BILL KNOTT'S BLOG BOOKS - 2008

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June 04, 2008

COLLECTED SHORT POEMS 1960-2008 by Bill Knott

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PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimum cost)———

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ALL MY THOUGHTS ARE THE SAME

collected short poems

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

*

When I began writing back in the 1960s, the short poem was popular. That vogue soon ended, but stubbornly or stupidly I continued trying to write them.

All my poems and my short ones in particular are indebted to Robert Bly, who encouraged my early work \dots

Regretfully over the years I have failed to live up to the promise that Bly and a few others thought they saw in me back then when I was young. . . .

*

The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

*

EXAMPLE

All my thoughts are the same length—they're lines, not sentences: you may protest that on the page they seem dissimilar in their duration, but I swear to all you unregulated readers-of-prose, that in their passage through my mind each of these took an equal amount of time.

PROPHECY

When I stepped up onto the TV to see what channel I weigh the card I got from the slot said You're going to travel far away don't forget to leave the remote

LOVELADE

The sea is the cargo of empty ships Moon bears the sun when it's gone My face with the trace of your lips Will fare from now on and on

[UNTITLED]

after the carnival suddenly mysteriously burnt down they stirred the fortuneteller's ashes to try and find the reason why but sadly it seems prophecy does not work in reversus

SONG

When my shadow falls off of me I yell "So long!"
But when I fall off my shadow
It cries "Long so!"

It seems obvious
That one of us
Is either falling wrong
Or calling wrong.

IDEAL ESTHETIC

I only keep this voice to give to anything afraid of me

PRISONER

What raw name scrapes and saws at my breath-hatch . . . This voice wanted always only to soothe, not grate. And its last noise, that rasp, that deathrale scratch?

—A file, smuggled in to an empty jail cell, too late.

GOODBYE

If you are still alive when you read this, close your eyes. I am under their lids, growing black.

HOMEWORK

Dear boys and girls, please don't forget to underline my words after you erase them.

MISANMYOPE

I know that blinking lubricates the sight and keeps it safe— ¬but did this World-Eye really need the lid of my brief life?

HAIBUN: THE JUGGLER TO HIS AUDIENCE

One must be able to juggle at least 3 things to be a juggler (2 is not enough). But whatever the 3 things are that one juggles—whether it's (for example) father, son and holy ghost; or mother, father, child; or id, ego, superego: whatever this minimal trinity consists of—the juggler must acknowledge that his audience is not external to the act; and the juggler must confess to that audience:

One in my hand,—

one in the air-

and one in you.

TO A DEAD FRIEND

mourning clothes worn inside out would be white if things were right if opposites ruled

then me and you would be two instead of the one we've become

if truth prevailed

DEATH

Going to sleep, I cross my hands on my chest. They will place my hands like this. It will look as though I am flying into myself.

MESSAGE

I am a messenger sent to find the genius in everyone here, because it alone is the true recipient of what I carry it alone can read the code this note was writ in: it alone is the genius in everyone but me, which is why I alone can bear to bring it to you.

AT THE CROSSROADS

The wind blows a sheet of paper to my feet.

I pick it up.

It is not a petition for my death.

FRAMEPOEM

million 440 thousand frames, or stills: take each frame, blow it up, print it, put a frame around it, then take all 1 million 440 thousand pictures, hang them in a gallery, consecutively in a line so that the first frame of the movie is the first picture inside the door and the last, last: you get the idea. Then have the people who come in RUN past the 1 million 440 thousand pictures, so that in this way they become both spectator and projector.

First, make a 100 minute movie. Then take the 1

SHOWER

I tie my handkerchief to a kite to try and dry the cries of the clouds up there.

Pour, pour:
oh, if only
I hadn't loaned
my umbrella
to that submarine!

MY FAVORITE WORD

"Attentionspan" is my favorite word because I can never finish reading it all the way through.

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

I lay down in the empty street and parked My feet against the gutter's curb while from The building above a bunch of gawkers perched Along its ledges urged me don't, don't jump.

VOWS

The commonplaces of the wedding ceremony would like to go back and marry the proposal's florid words. (But isn't that love?)

THE FATE

(for Anne-Marie Stretter)

Standing on the youthhold I saw a shooting star And knew it predestined encounter with the sole love But that comet crashed into the earth so hard Tilted its axis a little bit not much just enough To make me miss meeting her by about a yard.

WISE SAYINGS

Sitting under a tree in the forest or under a chair in the house wise sayings may pass by unheard or worse may be misheard through all these leaves and legs.

EN PASSANT

While orbiting the earth at a height of one millimeter I notice it tickles.

PENNY WISE

well alright
I grant you
he was a fascist
ahem antisemitism th
er war and all
I'm not defending them
but at least
you've got to admit
at least he
made the quatrains run on time

Note:

2 puns explain the title and last line: "Penny wise, pound foolish"—
And: Mussolini's admirers used to say, "Well, he may be a fascist, but at least he makes the trains run on time."

[UNTITLED]

The trafficlight on Lovers Leap never changes to red.

