December room. Restless, dreaming I saw him gathering strength. My hopeful dreaming woke me but he woke first. Yacking.

No way to sleep. Showered. Brewed coffee.

He followed me downstairs. Then to office.

No choking now. No hacking. No retching. No obvious pain.

Would take no food. Drank again with a vengeance.

I hoped his thirst and drinking were good signs. Forgot

I had to be on the early train for the city.

The car picking me up at 7.a.m.

Meetings scheduled all day back to back.

No cancellations possible. Left Wanda a note.

"Andy's really sick. Serious. Needs vet soonest.

Love. Me."

Andy, dog-like, my premonitions aside, slowly followed me upstairs to my office, plopped down at my feet and facing me sitting at the computer, kept looking,

did not sleep, kept me company 'till
the car arrived.

Wanda was at the vets by 10 a.m. Vet said he was dehydrated. They would keep him hydrated, give him antibiotics and, when he stabilized, take x-rays. Turns out he didn't perk up x-rays taken anyway.

That day was a blur that meant nothing.

All I could think about was Andy.

Nothing to do. Nothing to be done. Worry. Wait.

Late that afternoon Wanda called to say that the x-rays showed something lodged in his upper intestinal track and that he would need an operation. They had to be sure he was strong enough for surgery.

Next morning for me was all meetings, at every break checking voice and emails. Early afternoon in a taxi on my way uptown, I saw Wanda called. Called her back, missed her, left message, called back and finally connected. SILENCE. I knew, even as we were on the silent line, that he was gone. Wanda's silence confirmed it. 'He's gone, isn't he,' I said. She couldn't speak. Then, "Yes. The obstruction."

Not surprised. But still shocked and, strangely, had even foreseen it. Stricken, I believe Andy knew too. That his staying with me as the dawn broke and near me in my office was his mute goodbye. Simply eloquent, knowing in some animal way that he was going back Home to that place we all come from never to return.

I loved that cat. Andy. Andy. That child's voice in all of us before we come to know our mother and father and we will die, are mortal, can die, will die. That child's voice saying, "Please, no! Mommy! Daddy!" That child's voice in me was the voice I was hearing.

It knocked the wind out of me. Deprived me of air. Like being kicked hard in the chest. Heart pierced by a javelin of grief.

Thinking how strange, the power of it, knowing he's just a cat.

Thinking, in the scheme of things, he's insignificant.

Next to nothing even. Yet understanding that grief can kill.

We figured him for twelve years old when he died.

Quietly, before the operation was needed, the vets said.

Early morning the day after Wanda brought him in.

I wanted to see him one last time.

They put him in in a plastic bag which was then wrapped in a white towel, then in a long Fedex box, the kind that might contain long-stemmed roses. Unwrapped and stretched out he looked like he just decided to take a nap in a Fedex box. He was freezer cold,

his mouth oddly askew, one part of his left paw shaved. Still, it was still somehow Andy. Petting him was like petting a cold fur throw covering a taxidermist's plaster cast of what Andy used to be.

Seeing him, eyes shut, still cold from the freezer where he had been kept, reminded me of Julie, my mother's cockatiel, who we buried at the base of our old pear tree which blossomed white every spring out front of our country home

Julie died one Thanksgiving day in my hands. Cockatiels' beaks need to be trimmed. Hers was threatening to pierce her chest and prevent her from eating. The vet said it was just like clipping a cat's claws as long as you don't get too close to the part that shows the blood line which was easy to see just past the curve of her beak.

I had her in my hand ready for what the vets said should be routine. She shuddered. Her head fell back and she was gone. My mother laughed. Actually laughed! To this day I can't understand her laughing. Her inability to comprehend love of and passion for animals. For her, love was reserved for humans only. That was that. For her, overly sentimental attachment to pets was spoiled, self-indulgent, eccentric, inappropriate, silly.

Wanda and I talked about the merits of showing Andy's body to Tutu, Tippy and Squeaky. Two friends, great lovers of animals, had different views. One said elephants mourn their dead So why not cats. Another told the story of two golden retrievers whose owners, after the male died, decided to show the female his body. Next day the female died. No medical cause. Grief.

Before taking Andy back to the vets we kept him on the screened porch overnight. As soon as we put him outside, our three cats came out, surprisingly together, sniffed the air, looked at birds and squirrels by the bird feeder, went to litter box, back inside, ignored Andy completely. And, twice more. Once that evening. Once in next morning. No reaction. Only time I've ever seen cats not intrigued by contents of a box. As if nothing was there.

In the days that followed our cats didn't behave differently No more or less yowling at night. No searching hidden corners. No skipping of meals or losing sleep. What did I expect? Animal grief?

So Andy had his final sleep over. Then back to the vets for cremation (\$192). I wondered if they guarantee it's your cat's ashes you get back. (They do.) But how could

you prove it? I had this vision, before we decided on cremation, of digging his grave under the old pear tree next to Julie's grave with our three cats watching to the chorus of local chickadees, jays, wrens, white-throated sparrow, crows and juncos all bearing winged witness to the proceedings.

After Andy died, it would hit me. In exactly the same way, days and years later, remembering my father (62) and mother (89), it still hits me. Manifest as a hard clutch in the chest, inability to breathe, inability to weep. Inability to block tears in private or public. Surprised at the unpredictable force and uncontrollable big-wave nature of it.

Word chains: *imprisoned, implacable, walled-in, smothered, in tomb, cruel, blocked, paralyzed, enraged, mystified, suffocating, hurt bad, trapped*. Pointing to what? Another form of life? Eternal peace? Oblivion?

How not to look for some consolation, then?
From Coleridge's *Intimations of Mortality*:

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound
We in thought will join your throng
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts today Feel
the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In the years that bring the philosophic mind.

And O ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts, I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight To
live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,

Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality; Another
race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give Thoughts
that do often lie too deep for tears.

OR

In a more challenging and contemporary vein. Damien Hirst and his *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living (1991)*

His \$12 million tiger shark in vitrine preserved in formaldehyde.

OR

Philip Larkin's *Aubade*

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare. In
time the curtain-edges will grow light.
Till then I see what's really always there:
Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,
Making all thought impossible but how And
where and when I shall myself die.
Arid interrogation: yet the dread
Of dying, and being dead, Flashes
afresh to hold and horrify.

The mind blanks at the glare. Not in remorse
—The good not done, the love not given, time
Torn off unused—nor wretchedly because
An only life can take so long to climb
Clear of its wrong beginnings, and may never;
But at the total emptiness for ever,
The sure extinction that we travel to
And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,
Not to be anywhere,
And soon; nothing more terrible, nothing more true.

This is a special way of being afraid
No trick dispels. Religion used to try,
That vast moth-eaten musical brocade
Created to pretend we never die,
And specious stuff that says *No rational being
Can fear a thing it will not feel*, not seeing
That this is what we fear—no sight, no sound,
No touch or taste or smell, nothing to think with,
Nothing to love or link with,
The anesthetic from which none come round.

And so it stays just on the edge of vision, A
small unfocused blur, a standing chill That
slows each impulse down to indecision.
Most things may never happen: this one will,
And realization of it rages out In furnace-
fear when we are caught without People
or drink. Courage is no good:
It means not scaring others. Being brave Lets
no one off the grave.
Death is no different whined at than withstood.

Slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know, Have
always known, know that we can't escape, Yet
can't accept. One side will have to go.
Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring
In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring Intricate
rented world begins to rouse.
The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
Work has to be done.
Postmen like doctors go from house to house.

OR

Yeats's *The Wheel*

Through winter-time we call on spring,
And through the spring on summer call,
And when abounding hedges ring
Declare that winter's best of all;
And after that there's nothing good

Because the spring-time has not come -
Nor know that what disturbs our blood Is
but it longing for the tomb.

OR

The great Mexican tradition of the day of the dead, *Día de Muertos*. I see them in my dreams, the dancing MANY in their parade of death, death on the way to death, among the billions of billions of human and animal souls that have crossed the River Styx. All, once dancing here on earth, and, who knows where, dancing now, on this all souls day, when all eat death, drink death, breath death, look death in the face in his most baroque adornments stare at his many masques, sing and love and dance and laugh and smile outside. While, deep inside, all men and women weep.

Of all the skeletons in the parade, past and present, there was one who now stands out among the stripped-down, flesh-less, lurching bone bags, harlots, harlequins, kings, queens, villains and heroes. This one, I imagined joins the litany of those we prayed for on our knees, as children at bedside, was a recent pilgrim, black as coal, perhaps now, leading the parade, opening wide his cat skeleton mouth and emitting only the tiniest of greetings, celebrations or protests.

Andy. His eyes, those great yellow headlights, lighting the way for all those long gone, lighting the way for those too-soon to be soon gone.

The cause of Andy's death was not, in the end, his love of hydrangea flowers. Or a hydrangea branch bit sharp and swallowed. The X-ray showed some kind of a curvy, chewy plastic thing deep down in him. What? WHAT?? It was a twist-off from a celebratory bottle of Martinelli Gold Medal sparkling cider. Not even alcoholic.

“No!” Says the child's voice.

Silly we, we had many names and nicknames for him: Andrew, Andoozer, Andrewster, Drewster, Droopsie, Doobie, Andy Boy, Andy Spandrew, Android. All uttered with idiotic, child-like joy in him. And, finally, just Andy.

Many nights deep of night I wake and wish I could throw it all in reverse. Wish I had seen the killer plastic twist on the floor. His absence, his not being here is still a vile dream. Like the absence of everyone ever loved. That unstoppable, careening, heart-breaking parade for which there is no brake. He was here. They were here. Now they simply are not.

All the souls of the faithful departed. Their disappearance the one great unexplained thing. The mystery, the unanswered question that makes us soul sick knowing our only

choice is to ignore it or get over it. So many to get over. All buried or cremated or 'disassembled' and left on mountain top or roadside or under ground as repast for worms or carrion birds. All but dim reflections now, reminders of the impossibility of those living to conceive of their own extinction.

Is it their animal innocence, their unconditional love, their sense of mischief, humor even, that makes them as or more loveable than the people we love most? They never intend us hurt. Their love is uncomplicated. Few barriers. Just right touch, right voice. No need to forgive. They accept all. Admit no barriers. Just feel and follow instinct.

Andy had this way, especially if he knew you and was fond of you, as you were entering a room of flopping down – like one suddenly shot. His way of allowing a belly rub. Our other cats learned and imitated this technique. As all cat lovers know, only if they really trust you, do they ever invite and permit a gentle rubbing of their softer belly parts. Simplest of gifts. No words required. The deepest well of well wishing.

I remember most, after all this time, his eyes, those sweet eyes. larger than life itself. And his darkness: all mahogany black and chocolate browns. He was the least photogenic cat of all. Think of a panther on a moonless night, licorice in a dark room or a modernist black-on-black canvas. He redefined dark and light. The recollection of his eyes still a consolation.

I conjure him looking up at me with his curious, gentle blend of transcendent samurai and bodhisattva animal joy: shy expression, shining-yellow, true alchemist's gold. On the movie screen of my mind I project his beautiful eyes. I can see them now, whenever I choose, looking up at me. And, I call out, will always call out to him. My friend, companion and, strangely, absurdly pretty-to-think-so, my small angel and guardian. Andy.

Epilogue: Someone wise, certainly compassionate, on learning about Andy and my grief and my feeling sheepish but not apologetic for feeling so stricken by the death of a mere cat, said grief is grief eternal, no matter for what or whom. Grief has no limits, respects no species, admits no boundaries. Loss of father, mother, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, friends, colleagues, sons, daughters, friends, lovers, rabbits, horses, goldfish, dogs, gerbils, hamsters, mice, rats or cats... Grief extracts the same exacting toll. There is no portioning out, no measuring, no discriminating. Mornings follow nights. Nights follow mornings. Grief felt and returning reaches out to all. None escape Grief's bony grasp.

January 18, 2015

last december day
galaxies of snowflakes all
have been my friend to me

a proof a grace that some
things never end

to understand time

there is never enough
though times too much

but time like an open door will
take us to another floor

some times soft
some times rough

for the firm-footed
or those who need a crutch

those afar as from a loft those
who need human touch

nobility two
blue jays male
and female
regal-lieutenant blue

two cardinals male
and female
liturgical red

against the snow the
pepper black
of sunflower seeds

at the feeder feathered
assembly
of them busily

the day frozen white
dove gray
is inimitable

unforgettable like a
complex clock
a rower's rowing from a dock

have you did i did we see or
lose sight of this hidden-in-
plain-view
nobility

the given when each are
shriven the question that
must be asked no matter
age or station against each
life and each life's task
how open how driven
were we to the voice within
that always asked how true
how true to that beacon
within our skin
which each is given

daffodils the daffodils
whisper their stems and
petals cry
our beauty is our own

they cut us they steal us

my brothers my sisters from
our beds our homes we own
our beauty as we die

drinking glasses
crystal or plain half full
half empty night or day
rain or shine love or
hate hot or cold
pleasure or pain young
or old beginning or end
false or true right or
wrong joy or rue dark or
bright day or night
silence or song each a
witness each a friend
each a drinking glass
one without the other

makes the other true
each from the other born

the sky and the earth

though he held the earth his true
love in his wide arms come night
come day enthralled by her
charms the sky always doubted
his worth why so far away you
and i come closer earth he
prayed
or surely i will die

do not hate the rose

do not hate the rose it
does not hate you
for lopping off
its multi-foliate head

or your blood dripping
rosy from your finger
from rose's karmic dart no
apology from the thorn

flowers thorns blood hearts
how we begin how we end
somewhere in between the
now the been the long ago

somewhere always between
the soft and the sharp the
raw the rudest noise
is the sound of a harp

lies the living or the living dead
rose thorn or earth-bed risen
who will be next cut short
around the bend

thinking of butterflies on new year's eve

the butterflies spend their spring
and summer days just visiting

pistils and stamens trusting in their
giddy series of serial 'alleluias!'
and 'amens!' they give no thought
to months weeks minutes seconds
hours not a single day of theirs is
of any significance to them they
just aerial dance and fly on their
own time no such thing as a
butterfly clock they ask not sing
not 'why?' few things so ethereal
as ministerial as they to them it
must make sense as they flutter in
to dock orange black or black and
yellow and leave pollen powder on
each ticking flower's clock just to
be content to be and then fly
content away with first threat of
cold to migrate thousands of miles
to someplace warmer to escape
winter which they hate the
butterflies

snow on cedars

the boughs of cedars and how
their early wet snows
and almost-spring freezing rains