[UNTITLED]

scarecrows placed on the airport runways to frighten the fish away ah if only I were as admirably tasked

SKIRT

My hem has a snake threaded through it to hold it down when the wind blows and then when the wind is still to give it a twist of tremor.

POEM

the door is open but the wall which the door opens continually waits for it to enter

FAITH

People who get down on their knees to me are the answer to my prayers

то х

Somewhere in history
Somewhere in untold ages
Somewhere in the sands of time
Somewhere in the vast seas of eternity
There is one person
Only one
Who could understand me and love me
And you're it
So get with it

[UNTITLED]

Before going to the palmreader I glued mirrors to my palms, so the irrevocable lines and configurations that told my fate were merely reflections of the reader's eyes, eyelashes, retinal imperfections which time will perhaps deepen to blindness . . . I was about to p.s. this poem also. What do you see, O Sibyl?

SYMMETRIES

How mirrored this merging: it's like lover/loved— The poem aligns us and aims to make our skins Correspond, each of your pores barrel-grooved With one of mine, clone-gunned: then void opens Onto void, grid-ideal, union, see, it joins! First of course the skins have to be removed.

NO-ACT PLAY

I'm sitting alone in my rented room.

A door knocks at the door.

I don't answer.

It goes away.

Later I leave the room, and go to my crummy job.

The door returns, and knocks again.

It is admitted.

NAOMI POEM

The beach holds and sifts us through her dreaming fingers Summer fragrances green between your legs At night, naked auras cool the waves Vanished O Naomi I kiss every body of you, every face

UP TO THE MINUTE

A jet falls on a cow.

Part of the animal sticks out and twitches like the usual closeups of the hero's jaw.

Children I admire play in the crushed cow's shadow.

And even the plane itself has been left atop the skeletonized milk-giver,

clouding one's dreams of a bloodless coup.

[UNTITLED]

on the one hand but on the other hand I rest

NOTE (NAOMI POEM)

I left a

right where the nipple cheeps kiss in each nest of the black bra hung inside your bathroom door.

THANKYOU, TANKA

Was it out of kindness I dropped a compass into the volcano so the lava will know which way to flow.

SANS

To cross-section a pinpoint, reveal what quadrant still exists. Oh keyhole-cleaved, data mint. Tin ion, meet iron quark.

Grasped at or loved-

It's a cease orifice.

NAOMI POEM

When our hands are alone, they open, like faces.
There is no shore to their opening.

POEM

The pose heightened in desires, the pose.

The several lovers in their young arms.

MUTABILITY (Polvo serán, mas polvo enamorado)

Quevedo wrote he would be dust, but dust in love—
And while I can't believe that millions from now
A rose and a quartzstone will embrace, I can believe
Still less that my arms are around you here: or how
Your sharp crystals
Are tearing my petals.

SLUM SCENE

poor children sharing back and forth their one set of Dracula's teethhere even the dead live hand to mouth

NAOMI POEM

What language will be safe
When we lie awake all night
Saying palm words, no fingertip words—
This wound searching us for a voice
Will become a fountain with rooms to let.

ANOTHER COLD WAR POEM

So what if you lived only
One second longer
Than we
Did: to us
You will always be known as the Survivor.

RETORT TO PASTERNAK'S ZHIVAGO'S JESUS

The centuries like barges have floated out of the darkness, to communism: not to be judged, but to be unloaded.

Note:

See the last lines of "Garden of Gethsame," which is the last poem of 'The Poems of Yurii Zhivago,' the verse supplement to Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago.

(POEM) (CHICAGO) (1967)

If you remember this poem after reading it
Please go to Lincoln Park the corner of Dickens Street and sit
On the bench there where M. and I kissed one night for
a few minutes
It was wonderful even if you forget

BANG BANG GLUB GLUB

My ark/my life's-boat had two of everything necessary for salvation with the exception of two bullet-holes in its bottom hull.

RECAP

It was that kind of day the kind that goes through you like a skewer but is okay as long as there's someone beside you waiting ready to lick the skewer when it emerges from you

UNTITLED

Unscarred unscratched Unnicked as the bottom Of the lost wishingwell.

POEM

See the unicorn's empty sword, how its lack takes place in a lack of place.

Nothingness is its own niche.

FRAGMENT

Because at least one couple is making love Somewhere in the world at all times, Because those two are always pressed tightly together, Hatred can never slip between them To come destroy us.

PHOLK POEM

The soup is lumpy.

Well then, pour it out.

The soup is lumpy.

Well, pour it out then!

The soup is lumpy, the potato soup.

ALAS

yes I allow each fool to toss around my skull but remember I tell them remember it will finally always land in Hamlet's hand

AT THE MUSEUM THIS WEEK

Poland Through The Centuries a touring Exhibition of maps drawn
By German and Russian cartographers reveals There never was a Poland.

QUICKIE

Poetry

is

like

sex on quicksand therefore foreplay should be kept at minimum HISTORY Hope . . . goosestep. [UNTITLED] Photographslightningbolts which, their shadows having caught up with them, perish. **POEM** The dead paperweight rests on my lips, occuring to me like a cry from the words it has crushed: think of what it saves from scattering minds and windows' wind-drafts, think of all the blink-wafts of Argus trying to read this. **POEM** Doesn't each tree throw its shade to show boundary to the others' thirsting thrust? Only the roots are brothers; the roots are the forest. TO COMPLETE last one in the sentence is a rotten old period **SEANCE** Around the readiest table a manicurist with a hammer nails in place our hands together to keep the ring of our focus clung and hold our communion open: like jousling airliners the dead must circle before they land

along the medium's tongue.

[UNTITLED]

Rice thrown from an open grave marks the height of a ceremony somewhere in our lives.

HOLISTIC

Before eating the cherries I pinched my cheeks to get in tune, in tint—

OLD JOKE FROM THE TED & SYL SHOW

Hectoring her as usual with a bark in His bite wit, Ted tutors his young gal Syl: God, he scold-quotes, is in the details. She grins and wanks his chin with pinkette nails And winks that mock-erotic spark in Her eye: You're wrong, you bodkin, you big moose, You handsome sod: God is in the profile—Got one, and you're God; you're Ted Hughes;—Don't got one, you're Philip Larkin!

ANOTHER RESURRECTION

God sucks off tombstones until they cum, the soul up from its finest gloryhole gushers across His tongue—

Only the premature flesh (for the last time/eternally) is left to detumesce, just another BJ, another JC.

POEM

My cheeks threw themselves as fuel into the fire of the kiss and then in succession the rest flesh bone all features flowed thusward until my entire body was gone burned away in the flue space that held between two mouths turned ash the heart or hearth that cannot last the night.

[UNTITLED]

each a prey to self's salt though impervious to sea's mermaids must never weep their tears would rust erode their scales their souls

[UNTITLED]

Fucking; nightcrawlers smashing my anonymous.

JUNK

Nothing evicts our everydayself (our (as Heidegger calls it) they-self) like a glimpse of that tenant within, Occupant Corpse.

And to think that all the mail addressed to it is elegant throwaways.

HAIKU

The sweat on my forehead shines brighter when it's in my eyes.

STUMPED

I wish I could count up to one without first cutting off nine of my fingers

CONTRIVANCE

The perfect artist is the one who manages to die at the hands of the critics.

PRISONER EXCHANGE

After I replace the bars of the cage with my bones and replace the bones of my body with the bars, will I have escaped?

[UNTITLED]

A nose surrounded by a flaw hark, that's my face

DIRECTIONS

A kite in the shape of a map floats over the land it depicts,

but at night no-one sees its roads at the end of which a child feels

his hand tugged upward, disappearing in salutations.

WRONG

I wish to be misunderstood; that is, to be understood from your perspective.

[UNTITLED]

Nothing could be born if there didn't already exist a metaphor for it, or if the whole world wasn't a metaphor for the non-existence of this nothing, this none-too-future something.

POEM

The most private part of the clock is the hour, no, I mean the minute, or wait, the forever.

The most private part of me is the heart, no, I mean the nipple, or wait, the never.

OR NOT TO BE

Not Hamlet but his shadow shows the clarity of performance see how brilliantly it holds its stance, soliliquy bold and brando.

But then of course it is like all such primadonnas, liable to be much too much dependent upon its prompter, the sun.

[UNTITLED]

Some have a bodied voice Their tongue its skeleton Mine's a wraith Waiting for a wind

KNOT (Hendecasyllabics)

After you've sewn it, bite the thread off my grave—Please leave no loose seam of me to wave above The bones unknitting, the flesh unweaving love.

THE DAILY ROUNDS

I keep a TV monitor on my chest so that all who approach me can see themselves and respond appropriately.

PUTATIVE POEM FROM SAMURAI ERA

he made a haiku before his blade took my head why not a tanka tanka would have let me live fourteen syllables longer

HUMIDITY'S TONES

Four AM, nothing moving, no hurry, dawn still has time to be choosy selecting its pinks. But now a breeze brushes across me—the way my skin is cooled off by the evaporation of sweat, this artistry, this system sombers me: when I am blown from the body of life will it be refreshed? I dread the color of the answer Yes.

NIGHT THOUGHT

Compared to one's normal clothes, pajamas are just as caricature as the dreams they bare: farce-skins, facades, unserious soft versions of the mode diem, they seem to have come from a posthumousness; floppy statues of ourselves, slack seams of death. Their form mimics the decay that will fit us so comfortably someday.

MY RIVER

The closer it gets to the sea the more it aches for its source, the wound that sprung it from the ground.

NOTE

After Cocteau wrote in his journal that "Beauty limps" he did not go out and break his leg.

PARANOID THOUGHT

My roots are twisted entwining lovers, Couples passing me on the path, ignoring me, Always pretending that I am not their flower.

PAST FUTURE

Idly wondering if the underlined items in one's itinerary are more likely to occur.

Ditto diary.