cause them to pay tribute token
to king winter's power
how humbly they bow down

those with least pride bend most made
stronger by the weight they bear
those weakened by their pride lie

row upon row upon row broken
in the freezing air
broken on the frozen ground

for a bumble bee black-and-yellow
fat bumble bee goodbye mr. global
positioning system mr. sting me mr.
anti-gravity

the mystery of your flight now lost

you rest in an empty pizza box
no more present no more past
your wings in sunlight still
clear as leaded glass

reader book writer

the closing of a book is the beginning of writing
the wandering of the reader becoming the
wandering of the writer becoming together
though separately something more the book
read makes way for the book written what
disappears in the book is the reader what
reappears in the book is the writer where reader
book and writer are one an eye within any eye
a sun within a sun
that which reassures reappears on the trail

i entered a cave of blazing light filled with black
glyphs dark stories and myths i followed letter
strewn path and saw not two - the book and the
reader, me - but three - the writer and his voice
black on pages of white and knew it was his or
her body i was consuming while silent the world
outside was dull and gloaming and flying
seconds minutes hours were as nothing and as i
read i knew i too was being devoured buried in
the place the book was made to fill
tunneling into some timeless elsewhere within

types of theft the fox in his
jaws the struggling hen blood
and blue moonlight in the
tracks of his paws
writing the tale in the snow

the little boy detained by the
clerk the pretty painted
soldier in his sweater pocket
taken off the toy store's shelf
his purloined gift to himself
that he now must give back

the writer of political cant lifting
the words of another to impress
his world of superiors with his
copycat rant

the spouse bored to death
husband or wife stealing time
in another's bed

the murderer
dreaming of taking your life

the artist hack admiring
the masters producing
pale bastards

that phantom Memory rarely exact
never complete accurate as that gray
vagabond cat how empty the spot
under the birdbath where he patiently
sat

the fisherman's dog what
year what summer what
was his name
so terrified of thunder

the past the past the present
a feeble no show has a vote
but no veto
meantime the future's fleeting so fast

the cheese from the trap
in the mouth of the mouse

the comedian jester pillaging
the news
trying to quiet his terminal blues

the mother and father holding
back their child for fear
of the savage world's wild

the doctor stopping
the heart
of one yet to be born

the torturer forgetting the
cries of his tortured dead the
crack of their ribs their
broken backs their shaved
heads sparks of divinity
in the ashes of his atrocity

the suspicion when all's said
and done that there's nothing to
be gained nothing to be won

the fear that fuels fear the drink that
drinks the man the drugs that fail to
take away the pain
the grief that for grief grieves

the frenzy of all clocks' waving hands day
after day year after year

the mirror on the vanity impervious
to vanity or rage making all faces
age

that desperate thing in
the end stolen from all
that one very last breath
by that most clever of thieves

croton on hudson

the rough cotton quilt of the gray cloud bed the belly
seen from beneath of some boundless beast borderless as
the entire sky at one point the eye? shining bright as a
naked bulb in a silt-dark room the spider sun sending
spinnerets of light threading down thin steely cables
touching hudson's dimpling skin like a satisfied lover
running her fingers down your spine or an old woman
weaving bent over her ancient loom
in the sky in the river in the river light a godly rhyme

flocks of cormorants in october

hills lit by red Investor Autumn investing in neon stocks pale
disc of not quite full moon morning bright

usually in pairs or threes but with first frost nights
thirty flew no higher than inches above the river

how could their wingtips never break the surface
never disturb the tidal calm to sea flowing back

migrating like one flying thread-stitched black
by some mad and frenzied half-drunk tailor

unlike the honking military Vs of geese
they flew in hodgepodge ranks helter-skelter

downriver winged iron particles drawn south attracting
more ore of their chaotic kind

drawn south obeying The Magnet The Law
that all obey when drawn leaves fall

what is a marriage

what is a marriage but the youngest
noble dream of us a stubborn
agreement of a terrified two each
green day born and borne ultimately to
know guys and girls one will never
change the other
that stubbornly we all stay me and you
as each day's dust devils whirl

what is a marriage but to witness
the sad joy of changing and
aging of your one and truest love
and seeing your aging face in hers
and she her aging face in yours
still beautiful still opening doors
each graying day

what is a marriage but to try to break
the stranglehold the annoying
minutia of one's foibles scratch that

fancy word let's say it right - one's
ugliest ways and get on with it get
on get on and accept the getting on
day upon day upon days

what is a marriage but to laugh to find a
jot of joy after all the veils have been
lifted or torn dispersed like a silly fog
when you find yourselves looking at one
another over coffee or a glass of wine
and say
the enemy is us

what is a marriage II

what is a marriage who's the horse who's the
carriage but to know at the end if you have a
bit of luck are blessed you find something in
your *pas de deux* tattooed on your psychic
skins in your dance that's akin to hope
forgiveness and love something that still fits
like a well-worn glove is that not it as the
clock does its spin
isn't it romantic ain't that romance

october

her every tree losing leaves like
bald men losing hair trees need
no *rogaine* don't care seeing
each their offspring fall a
multi-colored parchment snow
not as a loss or sign of age in
the crisp october air each empty
limb a bone each tree's naked
facing winter's icy stare like
reverse long underwear
returning home with a new
reason bring on winter bring on
spring can you hear them
calling the pleased trees
singing "Please!"
bring on this change of season"

dream of blindness

i had a dream that i was blind without
a cane or dog or guide walking
frightened through my childhood's
neighborhood a memory map of
every place in mind i've walked a
hundred times hoping in the dream
that the dream would prove to be
untrue hoping that on waking i would
find a dull old world made new made
bright made wise made kind by
newborn eyes *for jorge luis borges*

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'

on death and dying

lights on lights out
nothing under the bed

closed her eyes pulled
the covers over her
white head
rising sun bright horizon

it was then she
realized
she was dead

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 the madness in us field breezes through
his wings whisper "hush! hush!"

my name your name

alpha male or alpha bitch
my name your name your
life my life what if we
switched

would we still be bewitched
if to the other's games and
baggage hitched?

spring eternal male and
female swans now back surviving
what miles
surviving what journey

on the mirror of the pond so black two
lines of fine silver their track

their ivory wings sing 'spring eternal!'

redwings chorus in the marsh sings
and echos back 'spring eternal!'
spring peeper throngs will soon be peeping

after winter's dark good reason for
those of little faith to smile
swans and frogs shouting 'victory!'

dreaming and waking

in the dream daybreak on a
long beach hiking with a
strange old man i get a cramp
in my calf
still own it when i wake

in the dream in an empty
auditorium next to a
strange old man he
hands me a golden key
my palm is empty when i wake

weapons of mass destruction

what is it about the phrase 'weapons of
mass destruction' that doesn't raise a jot of
compunction in us full of trust oblivious to
history's razing of millions upon millions
bodies stacked akimbo in each karmic phase
like grunions shore-beached and tazed by
some jokester god un-phased?

rhododendron

here's to rhododendron leaves
shrunk thin as pencils and to
winter's shadows their filigree of
thin branches of trees exquisite as
blue-on-white stencils

cell phones is
yours charged? if so
plug mine in in less

than an hour our
charges off or on
both phones win

winnie the pooh on god

“when you’re all alone god is a lot like
jello or when you stare at your face in a
lake the waters shimmer and shake or
when you grab your cell to make a call
and the almighty ALL refuses to answer
with even the smallest ‘hello’ ----! bears
and men this confuses.”

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

two in one

one must consider being two in one
at night the moon by day the sun

must dive into the darkest darks to
reach the bright of play must sail
through shite and misery must cross
the mirrored hall of doubt to find
calm center not cursed must
cultivate despair dig deep to from its
grave see a starry sky
and breathe the midnight air

mystery train

the words are all talking they say which
word they want to stand next to when they
speak it's as if they're queuing up
sweltering in some un-air-conditioned room
waiting impatiently in line or marching
angrily in place at the starting gate of
some great race or breaking out of some
dank storage place

they always want to be in charge never fail to
make their wishes known like captains of a
tugboat or garbage barge they say place me
here or place me there next to 'pluck a duck'
or 'her golden hair' or just in front of 'the red
caboose' at the end of the longest sentence
train or shoulder to shoulder with '*le grand
mystère*' or never ever next to 'dawdle' or
'legume' or to right after 'bats in the belfry'

gypsy vagabonds they are arrogant and free i am
their prisoner they are my wardens all i do is
plant their seeds and weed their gardens there is
no rhyme or reason to their choosing who knows
why 'grime' or 'treason' i just follow their
breadcrumb barrages like a bird on a wire fine
romance looking down on hansel and gretel
who knows why they choose 'pretzel' or 'losing'?
it's they who bring dumb me to their dance

no joke they are on fire they have bloody minds of
their own i'm nothing more than their broken yoke
the bone to their dog their temporary home a
schooner in their bay mirror on their wall observer

of their overture mover of furniture a drone when
they speak which is frequently
this is what they tell me do
what we say
just pick up the phone whenever we call

afternoon in early may

you could see in the slow bending of one apple bough
that the weight of a squirrel nibbling new green buds
gave the scene something ancient something wild
three clouds white as suds a crowd of robins finches
juncos sparrows and one loud morning dove world
fresh from winter's grave singing, "Love!" seignior
sun had taken a vow to smile down
on this busy crowd each one his favorite child

old tree

our old pear tree a living wreck crippled still alive still stands
trunk mostly hollow insect and bird pecked branches drooped or half broken

knots from limbs torn away in gouts by lightning strike or hurricane scarred
by blights of ice wet heavy snow or other smaller catastrophes

somehow from her roots she taps some hidden well of youth
and every spring manages to surprise in white defiance and gnarled glory

an arthritic hand a forsaken menorah she blooms righteous half-unbroken she
owns a kind of ugly radiance that in the morning sun van gogh would love

a larger-than-life bonsai she's shaped by the seasons' shears of heat and freeze rugged
fierce stalwart stubborn ravaged prayerful proud

when my mother was alive i always saw the old pear as her totem tree in
their shock of white - one now in memory – the two are still unbowed

in my mind to spite the savagery of time
the two will always stand together a loved and mindful symmetry

translating 'bird'

what is it at dawn at dusk and slightly less at full of day that
the birds all frequently tell us all prayerfully say?

maybe “come here, my love and play” or “harm-
doers enemies predators! stay far away!”

or bird couples guarding their nests
“how are you our downy fledglings today? had a good rest?”

some are mildly upset or outright enraged
the songster bird poets obsessing their songs full of angst or joy

those dreamer bird troubadours who so distracted by their verse sadly fail
to catch the early worm then cheep “guess things could be worse”

or that fan-tailed solo horny turkey cock
gobbling like some mad romeo crazing after harems of hens

why are all birds less vocal in the afternoons with a limited flock of
twitters calls and occasional interrupting tunes:

the lone cardinal’s persistent shattering triple whoop
hawk-swooping crows cawing “hey, red tail, exit our air space now”

the morning doves their “wee-you-ooo-ooo-hoo” are
not really asking “who goes there?” are they?

by chanting “tea kettle tea kettle” without cessation
its tail an exclamation the carolina wren loves to prove its metal

another fond of the sound ‘tea’ is the eastern towhee who
says over and over again “drink your tea drink your tea”

or the one who states his name when singing phoebe
who proclaims “phoebe phoebe phoebe phoebe”

the shrill cheee of hawks high above
an “i’m here i’m here alive with sky and clouds in love”

the white-throated sparrow’s melody “old
sam peabody peabody peabody”

the blue jay’s police-force warning shriek
“hear ye hear ye get ye out of our way or we’ll make you pay!”

the goldfinches’ thrilling trills

“you caged canaries, here’s what it means to truly sing”

the red-winged blackbird’s “konk-a-ree” over
cattail marsh and pond spring’s note of victory

the barred owl *stix varia* a tall fat chef from bavaria
who hoots “who cooks for you who cooks for you all”

or poor *caprimulgus vociferous* poor whip-poor-will
whose cries evoke cruelties when he weeps for us “whip-whip-poor-will”

the wood thrush calling from the gloaming dell
of dusk or night or deep shade a cross between a song and bell

the rare daytime screech of a great horned owl
awakened by a nasty dream who shrieks and then goes back to sleep

the rust-rumped catbird’s annoying “meow mee-ewe”
meaning “my fare - bugs grubs and mites (not mice) beware, beware”

and lasty the formally expressed “chickadee-dee-dee”
fashion forward gents in tuxedo black and white and gray most intelligent

the cacophony of squawks peeps trills twitters quacks croaks and tweets too
numerous to list though in celebrating a few true birders will get my gist

who can decipher what they say? we have no crib no dictionary of ‘bird’ but
we bird lovers always ask since birds insist on their words being heard

whether it’s territory rage display lust feast hunt or “howdy-do” especially
at those blue beginnings and softest ends of days

at least until the deep freeze of winter stunning comes
when most feathered ones go south for sun and here our days go dumb

and year after year all the cospes fields and lawns go vacant up-for-rent for
one long dead season we forget what in spring echoed in our ears

what birds say and the ancient riffs they employ may mean
something as elegantly simple as “boy oh boy ...

to be alive! we sing we play we pray we sing we fly
this day this flying feathered day this day our joy.”