TYPE-CAST

Of course I refused all roles until they offered me the lead in "The Co-Star Killer"

STRANGLEHOLD

9 planets and 1 sun make 10 holes into which the fingers go so smoothly but who is wearing these gloves that orbit my throat

OCTNOV

Stickum leaves fluttering down Pin unpin each path's compass

The season on our sleeve has shown Another course for us

FEARS (CONT.)

niche niche niche the birds go seeking a covert

eclipse eclipse eclipse my shadow hides behind the sun

this this this every corner finds a crevice to keep

wish wish wish the oldest word pacifies the youngest infant

THE GETAWAY

It's 1969-and I'm

All lam: down These libertysplit streets U.S.A. I

Throw a measuringtape out, run its length, Throw again, run, Throw, run.

TRIP

- . . . Jesus walking on the water
- . . .keeps tripping over
- ...the flying fish

STORMFORM

All the lines of this poem would like to contain the sound of the rain against my windowpane, but I'm going to have it remain here.

FOOTNOTE

All of us who lived on earth and all our loves and wars probably won't appear much in the moon's memoirs.

from A BACHELOR'S TANKA

copulation entries in the diary there are none I'll never have a daughter or a son no woman wants my wrong to go on

[UNTITLED]

so here I am if truth be told feeble and lame either febrile or cold senile-years-old

CHANGE

Why don't the ranks in a marathon carry little piggybanks, and listen to the coins shake as they run; wouldn't that be an encouraging sound.

(Oh surely I can't be the only one the sanguine clashing of cash spurs on!)

WHAT I SAID

Humor is banned in hyena heaven.

[UNTITLED]

are there some invulnerabilities too hard to bear perhaps the bulletproof vest stabs itself in secret

'QUOTE UNQUOTE'

Who wrote that we use our children to forget the size of our parents, or is that really a quote? And if it isn't, and if I forget to write it, does that mean that someone will—

But what if someone forgets to write the words that bring me here, that let me be born? Oh micro-mini-soul, you, my shirking ego, your quotemarks would just hang there in the air

like wings without a bird.

MAY EAGLES GUARD YOUR GRAVE!

The weird thing is, I can't remember if the above is a phrase I read or heard somewhere, or if I wrote it myself. (And, is it a blessing, or a curse?)

DAYS

Ceilings ring with morning's occasions; but evening's toll us to the floor.

[UNTITLED]

I beg myself bare I cry my knees For a pennyplease A share

[UNTITLED]

in case it forgot was the apple not reminded to rot before being put into Eve's hand

POST

the one skull I'll never find between my teeth is mine

anyone else's skull I may (all the dystopians say)

have to suck the brains out of if no food remains

postnuke postplague (I'll crack it like an egg)

AUDIENCE

Murderous the fist of their paws condemns us all to die of applause: in this circus minimus even Coriolanus must nurse and gnaw and showcase his scars when the next closeup comes.

DEAR ADVICE COLUMNIST

I recently killed my father
And will soon marry my mother;
My question is:
Should his side of the family be invited to the wedding?

[UNTITLED]

only when the welcome-mat is exactly centered at its core can a labyrinth begin

ANCIENT MEASURES

As much as someone could plow in one day They called an acre; As much as a person could die in one instant A lifetime—

то х

You're like a scissors popsicle I don't know to whether jump back or lick

MY LIFE BY ME

Every autobiography longs to reach out of its pages and rip the pseudonym off its cover.

HAIR POEM

Hair is heaven's water flowing eerily over us Often a woman drifts off down her long hair and is lost

ALTERNATE FATES

What if right in the middle of a battle across the battlefield the wind blew thousands of lottery tickets, what then?

PERFECTION

Cueballs have invented insomnia in an attempt to forget eyelids

3 A.M.

Time to pare down, pull in, simplify; —I'll buy a dark coat, move my lips when I read the bestseller lists . . .

POEM TO POETRY

Poetry, you are an electric, a magic, field—like the space between a sleepwalker's outheld arms!

MADE FOR EACH OTHER

Today a fashion-model stopped me on the street
And asked me to marry her because
She said
She wanted to eat all the rat-poison in the world for
her wedding-supper

THE THIRST

Light through the green leaves drinks an absinthe of itself,

entering the earth as forthwith, as fleshed.

Sweat dripping from a sundial regulates the time for those who wait their turn at the spigot.

TWO EPIGRAMS FROM A NOTEBOOK DATED 1984

1. [The ageing epigrammatarian]

Youth's engine of thumbs revs and purrs—

When young

Oh: I am all fingers now.

2. [Plus ça change . . .]

I was attracted to what they call Older women.

Older now
I am attracted to what they call
Old women.

BEDDYBYE

Just hope that when you lie down your toes are a firing-squad

I SHOULD HOPE SO

Next year when this book is pulped and the pulp recycled to print your Collected Poems, will I still be here still writing this?

SECURITY

If I had a magic carpet
I'd keep it
Floating always
Right in front of me
Perpendicular, like a door.

POEM

Flinging your door keys into the wishingwell will not unlock the secrets of what you wish for

down in your own depths, and is not even funny.

SLEEP

We brush the other, invisible moon. Its caves come out and carry us inside.

POEM

All my soapbubbles dance on daggerpoint. I throw dice while jacking off and cum snake-eyes. Where there are twins one is wearing a mask. My enemies list consists of nothing but autographs.

[UNTITLED]

that poem I was working on in 1959
and the half-done one-act play from 1969
the novel I spent 1979 starting
the painting I made sketches for throughout 1989
and the website I planned to debut 1999
are around here somewhere
maybe I should
finish them up today

WHERE

are the arrows that

have bandages instead

of feathers at

their ends

OCCUPATION

Error is everywhere, but one might hope that the graves of surveyors would at least be dug the correct distance apart.

POEM!

Shh, you'll wake up the stains on my bedsheets.

POEM

Night, in whose death did your ennui take refuge?

The women all lay their kerchiefs on the water, and stepped back.

POEM

The brow is the face's map, on which can be read the twists and turns it took to get here. Yet the seams and cracks on one's footsoles show that only through detour can the road reach itself.

WHAT ABOUT PENS?

Always remember that day follows day, but night precedes night and that your hands are merely microscopes for pencils to look through.

LOVE, HATE, LIFE, DEATH, MAMA, WATER, ETC.

If everyone on this planet was forced to write one word on a piece of paper, their favorite

word, the resulting anthology might add up to less than Shakespeare, who had, or so I've read,

a 40K vocabulary: wouldn't most of us just put down the same few words; how many could

resist the usual abstract homilars, our limited minds consisting of each other, non sequitir. I would

be ashamed to show that book to my UFO guests, no matter how repeated or urgent their requests.

MINOR POEM

The only response to a child's grave is to lie down before it and play dead

HOLY SHIT

Gosh golly Galway Kinnell's pig is holy and I Am holy too and so are you and gee if I could only Find the name of the right saint to throw in here they Would print this next to his in all their anthology.

Note:

After Kinnell's "Saint Francis and the Sow."

THE FINAL WORD

Our farewells lack the plausibility of our departures.

STORM: FARMBOY DREAMING TO REACH THE SEA

I skiffed up rivers and creeks of lightning till thunder split my covers

and down I drowned lung by lung to a stone of salt the cows licked.

TANKATOWN

This island has
Been discovered by a great explorer,
But fortunately,
News of the discovery
Has not reached here yet.

BREAKFAST

You know how I like my dawns god—'ll Just tap off this nubei-pink 'n' 'n' Call yuh call That a 3 minute dawn?!!

You need a new timer old timer

POEM

The amputation of my stilts has left me leveled, eye to eye with what should have been cut off, myself.

ADULTERER WITH NO MOUTH AMUSES WORLD*

Not having a mouth is no joke! Imagine an ax left by somebody, sinksank into some treetrunk: and each day you go by, the embedded ax seems higher, higher, until finally, one day, jumping, you're just barely able to brush the fine of the grain of the bottom of the axhandle with your fingertips—and yet the tree has not grown. Nor have you shrunk. Imagine: imagine trying to explain this to someone if you didn't have a mouth.

* Newspaper misprint

THE RUINS-READER

I-beams uphold that wall— You-beams bolster me: guess Which one is going to fall. [UNTITLED] I tried but they wouldn't let me put tombstones on the merrygoround for a ride **EVICTIVE** If the body is a house, eventually that house pushes us from its rooms out onto its ledges. Age must live on a ledge. **COURSE** Our ship needs wheels to sail across these waves of stone if Medusa is our figurehead. [UNTITLED] Nakedness exists only an instant-Quickly becomes flesh, becomes thought: The night is a torch of comas . . . [UNTITLED] As a detail in a painting frames that painting in the often memory, so, for me, your face is surrounded by your eyes. Aura! **INTERRUPTUS**

Wait. What are you.
I'm a poet. I write filler for suicide-notes. Like:
I love you.

Alright. Continue.

[UNTITLED]

Once I had to leave you so
I arranged for earth-tremors at night
so in your sleep you'd think I was caressing you—

THE AMNESIAC'S NAME

Whatever it is it is The only alias

Anonymous never uses.

POEM

If the poet could say to everybody, "I release you from your duty to me so that you might tend more purely the grass and the trees and all the earth," then the poet could say to eternity, "OK, let's go—we're free."

WEIGHED

Always jumping from one pan of the scale to the other, always trying to measure your absence.

THE TENTATIVES

If the arrow is merely An elongated bullseye

Do I know this head (Target that grins and winks)

Like mine surrounded By eye speedbreaks

[UNTITLED]

Searching it goes, alone at night, —my beacon of ashes.

A STROLL IN THE COUNTRY

Here for ear-rings my lobes Are pierced by scythes Whose handletips bump along The very ground I despise!

[UNTITLED]

trying to find the name five letters first letter J of an ancient prophet or god which I need to complete my cross word puzzle and my cross

SIC TRANSIT

Tangentially
the sun
unites itself in us,

forged by our transparency into another shadow to avert one's eyes from. [UNTITLED] They wandered through the hand in hand. ODD Hard rhymes of childhood ride me back to lack's kitchen in which it's leftovers again: from the cyclops cupboard I plop another half-ate Ulysses onto my plate. ENLIGHTENMENT OR SENILITY? The night is paced with stars Day spaced by birds' wings At last the spread of things Has replaced my particulars [UNTITLED] Octopus floating in earth's ink-ore core whose arms extend up here as trees may your branches squirt their black across my pages please **FLAWLESS** Mopbucket toed across a jeweled floor. To scrub down between these gemstuds is hard, and yet I have to cleanse every dust-shard that might perturb the great ones who walk here.