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"

heart

that precarious motor on which all precious else depends
its thudding ga-lump-a-bump of pumping blood still shakes my old ribs' cage

i must confess as the blasé years pulse by so blind and energetically i
find myself keeping time by listening to its pounding more attentively

dee dump da dumb dee dump da dumb

i can hardly recall those did-i-live-them? days when I was ten when
infinite time would never end and age seemed like a mere mirage

it used to be a lion no stress no fight no enemy could daunt it now it's
just a wee timid beastie the slightest late-night tremors haunt it

dee dump da dumb dee dump da dumb

after one attack my father's gave out in mercy suddenly
given the painful range of choices i'm sure most voices say we should be so lucky

that precarious motor on which all precious else depends
its thudding ga-lump-a-bump of pumping blood still shakes my old ribs' cage

dee dump da dumb dee dump da dumb

bars of a cage

be afraid: in his lepidopterous afterword to *Lolita*
nabokov in what fit of cunning irony or punning rage tells
of an ape coaxed no forced by a scientific jape coerced
the poor wretch to scrawl a self-revealing sketch a simian
necessita an anthropomorphic *apologia pro sua vita*
among the first charcoal abstracts on paper in ape art
history

and what was the subject of this animal triage of our age?

the vertical black bars of the naked creature's cage! and
what could be the meaning of this bubonic story?
that for man and beast there is no such thing as *la dolce vita*?
that true courage is to draw or say exactly what we see? that
once infected each prisoner in his own dank cell
to be perfected must find and know his own heaven his own hell

conversation with a warbler

he is the raccoon of warblers
the common yellow throat
no longer than your finger
khaki green yellow breast a
zoro mask of black outlined
in kabuki white most
uncommon delicate
and gentle when he gently sings

he paused on the blue hydrangea
as if to say "hello stranger! his
staccato whistling wicheteee fine
day fine day fine day, no?" back to
him i thought "you miracle you've
come a long long way you little
oracle with tilt of head
and ghost of sunlight in your eye"

shy as an uninvited guest
needing no praise from me he
chose not to linger and flit! he
flew away into the yellow
morning light maybe to wing by
again next may if we two birds

are still alive fine day fine day
fine day, no?

graffiti in train tunnels leaving
penn station
through amtrak tunnels gloom

when stalactites of light fall
on diptychs and triptychs of graffiti

shattering the criminal compositions
into tropical electric jungle-flower shards

an exploding cubist demolition a
shocking confetti taser to the eye

lightning bolts of calligraphy
lit by the hand grenade of the sun

un-sponsored as weeds or vines that bloom
safer underground than cloistered on museum walls

our cat on auden

never one to meow too loud or make a
feline racket when our fat cat Squeaks -
since that cozy spot was not taken - sat
flat down on the collected works of
wystan hugh auden he must've known
w.h. a lover of quirks
would unquestionably laud him

as long as Squeaks was clever enough to
leave no bum streaks on the pristine jacket
cover auden a man of erudition and
sterling common sense once quipped "bad
manners (in man or cat) should not be
mistaken for a deliberate intention to cause
offense"

swans

the pair of swans an ivory white surprise their
timeless cruising their steady paddle track two
lines of silver in their wake incised so fine and

fast fading an engraving on the surface of the
pond calm and black that fleetingly it is
possible to believe that their reprise is what
brings spring back

**constable's clouds at
the victoria & albert** his
clouds cumulous in may
still glimmer down on us we
dwarfed looking up to them his
portraits of their shimmerings his
adroit capturing his seizing of
the rapture of every cloud that
smiled their sky miles
enchancing him their fleets and
silver linings give us a way of
redefining
the flight of hope and liberty

every syllable
find your heart in it
speak your true mind
dismiss pundits and
dismissive wits
critics and their nits
do the best you

now
and i think to myself
what is it need to
do now what
beyond greed to get
through
what off the shelf what
new

and i think to myself
what is it i need but
to think i must do
something just only
one thing exactly
now

kittens giving the cat
away who birthed the
kittens instead of the
kittens as cutely as they
play is giving balls of
wool instead of mittens
only ghoul or fool
would not keep a mother

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!”

Cat TV

our cats are spoiled indoor cats in winters catatonic they
sit with us mesmerized fireside two males one female
staring at the flames in summers on the screened-in porch

where they watch fireflies or fat robins hopping filling
their craws full of night-crawlers at dusk some life sleep
eat nap and doze sitting still for hours by the pantry door
waiting out an unsuspecting mouse or two since it's more
a game for them than a meal thn bring their catch to our
bedside evidence of their pride

like of us they're not getting any younger and only
when compared to dated photos slightly wider to add
some spice and entertainment and a workout ethic to
their feline lives the sacrifice of living mice not an
option and mouse adoption a silly liberal pretention not
long ago i created a "for cats only" invention
a revolutionary cat entertainment and exercise device

i leave a trail of pumpkin seeds an open invitation
outside our screened-in porch garden side in no time at
all like a Broadway casting call every careerist squirrel
red gray and chipmunks all as if on demand queue up
'til not a single seed remains (is it possible they're
dreaming of their names in lights?) their scurrying
comings their frantic goings
i've branded *Cat TV*

now for our three cats each day is brand shining new
though the cast of characters and the sitcom are the same
they sprint jump race and chase each rodent actor tirelessly
a new improved eternal now of which they never tire until
they reach a point in their feline brains that screams
"squirrel futility to infinity!" and then turn their backs on
potential prey and shut themselves off to *Cat TV* they look
away derrieres facing faux prey as if to say
"this is awfully inane *no mas* i need to caterwaul!"

and so it is with us with our hunts our prey our dreams
somehow always impolitely haunting us on the other
side of the screen just out of reach then i see cat
'exercise' and 'entertainment' are bogus that *Cat TV*
is just a stupid ruse
that makes me god when duping cats

some days i think i need to abort *Cat TV*
though my cats keep cavorting mostly

enjoying the play feel no harm playing
the clown or in my playing them

what suspect god there is

suspecting the worse i suspect
it is the same with what
suspect God there is who sees
no almighty harm in playing
me who waits us out
and gently or not brings us
howling bedside back to
Him mortal evidence of His
pride

doggerel

dog doggerel

god god
doggerel

dog guerilla god
gorilla

dog and god cockerels

solitary it's not the
notion of alone
nor the rude collection of commodities

it's not the one place to be one
with one's solitude

it's not each dog's new bone
borrowed from the pack

it's not the tireless aspiring to be nor
some kind of shifting quest

in the end it's discarding loss and false identity
owning no luxury having no permanent address

'bad' dog bad dog walker

early taxi heading south central
park on right jungle green
runners cyclists all out all at it
lights on fifth all synchronized
big yellow lab on leash sprints
out against the light to snare his
favorite chewy toy almost hit by
speeding cab owner half asleep
cellphone-ized 'bad' dog bad
dog walker a modern aesop's
fable: keep the dog of your soul
on a very short leash peel your
eyes of scales free dance through
the media haze the coincidence
of chance or accident
their maze shares no conscience

yourself your pale pet peeves
keep in check safe as milk
that's pasteurized it's
always good to be good dog
good dog walker good street
wise balker the most
dangerous traffic is the
traffic we fail to see

marshland

this neat blue dome of delicate arias
this emerald palace of intricate song
singing sweet! sweet! sweet! many
tribes of birds calling home

noon

like a spoiled child
the july sun destroys

all that shimmers all his toys
the shades of summer shadows

all that's fleet and passing wild under
his yellow lion eye

owl

unlike robin finch or lark the
twittering shallow choirs
of giddy birds of light

owl who shuns the sun owl
star gazer
owl of silent wing

owl shadow hunter
owl eyes of moon
owl in yew hollows

you only you you
sound the dark
you voice the voice of night

moth of time

the moth of time mischief on
powdered wings like the hokum of
compulsory wigs british judge or
barrister will leave us all
threadbare

(like mice peeping out of oakum)
ridiculously silly after
completing a life sentence
ultimately our naked selves
during which we see hole by hole

stripped of our prison clothes
those who try cover up with
luxury wovens to hide the
unraveling truth will be un-
knit by and by

the moth of time drawn to the
flame of all who live and die no
matter how fine your vestments
in the end all are thread bare

by time our clothes are eaten
gone from here and now to

the then and there food for
worms
where worms meet bones

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 cheese cake 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

early bird

perched out of sight on an old locust limb
just beyond my tired bedroom window sill

he sings it's me i'm him it's me i'm him
shatters dawn setting moon before the day is new

shards of his song sharp before first light ruins
hope of sleep and punctures dream's balloon

just go away go away please let me rest
hoping my willing it would make him take flight

but he sings again it's me i'm him it's me i'm him
so proud is his best good morning song

that i think if this small feathered thing
can seem so sure of what his new day has in store

and greet our dark world so optimistically then
stubborn pillow over my head why not me

the sea the sea night has
every reason to boast to
proudly flaunt the treason of
her blanket of black
her many winking stars her
planets' planetary arcs
across her tract of sky

but the sea the sea the deepest
thing that haunts that gargantuan
roiling thing that heavy-lidded
sloe-eyed blink
of The One one-eyed Leviathan

the sea the sea that unpredictable
vindictive tomb that fathomless fecund
womb second to none in death dream or
memory her terrible territory her nursery
rime She Stallion that without reins
reigns she cradle rocks or quakes us
her tide alive swims in our veins

the sea the sea she shames the night the day
the sky the land while we childlike stand
shyly by each of us little sailing ships must
tack off her obediently her toys and murmur
humbly in her vast an unjust mirror
lusting to be born or drowned in her

the sea the sea inscrutable her
whims her commands deeper than
blackest night she is the never
content
the constant reinvention of the infinite

free rat what has it
meant after years and

years of messing in the
maze it has been given
to me caged stay in one
place unmoving and
unmoved by the captive
race of caged or
poisoned rats their
frantic masters their
insane laboratories we
rats shed no tears

philip larkin

anti-lark anti-
children anti-kin
anti-dance anti-
party pro-porn
pro-scorn pro-gin

always looking down at death
from the live volcano's rim
troubadour of the romance of
cynicism and sin and the dark
closed door malcontent with
his lot
calls shit shit
calls snot snot

chronicler of silly we
takes us all down a peg
over all lifts his leg bite
worse than his bark each
word his last breath
preferred the phony given
of earth's dreary seasons
to half-holy hints of heaven

a failed attempt to bracket poetry poetry is...

a place like home a conversation with a voice within that is yours yet not yours and wiser
than the one you think you know or own

a replaying of instants worthy of replay because so enjoyed by the eye: three pigs
sleeping in the sun, the explosion of phlox in may, the spearheads and bayonet leaves of
first irises lenten-purple bee-yellow ivory and white in late spring

the mental snapshot of the cardinal as he alights shaking snow off the cedar limb

the telling and recording of stories the repeating of words to one's self one hopes
someone else will love

the tending of a perennial ivy voice rooted in all writers' voices that greened before and
says "rejoice!"

a tom-tom beat the throbbing of art a heart praying to the systole and diastole of some
bigger moving primal heart

that hound-like thing that tracks down all that sobs and bleeds and sweats and breaths and
leads the hunter to the hunted's den

a series of measured breaths that exhale words which syncopated comfort disrupt or
distress

the mandala of conscious thought woven by another mind within the writer's mind

in the temple of the void to take or hold another kind of breath to shudder in your cage of
ribs in the presence of something holy

to feel the bracing thrill of a god's respirations

to extend the circle of light by holding high the lamp of words

the plurality of readers' eyes bringing life to the community of words the writer left
behind

the ruddle-glow of the book muddling in reader's mind

a knitting of words a domestication of their warp and woof
of exultation grief and horror or pleasure and peace that courses in the vein

the thing that makes the veiled-to-all apparent to a hale brave few

a bricolage a tree the smooth of leaves the rough of bark the end of which is a
mirage a hologram in which the writer lives and speaks

a disease a dissing of ease an addiction a repetitive emotion syndrome a reducing of dreaming to words a deliberate attempt to infect the reader with the writer's malady

a shepherding or culling of the herd of the black sheep of letters into words

a plausible pause that is born again

the mobius strip of words that tease the writer's thrust of up or down

the fork of the bird's foot in the meat of the word
to blossom bereft in conundrum's box the place where the secrets are kept under lock

the story on a rainy day that explains the bleached doll's head on the eyeless beach

the slapstick of lost identities the lipstick on the pig of plot

canned laughter in the crucible of the chopping block

that weak wick of simile and metaphor that relights like trick candles after each writer's life's blown out

the sea air of composition canonized by the mere fact of being here

the futile attempt to distill or capture the elegance of oranges in a crystal bowl on winter's sunny window sill

the mining for the faintest glimmer of the divine

the zen pulling back of the bow to hit the target center of joys and sorrows that have no name

taking orders from eternity trying to imbibe the light of moon and stars

the old alchemist's jujitsu of changing dross and loss to something akin to gold

the bashful smarter cousin of gibberish

the ballet of the mind in the company of words

the writer's wink of hide and seek with ink and words

that erotic act that plays out quietly behind imagination's closed doors

an exorcism a detoxification a cathartic exclamation an outering of 'in' the opposite of eating and nourishment a leaving behind an excretion an oyster-like accretion around an annoying sentiment that 'pearls'

the waking of each word in each word's dying

the saber of lightning that razes the scabbard from which it is drawn

celebrating the ugly hidden the grotesquely invisible a baudelaire-like or oldenberg-like elevating of the vanity and banality of the mundane to the stature of a sacred hymn

that 'adventure capitalist' funding the start-up of creativity
the vomitorium that proudly waits outside the banquet hall

highly agitated words in search of a melodic line like school children entering a museum

the high bright of mid day in which shade traverses shade

the well-read nabokovian habit of netting the lepidoptera of illusion

the twisting rack of tortured words and busted memory

the melancholy charm of bobbing on the surface amidst the wreck of flotsam and jetsam before the shark appears

the taking from nothing and making something that makes the moon and planets sing

the willing negation of the writer's life sacrificed to the rite words

the hedgehog inspiration hiding under the fox's pelt

that sometimes seemly but never inconsequential thing that answers to the name 'beauty'

the attempt to grasp the glimmer light of day as it shimmers in the looking glass

that vast thing inside that makes the outside shine and sing

the yet-to-be assembled golden city that beckons from the tool shed of this day

the dance of rage and fury at the noble center seeing rage and fury slowly die

a gentle riding of the word the exotic improvisations of the mocking bird

the pinching of a concept that causes it to flush and color a type of chaleur that warms the author and the word

finding a comfortable bench the one with a ray of moonlight on it on which to sit

to color in a coloring book

a moving van of words the writer the furniture mover

the fetal being of the unborn word evidence of life outside writer's womb

the knowledge that though hiding declares itself in the writing

verbs nouns adverbs pronouns adjectives leafed out the deciduous feathers of the word
a stubborn lunar brightness

the orange dog of love dreaming in the sun

in place of metaphor man himself the main character on an open stage beneath the
gibbous moon

the savage ruby of summer the ferocious mumblings of man

an idle mind finding wings

fearless and genderless

what without pride without vanity without boast without hubris without agenda without
marketing or PR simply stands its ground plain and bright in its right place in full light of
day

the word on the cliffs of the heart looking down on the tiny villages bridges and citizenry
each poet's model train set the toy of life and the inventory of memory

the hacksaw blade baked into the prisoner's pie the pile of sawed bars he left behind

the always-jostling queue of what remains unsaid a halloween parade

the ghost dance of words every writer ever loved

a telling photograph of the unlit mind into which the camera can not yet go

black white and gray by lamplight black white and gray by full light of day

a clock spring tightly wound herald of spring's arrival her emerald green beyond
imagination's bounds

a thorn deep in the paw scarred over shrapnel in the heart the gazelle in the lion's maw

what all the wordless animals say

the agony of trying to decide what to keep what to add what to delete

a gothic cathedral decomposing on top of an umbrian hill

making a mark leaving a breadcrumb trail the slime line of the slow-moving snail

what our planet's most seething species - the fish the reptiles
the birds the bugs the mammals - cannot say
that pale green shoot that sprouts from feces

compost composed compounded impounded

a bed of words nailed to a page designed to keep us all alert awake

that tenuous progression that intuition that which writers do with words that unlike other
obsessions and professions the more one does the less one knows

what the dead said that makes us say

living skillfully

the personal coliseum of our wildest dreams

a prayer a message in a bottle emptying the ocean into a child's pail

the raised voice lowered the lower voiced raised

banner or bandage or red badge of courage

the ferry boat that floating vessel that shouts that ferries all away from 'me'

the wind of a thousand years of voices the rhythms of their long-ago co-opted choices
still echoing in our ears

a full-stop door stop that keeps some doors open and lets others close

a living window that yearns one side looking out one side looking in a transparent plane
of thinking glass divided

the tennis-court play the back and forth of comedy and tragedy the silly sea-saw of our
ups and downs

the perfect pitch of light and shade the standing on a roaring freeway or reclining in an
idyllic glade

the 'iron' in irony

the 'lip' in solipsism

a self-centered lunacy a netting of the flutter-swerve of the swallowtails of words the
pinning down of them specimens for all to observe

a form of love a flash of news one can use while looking down from a tightrope high
above on the abyss below

a slaughter of the innocent illusions of control an accepting of chance a rocking to The
Great Wheel's thundering roll

stopping Time to start correctly to listen and record the glistening of the heart

a man in pain throwing his i-pad through a closed window pane

the house of straw and twigs and bricks that writers build each day to keep the big bad
wolf away

the lava flow that makes the volcano dance

digging up buried phrases served in verbal soups groups of squeaks never before
spoken as in "the broken marsupial speaks!"

the snug burrow of a warm mammal dreaming winter away in a bed of grass the snow
storm above

the crazy-glue bond of words to writer

a sincere desire to discover a way out up over or beyond

the thing that sparks the open mind and leaves not ash but fire behind

one's own life sentence the life lines of every person dead or alive

to untie the rope that binds the vessel to the dock to create a rift and let things drift to
kill or drown or bury the clock

to become more alive by flying away from the robotic frantic hive

toes peeking out of his shoes a hobo that smells the cooling pie on the window sill and
follows his cartoon nose

tracing circles in the sand before high tide erases every ampersand and 'and'

the writer's own darkness his black dog of despair

taking dreams out of the root cellar of the mind thanks giving

the lantern under the bushel basket

one thing so emotionally concrete that the verrazano and the hudson appear by contrast a
bit effete

the opacity of things made clear as a glass of water in the morning light

without flinching to see cruelty and beauty increasing and unceasing and still to sing
"again!"

that infinitesimal moment that lives between 'idea' and final word that uninhabitable
place between desire and deed that nano-second of bliss between 'now' and the willed
"to be"

that state of joyful nothingness that stands shoulder to shoulder like a rich man and a bum
their hearts beating to the same drum

something to be mistrusted all 'say' no or little 'do'

courageous cynicism

the dream made actual the actual made dream

the weightless luminescence of nature and time

the solitary self-defying labor that denies all logic and law that stands above and looks beyond

avoiding the stink of stasis

the sanctuary of the present perfect tense

to praise the sweep of dark as The Source from which we come to which we go rather than the single candle's light and the narrow circle it keeps

the Mystery the god-like force that prods and begs the hatching chick to peck and crack the prison of the egg

Postscript:

All poetry is in some way about poetry that has gone before and lit the way.

Like pods of whales that use their breath to create a circular net of air to contain chaotic schools of krill, poets use words to surround experiences that nourish.

But even words – nets of breath – meticulously chosen, rising and circumscribing, can only fleetingly contain The Teeming Source.

Many photographers bracket a single image with different lens and light exposures. This helps them choose, reflect on and point to that which can never be truly held or owned.

Hence, this failed attempt to bracket poetry: a pointing to, a meditation on what poetry has been, is, might be.

for Mary Ruffle after reading *Madness Rack*
and *Honey* with thanks to our mutual friend
Akiko Busch

fly

i try not to resent *musca domestica* creepy as the creepiest planaria that maddening nuisance the indoor fly trapped in our world of exotic smells and treats bacon grease butter honey cherry pie or cheese un-washed pots and pans and dishes in the sink on stove and counter tops the faintest hint of stink sent by the harpy gods to try our patience his and mine it's not his fault he through a too-long-opened window his five compound eyes smiling

each wide-eyed now Himself at house our home
nirvana fly paradise the megatron store the bastion
of supersize i'd like to swat him crush him flat
pulverize him into a mush a fly smoothie for the
chirping toads and hungry bullfrogs jug-o-rumming
in the marsh across the road but then I think of little
buddah and jesus christ ghandi martin luther king
mandela and a few holier-than-we rock stars and
tinsel town celebrities who don't believe in killing
or eating meat so i put the swatter and the poison
spray away can't lasso him so i try to shepherd or
shoo him like a tiny buzzing zigzag careening black
sheep through vault of open door or window crack
and finally! (to the patron saint of fly shooing thanks be -
- my only cost my fits of time spent maniacally) he's
free! to a far horizon a golden city a new graceland where
he'll live like a king until someone does him in and as he
wings his way to someplace out of sight i wish the
maggot breeder well (five hundred eggs a day) bug from
hell who vomits on his meals to pre-digest them
flibbertigibbet drawn to feces like racecars to wheels he
reminds me of virginia wolf's essay except
in "the death of a moth" the moth doesn't win

a kiss

one thing I know is this a
kiss is better than a promise

waiting

certain waiting times gain weight
unlike those we plain forget

when your train is late and on a
freezing platform you wait

or on the plane early arrival
on the tarmac waiting for a gate

at the dentist's office for a cap
or dreading a deep drilling or root canal

at graveside wishing the ceremony over
farewell to one leaf of a three-leaf clover

at the hospital looking eye to eye
at the anesthesiologist before he gives the you the gas

or in the bar of a five star hotel waiting
for an adventure you can never tell

june corn

still baby green
june corn

reaches for the sky

though not newborn so
too we

snapper

in the innocent dense of pachysandra
just outside our kitchen garden door at
first glance dark stone or plate of rock
or ancient slab of mossy granite

and then she stirred into focus antediluvian hook-
beaked predatory voracious gimlet-eyed she
stank of rotten compost road kill dank slime
as if arisen from some muddy-bottomed crypt

tiny lily pads of duckweed stuck to her spine black
serrated carapace alligator tail cretaceous she'd
clambered from murk of lake to lay her leathery
eggs someplace hidden and safe now more vicious
locked in fear of her predicament when touched
she hissed and lunged and with every snap she
showed the pink shock of her wormlike tongue
brooding strangely feminine a featherless reptilian hen

i coaxed and scooped her up in an old snow shovel
(her flailing claws could gut a duck or frog) and
took her glaring rage to our pond out back
and set her free to continue her labors of maternity

not long after i had this dream that one day soon hordes of just-
hatched snappers smelling sweet water small driven fools would

be highballing under a full moon seeking shelter and safe homes
and i hoped not chlorinated pools

cormorant

an offering a benediction on limb of
half-submerged locust tree mid hudson
pleased to embrace rivers shore hills
trained clouds and sky fishing done
he's free to rest to dry his outstretched
wings his supplicant cross of quiet and
peace meditating after preying in the
gladness of the day
and his flying hunting sun

ant throng

it's hard looking down from our great heights upon the ant
throng and their sprawling farms their pebbly volcanoes
with them clambering out and in their lugging that fly or
moth wing ten times their weight their gypsy ramblings
always finding their way back home their libraries and
guidebooks inside their heads

it's hard looking down from our great heights not to imagine
that their sense of order and what's right does not derive from
some intelligent communal conversation they always seem so
certain of their chosen destination their consensus not in
words but something chemical
something akin to the congress of the songs of birds

it's hard looking down from our great heights not to think that
they are not some mindless robotic swarm but really smart
aliens capable of individual choice and thought as evidence at
a picnic poke one with your pinky finger it's certain in a new
york minute ms. or mr. ant won't linger but in this tricky
contract will find an instant escape clause

they are more entertaining than watching cartoon TV imagine them
in graduation gowns and powdered wigs all assembled doing their
best to do something judicious or parliamentary voting on whose job
it is to remove the garbage or the bodies from their labyrinth of
tunnels or who will stock the ant pantry
with tiny worms crumbs or parts of hapless road-killed bugs

they're always so determined straight on always with a job to do
so assured well-groomed adroit and strong that i wonder if each
ant throng has a favorite fragrance or special totem song they
have no infirmaries doctors nurses or hospital beds to
unknown burial plots they diligently carry their fallen dead they
seem free of anxiety have no ant-to-ant issues with trust
i wonder what they must think looking up at skyscrapers us

old friend

sold five of his archive of original cartoons for eleven grand spent
six to prolong his cherished bichon's life
loved less conditionally than his children or his spouse

when it came to paying for a chance night out drinks or dinner however
small the bill he drained of blood looked even thinner
more lost and tragic than those dispossessed of home and land

picking up a tab for him was like stealing a rabid dog's bone easy
with a buck was one sin he will never be convicted of
when check showed up he saw no shame in touting his inner louse

fervent liberal in the politics of giving far-right hawk not dove
invited guest(s) were always out of luck left flat on their own to
his chagrin the one who spent and gladly paid was his wife his
will: all his cancelled checks to join him in his grave

owl

unlike the robin finch and lark unlike
dawn's chattering swallow choirs
euphonies of feathered light
you owl you who shuns the sun
loves the night owl whose
yellow moons of eyes owl of
silent wings
owl who holds the stars owl shadow
hunter owl whose talons shiver
scuttling things
you only you you who sound
the dark you who voice the
night with your 'who cooks
for you
who cooks for you all'

the man the dog the leash

season on season year on
years the man who looks
like mr. magoo his thick
glasses and medley of
baseball caps in rain and
snow and sun

man jerk dog walk man jerk leash

season on season year on years the
blond lab wild-eyed not spayed full
of beans chaffing at his leash
smelling every scat and bug and leaf
resists his master's every wish

dog jerk man walk dog jerk leash

then one fine day as if
they signed a treaty a
miracle play in perfect
harmony the man the
dog the leash season on
season
year on years

castaways

clipped bits of gnarl of nail of toe
scratched head 'druff of scalp
scruff of once-live flakes of skin
castaways of what we were paving
the way for
a new-grown us each day

shoo-fly my dinner companion

he was a small house fly immediately introduced
himself shoo-fly on white shelf of my napkin in the
light he was grenadine not so much the dark
invader as opalescent shimmering green and as
flies go friendly as family he intended me no harm
came and went of his own accord thanks to hole in
screen or open door a magnet for bustling germs he
full of hustle didn't seem toxic just flighty from

unprotected cup or fork to floor to pools of gravy
on piles of fries a gypsy of the outdoor indoor life
paterfamilias of maggots and decomposition self-
contained the opposite of almighty seeking crumbs
grease and camaraderie he gave me one of those
multi-eyed fly looks that all flies give half-empty
plates diners and cooks this bane of disease the hero
of this fable and then moved on to less-welcoming
tables a bravura performance sans cane and top hat
this restaurant this dandy's automat

poughkeepsie

on the train two mothers two
daughters across the isle the older
daughter maybe nine or ten
repeating again and again
poughkeepsie poughkeepsie the
extravagance of poughkeepsie
tickled by the 'poo' in poughkeepsie
the little sister maybe four or five a
chubby cricket her laughter tinkling
like a little bell

hello death hello death

my old friend like heaven
and hell you're just our
name
we give the end of our shift you
alone have no end your face in
my mirror greeting me each day
gives my life a special glimmer
your symbols the skull the
skeleton beneath the skin not
given to us to know when or
where by what by whom we
suspect the sand of our
hourglass of hours running
somehow independently is a
piece of something bigger for the
long suffering some you are a
welcome gift

my veins

as i age my veins
grow bluer like my
mother's in my
aging hands
i see my rage and hers

in my own voice i
hear her stubborn call i
hope it leads us all to
something truer
forever young and newer

i saw the dollar bills dancing

i saw the dollar bills dancing in a
wide casino a lottery of every
claymation character outside
turning in hope watching the
vanishing wheel turn and spin

i saw the dollar bills laughing
full of themselves and smug
as only the rich can be green
with envy odds all theirs
crushing every gullible bug

i saw the dollar bills flying
in the setting florescent sun
green as plastic leaves dead
presidents having fun
crowds of them on the run

i saw the dollar bills dancing
dancing erotically sexy and
topless in serial-numbered
g-strings their admirers all
panting

early morning in july

the first thing i knew as the
coffee began to brew was the
hummingbird hovering a sugar
sip governing his hunt among

the last white blossoms of the
mostly-gone-brown grape-
cluster flowers of the old
catalpa tree his in-neutral
helicoptering his iridescence
muted by gray clouds over a
dull red rising sun at start of
his clockless duty
some ancient accurate hunch

ninety-eight in the shade

something insanely robotic
nothing vaguely lyrical like tiny
rusting chain saws or about-to-
seize machines the mad electric
whirr of insects all business no
mad yield in them
half-baked in the plowed rows

flying half-phantasmagorical a
corn-bound murder of crows their
muted screams punctuate the
wilting yellow-green the smother-
weight of heat pain of dust on
gates of teeth oppressive as
unsettling dreams
all grit-covered things praying for rain

tattoos a prevalence of blue panthers slews of
nude dancers skeletons and skulls pierced
hearts with names of love's dead bettors angels
anchors vultures eagles doves untranslateable
chinese characters polynesian tribal runes

a ritual testament to enduring pain futile
ink and needles on thin skin
a wish to commemorate one event

a drunken eccentric ornament that
will not die will last a life
like the memory of a much loved tune

july

july was really shaping up
showing herself like first love
or a splendid radiant poem you
carry with you all your life
and its memory that calms and brightens

but, alas, a lass
so seductive that her morning scent
awakens and rules a continent i
blame you, july for my lost
working notes written while
driving
in between lights

it was all about you, july and i was
so busy looking and translating
what I saw to words that like many
photographers so busy framing and
shooting
i wasn't seeing YOU

and when my working notes appeared i knew
i had to look at you again as is the case with
all seasons people or things much loved you
are a list which includes:

dragonflies birds calling for the sun to rise
the mightiest clouds the eye can see the
pizzicatos of children laughing bringing
echoes of our childhoods back
the alchemy of white catalpa blossoms against a chicory sky the
translucence of mayflies backlit by the great projector the setting sun the
facts of bicycles canoes rowboats sailboats yachts motorbikes
firecrackers smells of burgers on grills charcoal briquettes mobs of
globes of suntan lotion radios changing stations mowers and chainsaws
whining the shock of red orange day lilies against a bird shell sky bees
mosquitoes ants of every size ant lions beetles worms dropped by robins
from the sky bull frogs' croaks the night heron's sullen squonk the
complaint of rain giving leaves their sheen boulevards and lawns'
monopoly boards of green new corn swaying to old tractors roars pigs
not pink but picasso rose rooting their troughs and always in the
gloaming at wood's edge the shy deer bedding down for the night

fireflies your greatest jeweled creation something like crushed
aluminum in their flash
in all things humidity creates a tropical gasp

alone

from this tangled shore noon's
hammer flattens ingot waves on the
anvil of the sea
lands heavy on earth's sandy floor

her dainty cup runneth over the
solitary peripatetic plover
skitters up and down the beach
always just a minuet step out of reach

the uncaring ocean ebbs and flows the
zipper of bird tracks in the sand
brushed away by tide's rude broom
let no uninvited ones come too close

for with my friends the sky the sun
the stars the moon the silent land i
share what more none can ask for
their peace pours my self away

katydids in august 'round
midnight under a new moon's
waning light the thunderous thrum
of the katydids SING i did i did i
wish i did i did i did i did i wish i
did

give dust a tongue

my daily crust my daily get
for songs that must be sung
in fear or praise may some
grace raise me up as each
breath fills my lungs that in
this hour my dust will find
the rain of tongues as
sunbeams shower slowly
down from new day's sun

carrion skunk

two red tails feasting on skunk a study in
decomposition deconstructed by freeze
and rain and thaw into a kind of tasty
hawk-broth stew as the car approached
one stayed put the guard - the other rose
up the shank of his dangling legs and
talons sharp hooks against the sky a
rotation of silver and gray and dun veered
to show a spread of wing of quill and
rusty under-down against a november
morning sun a form of thanksgiving on
the wing

ten below zero

the thin fingers of the
rhododendron many on
many as in the warming
green of a many-handed
glove first tight as pencils
then opening like love which
only lightly lingers green in
the morning sun each
rhododendron beholden to
the many many
never to just one little one

said moon

said moon to black bird of night you
are my true friend
as each dawn is my end

said moon to flocks of
clouds flying high on
the wing
with night let us play

said moon to stars new born in
night's sky let's dance and
sing and pray keep dawn at
bay

said moon to sun
on the rise gently
bury me deep
in your bright tomb of light

the thing

the thing in the closet the thing in
the cave the thing under the bed
the wide-eyed thing on both sides
of the grave the thing that divides
the bliss of cowards from the
bliss of the brave the sharp thing
that lurks forever young forever
old in the dark parks of our heads
the skull's lipless kiss the
troubadour lark of bliss that
reminds celebrates and shakes
makes sages and madmen bark
makes mystics rave

envoy beat it scam take off! you
mute strays and drifters get out of
my sight you vertical glyphs left to
righteous i'm tired of rousing you
like some border collie herding you
you are not my flesh and bone why
not as you flee the pen take another
liberal serving
of what some might call a heart

take off all of you shoo git! you're on
your own now you hodgepodge flocks of
wooly ruffians i've tried to shepherd you
to keep you in the fold even spoiled you
a bit with music long walks old songs
some bad whistling now it's time for you
to skedaddle to do your vagabond black-
sheep best
to take a run at what some call art

make tracks hit the road toads! coraggio!
don't worry about copyright rituals or rites
and all that crap you can't go wrong you
own us not we you we're just footnotes to

your troubadour yes's no's don't know's
and maybe's

so vamoose off you go leap soar bounce!
like flies or roses brought back to life
from some cracked amber tomb pound for
pound ounce for ounce adios amigos now
you are contenders make a peep sing out
eclipse your masters remind your readers
that when all has rung plunk your magic
twangers froggys find a princess or a
prince to kiss who may liberate you to a
certain bliss
and a cozy chair of fireside humanities

true to ash and dust and wreck and ruin
your silent song will find new eyes and
surprise! a crumb of dumb-born beauty
with a 'tip of the hat' to old ez's *ENVOI* and billy collins's
ENVOY

below zero

now the cold is like the forehead of my dead father lying
still locked in his box where i gave him my last kiss

the birds wherever they can find a blind of thatch
are two times their size feathers flared against the freeze

the wind has nothing but doom on its skeletal mind the
deer and their young just huddle in their beds of pine
this is when all the flocks and herds are culled when
everyone knows the weak must go will not be lulled

by the bony grimace of an accomplice december moon
for those contrarians who dream a dream or wheeze a feeble tune

too cold to melt the snowflakes hold their intricate lace
on rhododendron leaves in stacks and complicated geometries

the stillness of it all aspires to a below-zero hiss
and all thriving in their veins become one single wish

that legless faceless Death relentless as the lurching air will
strike some other one in his lust for yet another catch

**my three sisters happy
2014**

happy new year my three
sisters now that the old
year's done and the year to
be on the balance teeters let
us not be groggy with age
or rage but sage and though
not together tip a thankful
hat raise a glass of wine or
beer or something stronger
and take a breather
individually occasionally
luck being froggy in the
days to come in the new
year sun

sublunary perfection

when the january moon on the arc of full
and high high in the celestial stratosphere
brings its blue dove light to the pines and
all shadows are precise as noon every
needle's shadows finely etched on the snow
each flake so now so here that you know
it's not just the light and cold that causes
your measured breath to catch but a
sublunary perfection a planetary fact its
white whiter than some white beach dog
that has joyfully fetched some bleached
bone and this blue whiteness this old gypsy
brightness that has journeyed far to get
from there to here in the dark eyes of
anyone looking up anywhere in an instant
makes all time stop – an undone latch

**what all puppies and
kittens say** the saccharine
cliché of cute our paw pads
dark or pink stumble
bumbling in our attempts to
walk eyes dark as ink big

heads slightly bald slightly
blind asleep our only moving
part is our rose and black
noses awake in cozy poses or
caught between balk and start
jostling mewling in our beds
though just born brand new
we know how to work it our
cuteness is moot our
inherited animal art is a
survival stance in your open
palm snug fit each content
and warm
as infants in fur suits

cows sleeping content
udders empty only two of
the herd stand west to east
the rest deeply rest black
and white as a jackson
pollock painted in their
dreams on the new mown
field their sleep their
heaven like dough that's
leavened rising up
weightless
flying over a sward of green

spooked squirrel

looking out the window over my breakfast coffee i
saw a single gray squirrel under the old white pine

sserene seemingly content from a sitting position
he sprung straight up fur rocket to the sun

i wondered what form of love or hate piqued his sudden folly
and credited some small sharp-toothed grief or pain

imagined or living unseen in his squirrel brain
or hiding in prey in the pine needles beneath his gnarly feet

train in blizzard on hudson

the bridges half devoured by the fog
were phantoms the river a phantom
the hills far-side were there then lost
appearing disappearing reappearing as
the train defined redefined
all things clear morphing to a flurried blur

then the train turned cipher
dark inside a clutch of white
every fact edged in white a
disappearing act as a negative
appears to the eye
light things dark dark things light

white vase white tulips surely

we don't buy them
to watch them slowly die

as dull or bright all do almost
human their hymns

antiphons to our eyes (and
here's the shining measure)

ivory white as piano keys
they grow even as they leave

green bars of beauty
though cut a chanting treasure

patiently they advise us
we'll all be setting soon

each by each setting
slowly as the sun or moon

there here they are

there here they are my three-toed friends the
cardinal robed in red the junco charcoal-
breast the song sparrow dot-chested the
tiniest goldfinch now taupe no longer

yellow gold her body khaki green mixed
with olive dun the female cardinal her beak
an orange neon the lieutenant jay his blue
and white epaulets the belated crow
midnight blue-black depending on position
of the sun scattering at the shadow of the
marsh hawk wings in predatory flight the
black-capped chickadees smallest of all bold
and smart beyond their size the tufted
titmouse big eyes and tufted crown the mobs
of them a rising and falling feathered tide of
competitive species miracle a harmony
except for the predictable alpha-male or
between species squabbles more for show
than blood or dominance collective form of
preventive ordinance complicated as a
calibrated swiss clock their intricate
workings their shared urgency their
collective rush against sub zero and three
feet of snow they come and go after
sunflower seeds bigger than a cyclone of
pepper corns their hunger making them less
cautious though only arms length away i
know
through our window they see me
and like st. francis of assisi in
awe of their wirey tracks
an indelible delicacy each by each bright souls
of flying consciousness watching them feed
forgive the romance is like being an impresario
reborn with each play
a diaglieve in winter paris before spring arrives

said the moon

said the moon to the
blackbird of night you
are my true friend
as each dawn is my end

said the moon to the high
flocks of clouds flying
dark on the wing
with night let us play

said the moon to stars each
night new born let us
dance and sing and pray
keep day at bay

said the moon to the
sun on the rise
gently bury me deep
in your bright tomb of light

dry spell thinking
thinking
thin inking

leaves a parking lot
that the leaves grieve as they
shriveled and dry shoe-brown
oak and maple each edged in a
filigree of frost is proof that all
lost is never truly lost but bit
by vein by jot
things lost enable

birds in flight
their shining feathers an arc of circumstance and chance
bluebird's swift heirs dancing through the open sky
equally electric they and the air that sparks them the
softness of their gravity a mystery often overlooked
their songs communal illuminate the hymnal of the sun
the arsis and thesis of their surging wings flocks of
letters rising falling on sky's ancient book
who but children or innocents can gauge this transcendence

old goat through the bramble
patch woven with a thatch of
thorn at dusk the sky gone pink
night's brush washing all in ink
through the tunneled labyrinths
down the dark and funneled paths
since a hale and bleating kid i
have felt his gentle crook
prodding me leading me in the
same curious way that one turns

the pages of a book and more so
now that the dale of my spring
has flown away and i've gone
gray and old

the bed days when the bed is made
are days of light and order days when
the bed lies undone are days when the
mind runs howling to some ever
receding border
under a growling sun

a sight i wish i didn't see driving home
down a country lane there! two squirrels – a
couple? litter mates?
one crushed the other close to gone
hit by the same or different car? the
one still live back legs paralyzed
front paws clawing out of harms way
dragging limp half to road's edge i
thought to brake and end its pain
but lacked the will and killer brain

lear in my reign of old age
cold and soaking wet clothes
filthy and rent knees
knocking teeth grinding legs
weak hair white in this my
night to rue it is no shame to
confess that fear and guilt and
regret are as useless as fame
or a shark in a tent
i've forgotten my own name after
first forgetting all of you those i
love those i hate

that squirrels can
that squirrels can control their feet
and walk down trees heads first is a
feat gold medal status equal to any
olympic athlete's up down sideways
down facing down
gray acrobats and gymnasts

man in red slicker

the man in the red slicker
saunters past the bulldozer
covered in snow *Caterpillar*
yellow

snow drifting all around against
his black hunters cap morning
coffee steaming up
from a paper coffee cup

the only other colors the
sky and river's dun not
a solitary sound
a frozen silence abounds

genus: homo sapiens species:
the everlasting dream all
things waking on the run
source of all illumination: the sun

epitaph for a country rat i

found him mummified in a lid-
tight garbage can sunflower
seeds his bier and bed his crime
of breaking in was punished by
no exit interred in a full winter's
rations no cat or hawk or owl to
fear
though safe he died of dehydration

tulips from their cranial vases
the cut tulips stare they are
dangerous disengaged upstaged
enraged pink-faced whiter than
pale they insanely swear (but no
one hears them anywhere)
"how dare you cut us "sever
our fragile stems serve us
chlorinated waters and make us
overhear like most unwelcomed
boarders your boring ahas oh
no's amens we your captive co-

conspirators you more fragile
than we
we are dangerous

“you think we are not listening
the morning sun glistening on us
but how well how well we do is
this why you cut us and treat us
like a pile of stems yet you still
trust us and see our frail beauty
is always true we are
dangerous.”

ed's ode to his *olde* knee

farewell valiant knee fly away
like a pollen-swollen bee you've
been a lot of use to me for all my
marathon abuse forgive my
treachery now that i've got a new
one once it bends to ninety
degrees please excuse my
infidelities
think i'll go for a petit run
wonder what my other one
jealous or not will say
version one

ed's ode to his *olde* knee

farewell valiant knee wonder if
my other one jealous or not will
agree? or shout, “hey, remember
me!” fly away like a pollen-
swollen bee you've been a lot of
use to me for all my marathon
abuse please forgive my treachery
now that you've been cut out
replaced by a brand new one an
appliance that will outlive me
once it bends to ninety degrees
please excuse my infidelities
think i'll go out for a petit run or
dance a little dance
version two

fuse you are
the fuse i need
bomb

horizon

where you are i
rise and fall
beginning and end
to me you call
sun

stars may gods speed
thy arc of circumstance
pinpoints of light
whose way through
dark sky lightly bright
my day my night
thin sliver (i
the moon

candle without you
you alone strike
anywhere match my
taper unlit might be a
shame your flame my
life we light their
home i the candle

rain my drops dimple the
quiet faces of puddles
lakes and ponds concentric
eccentric ever widening
offspring in the millions
freely they flooding come
then tired of falling as
quickly gone leaving all
becalmed
i the rain

flashlight when on at night
casting light when off in day
gone dark i have found what

i was searching for without
having discovered what is
was or what it is i the
flashlight

autumn hay

when last cut i thought my
life was spent now in the
sun-warmed sweep of open
barn dreaming in the clean
olfactory of my autumn days
the little burro sleeps on me
her deep brown eyes prettier
than the pretty mare's now
she dreams of spring the red
wings sing and i am content i
the autumn hay

marsh ice

dark season dim and long
subject to whim of ice and snow
centurion and silent guard to
tomb of frozen pond now that
king winter's past i hear the red
wing sing the first peeper's
song my last joy is to be gone i
the marsh ice

stairs though many-tiered for some i am
one one way up one way down i am a
stationary connoisseur voyeur of
movement commuters' soles heels holes
in soles classic shoes or shoes too weird
i envy their owners' motion the emotion
in their stride forever still i wish for their
thrill their urgency when running late
their hesitance when dawdling to a place
or event they hate doctor dentist lawyer
shrink or awful test foremost functional
my styles vary the whim of architect or
urban planner with or without rail
straight or winding stacked like a
ziggurat or birthday cake baroque or