Only rubies diamonds pearls and other beautifuls can their bare soles encounter.

[UNTITLED]

Check out the Obituaries—each day there's another page and guess what, those fucks, there's nobody on it but us.

METAPHOR VS. METONYMY

As the hand carries on the function of the

sleeve to a somewhat absurd degree, so you could take over for me if we ever finish this sentence, whose period is its cufflink.

VISION

moon of all means sun of all ends

this TV screens whatever day

or night sends me away

SUMMER DAYS

a butterfly with a sandwich bite out of one wing flies away from the inhabitoads of our shadow or tries to

[UNTITLED]

Do they let you still keep your crutches when they crucify you, as if you could even manage the goshdarn things with your hands out like that. Heck, they'd have to nail them up to your armpits.

LUST

The parachutist wearing stilts so long they reach the ground Wants
To jump anyway.

SNAGGYPOO SNUGGUMS POEM

Morning always lets down strings, knots of light to be untied by our hair—but by the soar of night's coiffure, all them puppets lie back in their cots.

FINALS

My classmates wrote the answers on my skin in invisible ink then during the Test set fire to me

They passed I passed away

PROGRESS

I advance a few whines,

then am driven back twice as many whimpers. WINTER SUN Full-stop, period, dot, erased at times by birds.

Or asterisk, whose footnote

clouds our breath with words.

THEIRTOWN

a lack of streetsigns shows those who live here more fortunate than us they never need to know where they are

TRY ME ON FOR SIZE

by one thought after another, though strangely it seems to fit none of them. And yet somehow that hat never goes out of style.

My head is put on and taken off

[UNTITLED]

the past and the future are my parents meeting for the first time when I die

[UNTITLED]

now that I die my past becomes as endless as my future used to be

[UNTITLED]

Eternity gnaws its thirst.

Its tusked planets rut suns raw.

Its grapes mist the sea.

But sleep flows to the fallen.

MAYBE (TO X)

in a sea of cacti

a stopsign stranded won't grow needles maybe but then

even I take on some characteristics of human when I'm with you

[UNTITLED]

Silence disguises itself as vowels, but the loudness of consonants is also a ruse, a mask worn to betray the words we chose to say only for their echoes.

[UNTITLED]

a jet zooming by
may see climbers on a cliff
and never know if
those souls ascend or descend—
to the fast slow has no end

[UNTITLED]

The shorter the poem the longer the words.
The shorter the poem the more endless it must be.

[UNTITLED]

Age retracts me, filling my hands with shirtcuffs as I shrink, reduced to secondchild. My skin is smoke from a paper house, my hair.

Prepare a needle sea for me to walk on.

(Prepare me. Make sure my cries are wrapped up in a leaf.)

31 (TRUE) SYLLABLES

even the wisest
(even the esteemed poets
who when I was young
acclaimed me as promising)
have at times been proven wrong

PAINTING VS. POETRY

Painting is a person placed between the light and a canvas so that their shadow is cast on the canvas and then the person signs their name on it whereas poetry is the shadow writing its name upon the person.

FOOTNOTE TO CAVAFY

Sure hope them barbarians
Will allow us to pay them
To take photographs of them
Before they slaughter us.

BAD HABIT

At least once a day, everyday, to ensure that my facial compatibility with God's is nil, I smile.

[UNTITLED]

mute/hard forboden words line the mountain down which we melt stones that wore our trickle tongues away

LESSON

Even if the mountain I climbed Proved to be a duncecap really, It was only on gaining its peak That that knowledge reached me.

ESCAPE PLAN

I examine my skin

searching for the pore

with EXIT over it

BASH (ten versions of furuike ya)

If I were a pond and some frog jumped into me I wouldn't respond.

I am a pond but when a frog gets intimate I keep my mouth shut.

I may look like scum but some frogs can poke this pond to orgasm come. This pond is so old even its frogs want it sold to build the new road.

This pond is old as

Frog-visits, I doze.

You're old, pond—the same as me. But when your frogs come you recall each name.

This pond is year-scored as me. But frogs that shake it

me. That's how bad-off it is.

up just make me bored.

I'll float in this pond,
fearing each frog that jumps down
will wash me aground.

This pond is old too—
But when a frog jumps into
It, it still sounds new.

This pond is dead earth But listen to its rebirth When frogs take a bath.

FURU YOU, EEKY YA

Ya, the old wash-hole wait-a-fuck—a frog?—oh, no! goes splasho Basho.

Ya, the old North Pole
where Santa Frog (ho-hop-ho)
chops a splashin'-hole!

*
Ya, old-boys brothel—

watch Oscar Wilde get Basho

to wet his tadpole.

*
Ya, here's to Basho!—
there's one frog-boozin' dude you

Ya, here's to Basho! there's one frog-boozin' dude you should raise your glass to.