modern or belle époque accomplice to
falling or rising bannisters i am
pedestrian passage populist to
everyone's everywhere i'll never walk
from my bottom to my top i'm doomed
to being gracious about my eternal stasis
my lot's to feel the tap and clop
of the world's frantic dance
moving up and down with
or without significance i the
stairs

firearm

i fire doom-spark spew death
rain mayhem down at target
what or whom i'm ever
pointed at it's not i who pulls
my trigger but some cop or
con or crook or soulless
mafioso rat my liege's bullet is
blind as i am his eye he my
vision master it's not us! i and
my bullets cry we are not the
perpetrators blame our
creators who conceived us in
hate and rage as lead parts
flesh from bone as blood
makes earth or carpet wet and
finds a home in making
something breathing still my
mission hit mark make living
dead no special hollywood
effect i must confess I take a
certain joy in the revolving
chambers of my head in how
when struck they dance and
scream like ones ripped from
bloody dream i fire doom-
spark spew death rain mayhem
down at target what or whom
i'm ever pointed at i revolver

skunk

black and white phantom shy
midnight prowler shadow under
star light prince with acrid
powers i soft around and appear
in a cloud of scent-surround dark
priest of ripe olfactory i celebrate
my territory with a baroque mass
a handel's messiah of eye
watering gas claws caked with
earth little-man hands black paws
sly grub miner extraordinaire i
incense the country air cause dim
dogs however debonair cause
predators' eyes to tear nibble
roots new blades of grass as
blithe i silent spirit scuttle by
spring peepers stop singing long
after i've gone (kissin' cousin to
the coon skin cap) any living
thing that breathes (my presence
a memorandum) soon know well
to avoid me well before i arrive
i skunk

the wheel

i turn back on my self time and
time again whirl memories whirl
my spinning light a harlequin i fly
forward to where i began round
and round again no need to
complain compassion pleasure or
pain i own them as round i go past
present future in my spokes i
shake the harsh of winter out of
peepers singing in the marsh my
spinning my only gain i the wheel

the doe head thrown back
by the gleaming track
mighty hudson at her back
there she lay dead on her
dark gravel bed struck

while grazing bright
waters shining
not far from her head

nature

i have an intention of order but am never
disappointed by accident chaos mistakes disorder
chance havoc mayhem or the unintended reckless
centuries of my often unkind dance have taught
wrecking me to be skeptical of religion human
order and other forms of romance come what may
shit or gold i own equally

i'm an always razor-sharp reaping machine that
dices rabbits mice voles nesting birds and homo
sapiens with no wink to conscience strictly
driven by my infinite abundance to me master
commander in all eternity what's one human
gnat skinned alive my gift my predictable
inhospitable path - i season-cycle death and
resurrection one following the other never
daunted awake asleep always busy night or day
for vast me (some call me Gaia) a walk in a park
haunted by my redefinition of law or whim all I
do is live and die live and die give birth or kill
give birth or kill not once have i ever felt the
need to justify not once have i asked myself
why my sole inheritance i leave you humans as
you die
i nature

house spider who says no straight lines in
nature? who could ask in light of day for
more? staying hidden is my small vocation
proclamation of my after-midnight run my
thin cable straight from top of door to floor
while worlds sleep on and all TVs are off
industrious i spin thin steel as only i am able
proof of my hale nocturnal inspiration my
magic spinning makes all weavers pale
i house spider

anonymous

i don't really know how long
twenty minutes is or twelve

thousand years since i left the print
of my palm below my renderings
of bison mammoth antelope gazelle
our fleeting sustenance a memory
of their dance on the lion-yellow
plain the big cats stretch and dream
in a patch of sunlight in the grass i
go back to the smoky dark of our
tribal cave and celebrate the safety
of my return
the acacia limbs burn reaching
through the smoke of time i say in
pigment over centuries i once was
here i anonymous

cloud

i hover neutral over apocalypse famine
drought pestilence and celebration i fly
above the oceans' dance look down on
yachts and vessels under sail on tiny men
as boys look down on toys fleet above
beasts' herds as they prance across the
serengeti and the western plains as
children see their faces in still waters
above my white reflection with theirs like
a dream in ponds or lakes or streams i
follow or lead the great migrations reflect
the shifting light of sun as one season
changes to another i mirror great sky's
many shades
i cloud

carpenter ant

so i hitched a ride indoors unharmed on a
spear-leaf of daffodil hidden in a sheaf of
dozens yellow-orange centers snow-white
petals then black granite kitchen counter
found myself exposed to giant Two-Eye he
tried to tweak or tweeze me i fled he tried i
fled but finally caught more gently than i
could have thought i was carried by one
leg to the door he muttering no worry no
worry could he possibly have been
speaking to me he set me free went inside

put my flowered transportation into a vase
while i magnetized by my colony's drifting
pheromones set out to find my cozy
tunneled home after what by any ant's
definition would count as a very lucky ride
i carpenter ant

the present i am NOW forever
staying in power now nothing more
clever than looking neither forward
nor back a ship becalmed a lock
locked not yearning for time to come
not worrying about time that's spent
memory and anticipation all one
unborn to then or what will be i am
the infinite am the shifting static
traffic jam that while moving remains
the same shut in my shell like some
clam happy in the tidal shoals of time
forever i am NOW is my name i
the present

country telephone wire

collier de diamants the raindrops catch the
morning light all-seasons necklace of mine
they cling to me as i vibrate privacy carrier
of conversations of every stripe of news
blush bull and balderdash my simple line
black-rubber-sheathed runs from road to
cozy country homes owns an edge of
ornamental white filigree of late november
snows i process a hundred million bytes
through my conducting wires no voice of
my own i'm voice to all i have no fear of
lack of eloquence can speak in clichés or
humbly parrot jive and dance to insults or
true romance and best of all give phoebes
jays and robins who use me as a launching
pad to hunt a swaying tightrope on which
they dance i love their feathered lightness
their briefest perch on wired me a
testament to my connectivity i'm smitten
and stand in awe of each my every call

tragic or trite *collier de diamants* i country
telephone wire

ant lion

ever patient ever diligent i ant lion wait hidden beneath
the sands of my inverted pyramid until pilgrim ant or
beetle slides down my slippery gates victims of
gravity's laws in a flash of snapping jaws like all vain
or hopeful ones that pray yet get ate
centuries of no regrets for those that do or did

so long daffodils so

long daffodils whatever it
is that kills or wills some
back again i praise regret
and trust a mix of sadness
and mirth your stay a
matter of two or three
weeks a sweet too-short
song
weighed down by spring rain

failed resuscitation memorial

he was
an exemplary horned toad or was he a newt
or marbled salamander whatever to me
worth more than gold a gourmand with a yen
for live crickets or was it dried flies or pink
angler worms we knew he was a goner after
the parade belly up no sign of a pulse mouth
to mouth was out 911 a charade so many
little presses on his chest and encouraging
exhortations our desperation fueling we
hoped respiration in hindsight i was only ten
it was very zen my sister witness nurse
concerned citizen we felt worth a shot
though god said NOT so what the hell we
tried then buried him in memory he joins
tonto the lone ranger roy rogers davey
crocket lassie and rin tin tin
in the relentless scrapbook of what has been

chipmunk

hello small one i say out
loud to chipmunk skittering
though it's only him and me
near edge of uncovered pool
bodacious characteristically
chipmunk spunky
stereotypically our only
witness one lonely cloud
and our friend the sun now
the fleeting four of us
achtung he halts achtung
and looks so intelligently
as if keenly listening his
black eyes glistening i
wonder if he thinks at all if
he thinks my trans-species
call and big-mouth me the
fool or a good friend our
good song well sung

stabbing the i-phone

during my working week
when it rings too much my
ears they swear you dirty
ring and ring to stop your i-
phone shriek i see an ice
pick in our future my ears
they swear it won't be me
that'll need wire sutures

she rose rudely the

moon's lewd blush
suffused the marsh and
bathed the frogs in a
powder cloud of red she
rose rudely as if some vast
one looking over the
shoulders of those few
looking on had lifted a
sheet of tinted glass or
put a lorgnette to their
minds' eyes as lake and
hills basked

in an opera of rose surprise

reaching through the stone

i don't know how long twenty
minutes was in lascaux but
fourteen thousand years ago on
towering torch-lit walls
i left my palm print evidence below
my clay-red renderings of dun-horse
birdman eye of bull megaloscerous
bison and gazelle then our only
fleeting sustenance record of their
fleeting magic dance their great
escape ballet a dangerous hunt gone
well and while saber tooth sought
shade from sun's harsh glare in the
lion-yellow grass beneath the thorny
acacia tree wily i trudged back to
smoky dark of our high-ceilinged
cave to celebrate my safe return and
fire roast my fresh kill feeding wife
children family tribe smoke spiraling
up through cave roof
to the outside star-lit air my
paintings over centuries are my
pride proof i hunted well painted
brightly my elusive prey that long
ago i and they were there
and for a time like you survived

moving man

moving man oh moving man from
old homes to new ones from rise
to set of sun he busted his holy of
holies and his friends' pignolis he
toted bounced and schlepped so
many heavy box on boxes (were
they full of rocks on roxes?) that
when the move was done drained
dry of every ounce of pep he had
a body like a block legs like
overcooked fusilli feet like wheels
of a moving van

and glutes like baked stromboli moving
man oh moving man

a type of masquerade

the eyes meet the other eyes through their baroque masks questioning
where they might have been before they thought to ask banker
lawyer squirrel fish priest ferret crocodile hawk or jester what the
worried fear is what the worried get the brave just bravely bet get
fed have a drink a chat and walk or run from dark to light to dark the
prisoner in his jail the lord in his castle the monk in his cell the
things with gills that breath water with wings that sail the air all brief
assignments and always in their eyes the recognition that what's here
has been here once before the minuet of that longer breath when cat
meets dog that never subtle feint intuition that bark that there's no
such thing as death no such thing as a forever closed door as the
stone of a glance drops into the well of animals' eyes who know
what we don't and will never tell

the empty chair

alone my farm not sold my barn
my only room my cane seat worn
out barn's roof full of holes the
pigeons use as exit to sky at night
i watch the gypsy stars shy bits of
constellations and skeins of geese
fly by i sit a decade not sat upon i
sit and think of centuries each
seasons's new perfumes smell old
hay that sunshine warms
contemplate my antique chairness
miss my mother table sister chairs
their cane bottoms intact after all
the haggling's done sold for a
song no fairness in real worth and
selling price sagging barn and i
are one now half myself but still a
fact some day someone will buy
the farm the field the barn and me
i'll be restored repainted or burned
either way a liberty

thumbs

we thumbs ain't dumb
smartest two of the ten it's

only when bruised broken
or sprained that one
becomes a pain a bloody
throbbing bum just
between me and you
good thing we are two

dead pine

though dead i still stand stubborn watch
as the stubborn seasons wheel around
my roots failed to eke a living from
this dry acidic ground nomadic ticks
prey at my base rebel to all things
green and boring my needles gone
brown still clinging a has-been but
here's my catch i now stand out am
better seen
i contradict spring's frantic race

watchtower

under my thin ladder a litter of debris the bodies
of rabbits rats and pheasants and that always
worthless peasant man frozen in that ballet
moment of their fall when their blood made rich
the earth in their final flight from death to birth
the cozy sniper perched in my high tower after
every kill smokes a power cigarette and chalks
another coup stroke on my black wall
somewhere beyond the loops of razor wire
beyond the searchlight's enquiring glare beyond
dead pines at edge of camp the carrion birds
wait patiently and you can barely hear the gulag
wolves call

how to get a cat to smile

talk and talk and talk and please for
fine cat's sake adult talk no fake
infantile cooings to him or her tiger
marmalade tabby persian calico or
black-and-whitey talk and talk and talk
about anything talk tenderly hold out
palm of hand or finger tip so they can
sniff have a smell be inspired to rub
themselves on you in appreciation of

your gesture and your skin's olfactory
stew pet them with admiring tones
words too though they only know a few
(it's not what's said but what's meant)
when they approach and shake a tail to
telegraph their shy impatience
and head bump to imprint you show
you get their subtle dance think of how
your time with them your simple act of
petting is a vetting a human form of
divestiture of care a letting go of your
own mind clutter a cat catharsis an
anamnesis (a recognition of a past
existence) praise things they do so well
things gallant elegant and true like
sleeping instantly or staying limber and
remember friends or fools drink deep
from history's bitter cup humanity's
mostly a bunch of tools fact is you
can't get a cat to smile they always are
all the while

cats can't laugh

cats can't laugh or chuckle
else their bellies buckle only
purr
goes better with their fur

odd words do

zoom odd that
"elephant" in the
spelling room
close to "elegant" looms

rip tide

i love to hear my criminal waves roar as they pummel to smithereens proud land's sandy shore but even more i adore the wide-eyed screams of one too-weak swimmer too dumb to see that swept out by my relentless currents sad he soon will enter the realm of ex-human beings remembering his luckier hours at home on terra firma and thinking of quilts clean sheets cut grass and as he drifts out of control midnight snacks pee breaks cell phones Netflix and interactive TV as land and life rush to fade away on my swells in my harsh embrace i too see that the spaniel fetching swimmers in the surf motel flags flying the confetti of umbrellas bathers small as ants are a closing door viewed by him in panic regret and sorrow as if through the wrong end of a cruel looking glass and in the ledger of rights and wrongs to know he now drifts head of class i rip tide

not a mechanical toy

they were not a mechanical toy
though the two seemed like one two
pileateds mates or brothers?
imagine a branch-free escalator tree
and the two red caps in hunt or play
pecking parallel right then left they descend

hunting one and then the other descend
in play more likely prey
the bugs that fled to one side

thinking they were scot free and
would live another day
were eaten by the other waiting one

compassion

i am the blunter of rage the force that
gives meaning to age contradicts
infirmity terror deformity that stymies
the devil pompous and proud
his brother hate strutting on his stage

i am the conquistador of apathy that tends
to the untended the ones unseen upended
by cruelty by fate those ignored only seen
by those who win no profit in righting
wrongs

i am that gentle force like water that wears
down the boulders of bitterness the song that
lives lodged in the heart and brain
born in those blocked too weak too tired to feel

i am the wheel of karma that blesses the kind
hand of the unseen deed the unrewarded
mercies of those most keen
to cry out to stand for acts of mercy

i am the soul of liberation from all lonely hesitations
left on the shelf of the insular ego clinging to a

shadow of its best self prisoner freed from the cruel
wheel of dharma

i am the center of peacefulness the gentle song
of mindfulness that banishes inconvenience and
puts aside greed
endures pain to bring healing and wellness

i am the well of the genial calm in disaster the deep
call in the vortex of chaos the dynamite blaster that
explodes the closed eye open
the animal instinct that sings live not let die

i am the friend of the friendless the angel
that accompanies every lost soul the unity
that makes the broken whole
the give in forgive that illuminates all

i am the one not to be ignored who never
condones too easily turning away from the
smallest of horrors in true light of day
the great hand held out to all trapped in disarray

i am the self beyond the self flying above all whose
mantra is pity and love ever present at dusk and
dawn like the morning dove the thing that takes
wing against all odds and sings

i am the principle of clarity the unheard
practitioner of faith hope and love the
masterpiece to be found on the walls of caves
things that disdain the clock wait to be unlocked

i am the doctor the sower of sutures who
raves it is not just pretty to think so who live
in the realm of know right and do so
who sees in everything the dare of the future

i am the enemy of irony and arrogance the
antidote to the dance of cynicism and lassitude the
leveler of smug attitude and complacency giver
of joy shatterer of the materialistic trance

thank god if god

thank you merci bien
most gracious god if god
that has saved me from
bitterness and fear i
insignificant clod
continue to find you
whoever you are on
your paleozoic train but
a passenger
among many in one car
not like the bible's Job
having won the lottery
small torments pains aside
in gratitude like all to
finally be fried hoping
for some strength as a
lilly or butterfly as the
journey continues thank
you

incarnate

under this carapace of gristle and drying skin here like crickets
scuttling through their tiny stratosphere our epidermis heir to
our father's and his father's sins is this the accustomed sum of
what we have become a preplanned song at dusk or dawn to
greet our buy-ins and once we've climbed the hill to an
offending age how diligently we look for a rune a ruse a
cunning explanation some shelter from the face in the mirror
in a drop of rain from thickening corpuscles spider veins
clogging arteries from flatulence of tired mind forgetting how
it used to be how we wonder could it be this complicated
comical our tits fall down our bellies billow like plastic bags
the stalling out of the once-clean factory of our interior how in
the silence we all feel are we now fuel for file and fire fools
on a wheel dizzy undergrads spinning in a carrel returning us
to what play script scene end unknown forging on no
endgame in mind to some blind tryst starry-eyed ever
optimistic colder than the lonely moon is this each cricket's
wish on his climb from grassy rise down garden path on his
way to meet the hungry mantis?

what's a recipe?

a recipe is an attempt to embody love
in food a strategy of preparation that
leads to celebration delight in a
special point in time when someone
throws away the clock
makes delicious a thing of beauty

a recipe is *mimesis* that says do
this then this and so doing you
are me here with me noodles
steaming the scallions diced
fine white to dark green an
accounting of a lovely thing a
passing on of a delicious
memory

a recipe is a fleeting captured rhyme
elegant simple as rain not work a
snapshot or blueprint of play more than
a hint or vague definition something
like Donne's valediction a shortcut in
plain stated diction pointing to another
tasty day

sings without tiring

one: there is the cliché of vagrant wind
a kind of mercy in the swaying trees

two: there is the humdrum sun
old silversmith etching the edges of leaves

three: there is the goldfinch and his stubborn trill the
fire of it igniting all things on the run

unrehearsed this hidden feathered thing
this little king in the shade of hedges canopy

of all things that shine and blaze
this shining morning by none is he outshone

by no shadow cloud or note overcast
his vast domain he owns the universe

brightest of this day's bright things he
sings without tiring

a birder's life list of imaginary birds (continued)

the extravagant escargot slayer
the sanitary stool swipe the
thunder auction auk plumber's
ponder wit the mulberry
laughter lark dudley's do right
thrush the simpering
sympatico the oleaginous
grebe the stultified stew wren
the bilious bog borer the
equestrian saddle hawk
the understated uberwart the udder
dove the sedentary sphincter tingler
the erroneous earwig plover the see-
through pipit the dew clover cock
the spangled bunny sparrow the
marrow masher the integrated itch-
wit the solitary snap murmur the
proboscis phoebe the slipper puffin
the cross-tabulating cassowary the
pompous perch horn the doody
darter the singular snatch wallop the
ergonomic clock hen the pustular
ponce pecker the inner sanctum peep
morsel the farting fizz toot the
spinner snoot the egalitarian stomp
catcher the strutting tut swallow the
gadfly bunting the furry feathered
finagle the awkward ant poach the
frisbee follow prompt the howl-
weed hawk the ululating pigeon
snitch the blue-backed peck digit the
vegas snicker tort the yellow-bellied
truth tarnish the red-crested adipose
the turquoise-toed toad tuck the
bogus lotus willet the two-toed true-
bloated lotus willet the pomeranian
peek wimper the short snort snort
the tall snort snort the stink-toed
walloon the cerulean crumpet
crusher the tasseled deviled egg

egret the synaptic sturgeon stork the
pusillanimous beak burrower the
surrogate grub Grinch the crenelated
calendar jot
the giant marshmallow dabble the
nigerian guzzle quirk the mystic
tick gulper the silver martini
robin the slutty sturgeon ibis the
estonian extreme ecstasy egret the
wooly worsted woo woo the shy
don't-do woo woo the elongated
whack pod the foreshortened
whack pod the simplistic tick
choker the mountain laureate
pecker the stingy crematorium
crane the black-winged coffin
chuff the belfry beetle shovel
duck the pileated pizza plover
the duck-duck duck the dim-
witted red eye the salty strangle
crotch the impervious blue boob
wit the cerulean thesaurus the
dusky poltroon catcher the
polygamous bark snipe the
chocolate ponder rap the rufous
testicle trounce the rustic woo
woo the steely strum thump-it
the squalid lid ptarmigan the
tinny cricket croak the tango
warbler the brazilian wax hatch
the adversarial bust nutz the
imperious id cracker the slimy
ego scooter the goofy glut twitter
the needle-beaked blister pipit the
muddled minotaur munch the odd
aardvark owl the white-throated
torch wailer breugel's balalaika
buzzard lady gaga's grebe the
stradavarian sludge gull noodle's
king nuthatch the mute Mercedes
mallard the rainbow ass thrasher
Milton Berle's schwantz parrot
the seditious cyanide starling the
bodacious blog swift the
incendiary ink-chinned canary

lulu's leering peregrine the
dunderheaded shriek dove
penelope's pulchritudinous
pudenda pullet wittgenstein's
blurb shrike the congealed
canopy cuckoo
the fur feathered fox finch

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 colleague anaselfa dressuppe
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 i was missing my
father so long gone in our bathroom where he fell
the floor white with inch-wide octagonal tiles while
sitting on the toilet nothing to read if you stared eyes
slightly askew hard enough
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 vegas 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 or a nation's heart withstand given the heart's need to love and dream and can one 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 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 pierogi 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 bulls-eye 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
at 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 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 become real

catalpa white

the catalpa flowers in grape clusters
weak under waning light of dusk
slowly they close their albino buds
fireflies blink on and off all a fluster
as if to say goodbye day hello night as
if an unseen thing says they must
legislating summer's dark luster

on lust lust rides its prey down a
peg and up and down a peg again a
lubricous between-the-legs vaseline
or KY jelly love of cock and cunt
silky sticky nightclub path of the
polymorphously perverse the more
delicious the erectile yearn the more
futile the future burn
the more play the more pay

lots of friction without a true friend
stroking the reptilian driven id in the

joyless end unrequited privates hung
flaccid on the dusty shelf of self a heap
of limp one-eyed pirates and memories of
screwing lots of phonies final outcome:
paying lots of alimonies thinking about
what raw has meant
maybe an STD a futile trembling skin

jaded often this side shy of impotent (here – do
google breugel the elder’s “temptations of saint
anthony”) parable about waste of time and sin
and other medieval cousin allegories the orgy
master salvador dali’s portraits bizarre eros
dreamed over and over again this note to you
not from a moralizing pundit but from one
dumb fool who’s gone and done it

mirror

i the only one absentee in
the chimera that is me
greet man god and infinity

alte kaker

old owl here i is here i
still be grateful for a poop
and painless pee the sun is
up making hay coffee
steaming in my cup the
birds are singing hip hip
hooray avoid all things
fried growl as i stretch or
reach i have my scoop of
kellogg’s raisin bran my
cats well fed know i’m
their fan what i don’t have
i will not miss picture of
my wife i kiss i’m
satisfied tickled too call
each fine day
small victory

old lion

old lion great lion mouth all
twisted and askew deaf with one

ear drooping half felled by a
stroke god's toy no longer new
why when this maasai mara king
scion of might and power is
slowly taken down by age with all
his pride and waning rage why
much sadder the demise of one so
wise than some scrawny plodding
bloke old lion great lion

for-rent names for rock bands

your mother's tourniquet
no-legged stool spike
butter log noggins pussy
lozenge
slam weedleute the
sissy sisters
the triple pierogis
squeeze monkey
seed miner skull
juice the snake
angels gutter glob
slime flowers pulse
noodles buddha's
purgatory neuro
wallop flesh rocket
electric eternity
smoosh monster
the bagels loath
dirge bona fide
the pluck bones
crystal testicles
glass boatmen
drip feed
strumpet mongrels
life size
gorilla toe
skunk sizzle
ponce hog
knuck;e
skittle benders
the hamsters
ape skull

the turtle girdles yoni
hammer frog plumbers
long cortex treacle
sprocket splurge grasp
gasp the eloquents stun
grope the dawdle bawds
lick dunk and the dippers
nasty finger the cream
buns
the solid dirigibles funk
farm
the photogenic protons
amoeba angels the
inflated thumbs the
traveling poltergeists
lung couriers
visionizims long neck
nerds squawk ball ogle
grunt

the nostril as pencil holder on those
bright contemplative days when big ideas
emerge hulking from the haze

before you write down
what appears profound

use your nostril as a pencil holder
few things comedic ally bolder

right next to philosophers
and their self-important dirges

as we get old and puffing older poking
fun bursting bubbles mostly done

too-big shoes tumescent red noses
slipping on banana peels we the clowns

what the years say
obey obey

in love or out married or not in
one relationship or somewhere in

between the only happiness you
can control the only paradise
that's yours is your own

obey obey

to obsess on one new or old
is slavery self-imposed the
chains though invisible are
stronger than physical you
need to possess only you
the true road to happiness
is your own house in order

obey obey

yo yo the STRING to which i am attached
some days i love some days i hate i spin i
laugh i cry "rotate!" no matter how hard the
tricks i learn as i learn only let me go so far
among our multicolored tribe half circles
joined by central dowel yin yang there once
was one who cut or burned the THING that
kept her prisoner some said genius some said
dunce who at limits of her gyroscopic loop-
de-loop rocketed away never to be seen again
some said lost some said crazy some said free
good thing yo yos never marry
she left bereft no spinning widower

on my 67th birthday

o gods of light and mercy in
my maybe dotage banish
my bitterness diffuse my
anger my rage melt my
every stubbornness my
sloth my indifference if
only to provide those
closest to me those i love
those by my side a slightly
smoother ride like a pair of
riding chaps or
warm fit of a woolen mitt

marsh hawk

the marsh hawk on the telephone wire his
striped tail a patient metronome
he casts a razor eye on his marsh below

waiting for one warm-blood to move its
slightest stir giving prey away
to sudden bolt of silent doom

he cuts through fur cartilage and bone this
butcher king snug in his hunting room
never tires of killing at home

flushed i'm going down
down down and down
down around engulfing me
this ferocious funnel a
gyroscopic tunnel a
voracious gyre a fly
spinning
in a bowl just flushed

cerebral cortex on fire excuse
my getting all girly what's
got me is not clowning as i
gasp my last gasp and breathe
my last breath yes i know
things are dire but i guess it's
a sight better than being
crushed

thank you catalpa

thank you catalpa for your grape-cluster flowers
in droves on the grass faces up lunar white
eclipse under your arthritic limbs a saturation
bombing not quite moon white what happened
to your sister locust's flowerings tossing petal
blanket on the lane behind you how did i miss
them like violins
complementing your heroic cello

thank you catalpa for color coding the bands of
marching clouds the big high rolling cumulous ones

in cartoon regalias scudding beehive bestiaries of
imaginary beings morphing into warner brothers or
looney tune heroes in mardi gras white parading

thank you catalpa for your heart-
shaped leaves the size of
celandine dinner plates sanctuary
to troops of tiny feathered
troubadours from talon of hawk
and kestrel and peregrine you
save your burst of white 'till well
past june
proving even the old and gnarly can bloom

walk ahead of small farewells

walk ahead of small farewells
malcontent or joyful imagine
all the trains leaving all grand
stations all swimmers all
shores all birds their nests all
fools their foolishness

the future will always be
a casino of revelations
heir to loss or gain
imagine all closed doors
as just about to open
your self but a drop of
coolest summer rain

the small iconostasis of 'I' cut blue opal of
a hotel pool wedge of granite entering in pointing
to the emerald putting green and tennis courts just
out of sight the trimmed trains of privet hedge
wait silent in their cultivated stations everything
and everyone playing unselfconscious
so obliviously alive

at the frayed end of too many boring hours and formulations
'so what!' sings the sour chorus of the unimpressed

the grackles and the magpies strut officious pompous
parrots patrol pool's sparkling edge the palm trees
sway their caretakers away the clink of cups and forks

and spoons and knives the thrum of the waking hive
the hum of conversations waiters all in black and the
small iconostasis of 'I' everything and everyone
playing unselfconscious
so obliviously alive

at the frayed end of too many boring hours and formulations
'so what!' sings the sour chorus of the unimpressed

this might be a glimpse of paradise a universe
light years from tomorrow's hells everything
conspiring for now to make things well yet
lurking in a shadow stand of pale bamboo a neon
life preserver alien from an alien land likely never
used is an off-key premonition something for now
at bay and dangerous everything and everyone
playing unselfconscious
so obliviously alive

at the frayed end of too many boring hours and formulations
'so what!' sings the sour chorus of the unimpressed

iconostasis: wall of icons and paintings separating nave from sanctuary
in a church; portable icon stand that can be placed anywhere in a
church.