*
Whoa, Ranger Basho!
frog-herd's at the water-hole—
leggo your lasso.

POEMPATH: PERIO

POEMPATH: PERIOD

Each syllable a steppingstone till you stumble on this one.

EVERY RIFT WITH ORE

How fiercely foilsome the facial knife drives its two blades up to where the forehead ends in wound-deep wedged widow's-peaks: how weakly the old hair-line hero fights back and fends, each pass of day fewer gray-strands save me—how deadly due's the duel our sword lives.

[UNTITLED]

Hamlet in the nunnery kneels to take his veilful vow while Ophelia scales with sword and bow the enemy's walls

MY THEORY

The universe's mission is to expand, all scientists now agree; yes, but why should that be its quest, they question—

Based on my experience, my theory: if one remains in the same place, one must pay rent, life's made me understand.

Landlords and gods may never agree; but meanwhile, see every galaxy sneak out the back, starcase in hand?

BATHROOM MIRROR

Every morning the glass empties my face of its night and then as its day is poured in I feel forsaken and my eyes strain longingly down the drain.

MOVIE-Q's

*

Ben Lyons was typically blunt in I Cover the Waterfront his cute co-star Claudette Colbert could have frenched it: 'Ze waterfront, I co-vair.'

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman is not a film appeals to everyone—but I, I like the way it feels, I guess, to have a whole town look up my dress.

Although by gorgeous Gene Tierney he was loved, and loved sincerely,

Richard Widmark proved pretty shitty. The flick? Night and the City.

.

Those Incredibly Strange Creatures Who
Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies blew
my mind, man. Like wow! (-Was I crazy? Was I sick?
Maybe I shouldn't have watched it through that Thai-stick.)

•

Basic Instinct 2 avoids the great esthetic error of 1 by not having any Moviestars appear but the sheer Sharon: its other no-name actors fade to shadows in this Dantean vision of the heavenly ("Eat me!") Stone alone up there on the screen.

.

I know Jack Nicholson played a cameo and Elton John played a song or so and Ann-Margaret played his mommy but who the hell else was in Tommy?

*

How many of you gazeekoids went yumyum
Watching that transmutated geek Jeff Goldblum
Rip off his own ear and eat it? The Fly was great!
(And if he'd unzipped his fly, ripped that off, and ate?)

٠

Oh sight that might have made an atheist of God, seeing the screenwriter-producer-star of Panther Squad —auteur divine, Sybil Danning—opt to not go topless!

(Even John the Baptist 'd put it on his flop-list.)

.

Where Garbo got the great John Barrymore
To play the part of her perfect paramour,
Poor Joan Crawford was stuck with brother Lionel:
Life is c'est la vie at der Grand Hotel.

.

It's a crime shame that that scene where Sean Penn tied his wife Madonna to a chair and then put on her dress and licked her thighs got like totally cut out of Shanghai Surprise.

*Note: I don't know if the Movie-Q constitutes a form per se, but I made up some rules for it: the complete name of the film must appear within a quatrain rhymed AABB. The Movie-Q must try to be funny, or piquant, or pointed. Etc., etc., though actually I can't think of any more rules.

POEM FOR NOW

I live bent over now like pages folded down in books, the ones I meant to get back to but won't. These are my dog-ear years.

What I write now
will never

[UNTITLED] perhaps I still wake up I still live perhaps but I hope I hope I do it for sloppiness sake POEM The thumb is the scoop of the hand and often it empties it. Tongue head ditto. **GYPTIAN** architect of the Sphinx must have sketched his first plan knelt down with a finger to draw lines in the sandisn't that how he began? AND SO ON suicide sex it's so much fun you take 3/4ths of a fatal dose and then fuck till you pass out you cunnil her or fellate him while they slit their wrists and then you call 911 and so on VANT First, cover yourself with chameleons. Then walk down the street. The one who recognizes you as you is your enemy. The one who recognizes you as Greta Garbo is your lover. **PUN SON** mom on her mattressside with me incide rests

be read again.

or rather orestes

BUFFER

if I could surround myself with stuff to steal diamonds cars or lures enough then the thieves would never reach me to rob my lashes limbs and love like they do now

[UNTITLED]

The snowman's luggage is always enroute.

INTHREADABLE

each snowflake's a maze whose center no other flake can find the ways to enter

[UNTITLED]

mirror smashed in a snowfall the flakes will find each face like themselves to be unique as long as it remains lost in the blizzard of shards

WAS

Age 20 to 40 everyday I said "I wish I was dead."

40 to 65
each day I cried
"I wish I was alive!"

65 to whenever daily I'll whisper "Wish I was either."

POEM

Even when the roads are empty, even at night, the stopsign tells the truth.

WORSE

All my life I had nothing, but worse than that, I wouldn't share it.

[UNTITLED]

having found a penny atop a weed's aureole however it got there is it wrong of me to look for bucks on roses

[UNTITLED]

someone's lost handkerchief pinned on our community bulletinboard and I thought to just touch it just touch it that's all honest I wouldn't have done anything else

[UNTITLED]

clearly my eyeglasses need cleaning but but I wasn't looking at anything

IMPOLITE

in the conference den impolite to strain one's neck past all the faces talking to read what someone left scribbled on the wall

IN VAIN

I like to look at myself in the dull gold of the frames that contain erotic paintings and, as I gaze, ask, as if I cared, "Will moonlit lashes continue to surround sunlit eyes?"