dream

when they lay my head
on that final bed of rue
i'm as certain tickled
too and satisfied as i
dreamed i once lived
my work won't die nor
fail to give

the smallest of smallest things

the smallest of smallest things that elevates
the good above the mob raw cooked
simmered stirred deep fried that thing
ignored by the hopeless stultified the ones
who say it's not my job the ones heads
down who never look is the one
irreplaceable beloved thing
that in the dark laughing glimmers

quiet the old kite

quiet the old kite the shiftings
and driftings of the too-
conscious mind the railing
rebel of ancient skies the
forever winking why to
discover the unfettered to bring
forth the untethered that which
is hidden the blinking obscure
unkind and kind raucous or
still that which enables that
which can kill that which
heals or cures one precious
vein no divide pleasure or
pain truest alchemies our
only guides holy river of
golden ore uniquely mine
uniquely yours

simcoe vole

the other two died instantly third
feisty one not quickly enough trap
sicked his lower third wounded like
a buckshot bird screeing a febrile
scree futilely stubborn paws
pawing to break free
as roast turkey got sliced festively

we took him out to edge of lake
released the bar that broke his spine
with a sugar maple twig he could
only front-paw crawl through the
damp ash of camp fire cold
memory of the night before
small country squire charcoal gray

our conundrum was not so big let
him expire on his own rhyme death
by water or human intervention a
kind no-convolution execution
crushed his swooning head one
stomp laid him down to sleep least
pain final solution

counting to ten

'one' is always calling back
all things regretted stalled out forgotten

'two' is remembering things all
that one lacks and hopes to do

'three' is yearning to be free free of
thought as lakes or one burning tree 'four'
is deciding open? or closed?
why and how to pass through each new door

'five' is burning living alive
shucking the dross shucking the jive

'six' is finding the ever-giving center
that lever that lives forever no tricks

'seven' is never hoping for heaven
dying or living but two forms of leaven

'eight' is to destroy (oh boy!) all forms of calendars all
plans fragile as the scent of blooming lavender

'nine' centers breath and straightness of spine staying in
state of grace in the zone as a lone algonquin pine

'ten' is unlatching the latch of the pen the
transubstantiation of now to then from
shut (oh pen!) to forever OPEN

algonquin shorts

dark clouds rushing in fly
over vast lake and islands
rain drops on sun glasses

the sun is the eye of
a gargantuan face
looking down on all

waters have gone black silver
white and shades of gray

afternoon's canoe

the one seagull's cry sounded
like 'help me! help me!'
no one needs to help

loud wind loud waves shout duet
voicing their concerns
sun peers through storm clouds

the birch leaves tremble
sweet their anticipation
young they expect all

cloud shaped like a moose looks
down on islands below
sun draws his long bow

each wave a body body
to body adjourning
home returning home

suddenly the loon red eye
glinting in the sun
soon the sliver moon

in fall

in fall river's edge all ochers and umbers all
the leaves their endless drifting numbers
the oaks all orange the maples violent red
vermillion bells in millions tolling silently
today they toll for rivers of you and me

a fork a fork is never
cloying a fork is just a spoon
with tines good for spearing
meats or fish useless for soups
or wines even less as a brush
good for under-table stabbing
of annoying conversationalists
when must not turns to must

autumn is a rusty bird

autumn is a rusty bird sheep
eating whole pumpkins in
dirty woolen herds autumn's
a hungry spin sheep and
birds living words no bibs in
their nests or cribs

redtail october

to watch the redtail rise born
on a draft of october air is to
feel a rapture close to daft to
reel in a blaze of harmony to
fly above the brush of fall's
great rush all the leaves
curled up and swirling
morning playthings of a smiling gust

false to say what you sow you reap in
fall harvest's bounty goes to all which
is why earth dresses for success
season blessed with greatest victory
making winter just a time of rest and
death an act of hope and glory
like chasing after a wind-blown cap

man in white pajamas

on the second floor of the corner
unit with the floor-to-ceiling
windows the hope of traffic
roaring below at seventy-ninth
and lex the man in white pajamas
was skipping rope and watching
himself in the mirror skipping
rope in his white pajamas

for william carlos williams's 'the red wheelbarrow'

crow with one milk-white eye

when the proud fan tail of peacock fall spreads
orange golds reds and rusts on hills and fields and a
colloquy of crows queues up on power lines

like jurists waiting to call justice just or
living in the dark then turning on a light or
the descent from noon to autumn moon

i see one gone dead in eye from branch or raptor fight and
imagine this half-blind crow with me feels a harmony and
so in stubborn grace we go

butterfly in fall i

watched a butterfly mistake
a falling yellow leaf for his mate

i wondered is this how Faith serves
bright breath true compass at our death

stink bugs

they make their foul presence smelt triangular
brows thick as hockey pucks if you crush one
you never will again they appear late fall and in
winter's deep outside or in home hatching to sun
or hearth heat it's better to fold them in a cowl
and gently usher them out a window than to let
them trouble you at 3 a.m. in bed crush one
landed on you head only many shampoos will
rid your hair of the putrid stench of them there
they have a pretty rainbow cousin who's stinks
as bad or worse they all should be gently placed
in a galactic bubble and propelled by nasa to
outer space to stink up other galaxies

fly fishing in montana

cast your fly hare's ear nymph midge
or caddis on the surging autumn stream
jefferson madison yellowstone or green
and wait wait gently wait how
supremely delicate the fat rainbow's
take how dreamlike the strike how
violent the broken spell
of the reel's well-oiled scream

momentarily

two yellow maple leaves
collected by an october wind
pressed to screened-porch screen
old stamps in autumn's album
engraving none can rescind fell
small wild merrily by raving
winds blown in fall all fall
together collecting a form of
recollecting

imaginary flowers

how long since my mother and my father died i
never again visited them grave side yet every day i
bring them imaginary flowers counting the petals
of years months days and hours no one can tell us
when we will join them in the well manicured
cemetery of our minds then may we all be one in a
new now like being sent from a suffocating room
to some peaceful place on a crisp cold night light
snow falling under a crescent moon this husk of
time a thing of faith and trust

sleepy cats

o sleepy cats sleepy
sleepy their faux fur
throw cozy as geronimo's
teepee sleepy sleepy o
sleepy cats

roadside sign by quaker

grave yard

*"333 3333 'call for
leaf removal"* better to
beg forgiveness
never ask for approval

armageddon

of endings i sing death in the
chapel of the dusk death in a
sunny room death in empty
head's hush all they heard

was an apocalyptic boom and
the tiny rush of the fast wings
of the last bird

the cardinal admirable
admiral as he leaves snow
explodes from his blue
spruce branch like lost love
recalled
when all is spring and green

in the deep of night he owns
something like fire in his wings leaving
cold observers locked inside with
something like a splinter sting
some place deep inside their souls

flag

these my feeble anthems to our crazy world may
they fly with ease in time's winds unfurl
let them die burn be desecrated walked upon ignored

my best try to talk back to the cosmic burly hurl
the tectonic canon shifting and grinding of what we
make of this our great unwinding that

let the record show i tried not to bore
nor kow-tow impress or please always
followed YES never NOT

garlic and the baby jesus

all the world does love you garlic your naked
ivory body here nude with us this day to remind us
of the baby jesus so pale in his swaddling warmed
by breath of ox cow donkey magis' and
shepherds' company the christmas tradition (some
say craze) to praise and celebrate this endless
chain of infancies mary and joseph wept sensing
the pain to come
the herd-hard hearts and ignorance of man's scorn

the endless maze of atheist blasphemous or agnostic
the faithful (some say deluded) full of hope and trust

with or without the aid of john barleycorn like you
garlic and our daily bread or wine all share your fate
from the manger rushed each to be in preparation
crushed by time each to be drunk and eaten some
call it transubstantiation some magic mystery nailed
naked to a cross a loss or victory
Christmas 2014

firewood

each cut one each
limb cut is a body
or partly one the
fire-eaten many
souls deserving a
tiny hymn the
small equaling
the burning all

confession

my first wife's tears were
broken mirrors shattered glass
on marble floors violent as
violet black as blood stitched
into my heartless eyes moaning
doors in an open field under
dark skies still they fall
implacable cold impossible
splinters nailed into my bones
haunting as starlight price and
prison of my pride

quadriplegic

you olympic bug wrestler
unable to move black fly
inching up your nose
refuses to budge your so-
called doctors lugs holding
a grudge stick many
hopeful needles in your
legs and toes a medical
vengeance for what crime
if any
who can say who knows

mistaken identity

like two books well read
traveling from country to city
as i slowly woke well past
midnight in the early
morning gloom i mistook the
blue light in my room for the
blue light of the moon when
in reality it was the ghostly
glow
of my witless tv

old shoes

since christmas 2003 easy on easy
off winters long years since she's
been gone and i after the war first
born my mother's practicality
reappears
trudging through dark of snow and sleet

tears cheers seasons tectonic shift all
sharp edges find a rounding
through blizzards of days and years
can you hear gabriel's horn calling?
still walking in my mother's gift
my old shoes and a drifting song

winter deer

near end of winter deer at
dusk dark hides each a husk
phantoms in a train-like trail
prisoners in winter's concentration camp

cages of ribs walking hope on rote
if they think thinking "surely one
heroic bud will pierce this arctic
crust
and all spring will follow

thrust after thrust after thrust
one by one by one our
bloated bellies hollow
reduced to debarking twigs
chests deep in unyielding snow

legs like sticks noses raw our
herd of living dead plowing the
same hungry trails the same
starving labyrinths
we dream of fields of green”

pencil in hand

pencil in hand like
lepidopterist nabakov nerves
on high alert butterfly net ever
ready for exotic species agog
skippers mallows dusky wings
pygmy blues pine elves
buckeyes checker spots green
commas monarchs oxeyes
fritillaries mourning cloaks
satyrs western whites
hairstreaks ruddy coppers
brimstones belle dames wild
browns leaving behind all
baggage of city and town
pencil in hand i wait for
inspiration's flutter wing to
fly so ephemerally by
to write one living thing

cars in parking lots

cars in parking lots riverside
on hudson like mountain
marmots nation resting side
by side their windshields
blinded by blankets of snow
varmint vehicle hibernation

stink bug at 3 a.m. a
stink bug flew into the
corner of my eye put
compassion to the test i
brushed him away saying
think bug to stink bug you
putrid pest you born-to-
be-goner do your best live

or die another day fly
away

the plural of lazarus mid
march near end of winter almost
spring almost april little "lazuri"
or "lazaruses" from their snow-
tomb tunnels the chipmunks
emerge squinting dazed emaciated
crazed drunk on sleet rain and
fresh air starving hobos wide-eyed
blinking in bargain-store roaring-
twenties furs waiting for stubborn
old earth to thaw to feast on bulbs
of daffodils and crocuses

golden trout

i crave the barbless hook by rich-God
sportsman cast (feather quill ear of
hare wrapped in fine silk filament
complements of beads and eyes
chenille yarns hackles hairs or hides
metallic threads tinsels colored wires)
that frees me from my element and
takes me to another firmament raises
me up slave to river's currents
up at last into the wild montana air

gray dog

this day is a gray dog his back to
bear mountain sleeping
rolling over onto his bed by frozen hudson

this day is a cold dog the roof of his
dog house the open sky
a fitful rain leaking down changing to sleet

this day is a wet dog trying to curl his
body into a smaller ball
awaiting spring's call and all things warmer

this day is a good dog who has lost his
way his master long gone jerking awake
and growling back to sleep

this day is an old dog dreaming of a
summer time treat dozing through noon
heat on a cedar porch

half hearing laughter of schoolyard children at play ghost
dreaming a memory of a tasty chew bone
on which a greening june sun once shone

squeaky

squeaky sleeps all day
his truth his light his play hey!
that's the righteous way old
chubby cats do pray

spring peepers

another spring
another year to
hear to hear the
peepers sing

what the violet said the thunder of the
peepers in the marsh rolled over us from dusk
through early dawn lion-headed dandelions
accepting daffodils and i among the first cut
cruelly down with the first spring mowing of
our lawn

viola tricolor popular names: dog violet, wild pansy, johnny-jump-
ups, tickle-my-fancy, three faces in a hood, come-and-cuddle,
heartsease, heart's ease

forever

i am a grinder of bone
and flesh more or less i
am wrought like a
sword of fine steel or
the right word i embrace
mystery i am the wheel
that reels the thunder in
the thunder of chaos
infinity and wilderness

april

april is an agitation of birds cardinals
waking the red dawn geese bringing
down the sun as they make their beds
on the velvet dark of ponds corona
borealis and virgo shining down on
backs of the peepers' chorus
the size of paper clips x's on their backs

april is an adulation of greens of
crocus whites and scilla blues
the scalpel blades of daffodils
opening to their yellow flowers
the dull moon a pale nickel
round whetstone of lightest
silver sharpening the black saw
edge
the horizon line of blooming trees

april is a rowdy instigation a once frozen
thing gagged mute now singing out from
winter's tomb she smells of leaf rot rain
and loam the many headed hydra
pushing out of warm earth's contracting
womb no fear all joy all now all here she
smiles as every wailing thing is busy
being born

chip shot i don't golf but
watch it on TV if i had one
wish i'd wish my life a chip
shot impossible to make at
a major PGA tour that
follows my stroke to the
illusiv cup lingers on the
very edge and to crowd's
obliging roar drops blithely
in not wishing for anything
more

sage? advice

don't expect don't
ask or live for don't
build on the notion
that happiness or love
is in the bargain

so when at your door they
frantically arrive like
prodigals lost now found or
some missing sock or glove
embrace them as windfall gain
don't ask for more

the feeling of what happens

after sun rise and bacon and eggs on a toasted onion roll outside
dull unruly sun losing out to a low sky of battleship gray barn-side
woodchuck crowned with a bright dusting of spring snow this is no
time to run a race make a fuss or fight a fight but a chance to savor
a postprandial bout of mortal lethargy as the central and autonomic
nervous systems do their duty the early day's dictionary opens to
the strange word 'somnia' something in here or out there surely
must be monitoring this dance like some perfect prefect of
discipline in a rowdy boys-school dorm the incorrigible opening
and closing lotus of the body's day is born each temporal artery
beat corresponds to the echo of an ocean wave was it ralph waldo
emerson in his sixties foreseeing his grave who torn by early
symptoms of his alzheimer's said philosophically "i have lost my
mental faculties but, oh, i am perfectly well" ?

then the houses all began to cry

when the children all went hungry
none could read or write the dog and
cat and parrot died no birds perched
or calling none singing on leafless
trees outside the putrid air the waters
rancid everyone forced to stay inside
darkness erased anemic light
everyone was frantic angry more
murders and suicides clocks and
doors all locked no one could tell the
time
then the houses all began to cry

wish

wish i could live like the
red bird does fly
no thought to the future
never wondering why pure
joy on the wing under
bright awning of sky blue
lakes and rivers below his
nest in the marsh among
cattails and reeds when at
rest at home
only then does he sing no
more no more than this
does this clever one need

BROOK NO TITLE

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