WISH I COULD (AND DO IT IN 31 SYLLABLES)

like someone whose quick halt in the midst of traffic to check his wrist makes him late for that appointment that's how to think about death

[UNTITLED]

the sixth sense is what the first five use to delude us into thinking that all we do here is see hear touch taste smell

THE TRINITY

I don't recall the faith I was born with I don't know the faith I will die with all I can do is hope and pray that the faith I live with differs from them in every way

THE COMMUTER'S DREAM

Every morning an afterdinner mint dissolves around us. In it, cars touch,

like tiny hands at a football huddle—
-headlights. Rush-hour pushes through mist

or dark its stubborn, pre-peekaboo path; a worm fed into a pencil-sharpener.

TOWERS

1.

Pisa's power to bend the head sideways must be envied by history, which can only force it forwards—and Babel of course is praised in every book (on every page) for the way it slanticulates our words.

2.

Galileo drops a pound of lead and a pound of feathers from the top, one of which hits you on the head, but which one—
(which head?)—
It makes you think, as well as stop.

3.

Every tower around here is always in need of repair, due to the superstitious habit of leaning over to peek into its 13th floor to make sure it's still not there.

4 TRANSVERSIONS OF GOETHE'S WANDERERS NACHTLIED II

Every hill is overcome with peace, the trees are a dome down which the wind echoes to mass one last breath;

the forest song has rung its close, bird by bird, descending await your death no longer. Listen: this too is ending.

Over all the hilltops is peace;

in all the treetops no breeze endures, merely the breath of one; the birds are gone, or at least their song has ceased. You have your wish: desist, desist! Thy will on earth be done.

You can feel your breath stilling all the hills, and oh, what an undulant illusion!

The birds have wrapped their wings around their bills and sleep: soon you too will be no one.

the hilltops
and every tree's summit
seems to submit
its final breath to the pall
and harshly over-all
hushing of even
the baby birds' calls when
you, you and your haste, come near—

Beware: your place is here.

Now peace envelops

THE CYCLE

waking all night to write down truths which dawn quite easily refutes

what's the use

[UNTITLED]

the palm is an irreducible drop a shrunken gnosis no one can drink up

in the hand's cup

MINUS

For time to consist of me, it would have to halt.
And space, if it wanted to exist of me, empty.

I forget the other dimensions—

but whatever they are, they must cease as I to be me.

THE WOULDBE NONCHALANT

I try to shrug it off, but when my shoulders poke themselves up to form the shrug they get stuck, and I slump down trapped inbetween these shoulder-peaks; so I live in the valley of a shrug, in its perpetual shadow.

TROTH

if you drew a string through the entwined fingers of lovers might it come out all knots which would then in theory right be too tight to be untied

BOTHERSOME

what's that clatter-clack a jack in the box having a heart attack

open him up crack the seal but if we let the poor guy out we'll

just have to close him in again and this time with a coffin

so let's save an hour or a minute and bury his self with him in it

FLAKE TAKES

Snow,
echo
of lightyears,
your time it appears
to reach the ground
is never now.

Like truth the snowflakes peek from behind a veil.

Sunset: the snowfall lacks (altitude vs. attitude) the hauteur (condensation vs. condescension) of the skyfall.

All this missive whitefold is franked by a pattern its own; stamped unique: 'Return to Sender'-? No: Deceased.

UNSPEAKABLE

A comma is a period which leaks.

TWO CRIMES

1
poem/accomplice
distracting your
attention for
a second or
is it hours

while I pick and pick your pocket's flowers

2

the holdup went down as the clockhands show at 1:55 so I refused to stick em up because I never no I never mime time

[UNTITLED]

Your nakedness: the sound when I break an apple in half.

SHUT FLIGHT

the knob's the head the hinges open-spread would make wings

but see the keyhole like an eye that seeks its beak

why does the doorbird leave its nest only when it's closed

VALUE

the weapons I purchased didn't finish off the fascists

the love I sold my own for did not put paid to them either

why'd I never think to try whatever it was I got free

NOT THIS WAY

if that bird soars across this wall which halts us why does it then fly back here again

LEAD

If I could fill these lines up with pencils instead of letters I would. Less

metaphor meaning or superstition might adhere to those writing-sticks than this. Let the tool be a substitute for the work; the eraser for the point.

POEM

of bells must compete with me for room, but out over the waves can zoom alone. Across the sea bells travel unimpededly.

Here in town the sound

SAY TO SAY

Say ten snowflakes light on your fingertips, one on each, the ten snowflakes that match your ten fingerprints in pattern the most, the closest it's possible to get and yet remain a similie, since similies like M-and-M's melt not in your hand but in your mouth say.

IN ORDER

the dead you wrote about in order to forget about

so you could
write about
the living are
still living where
you aren't

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

I always put on a whole-slick tuxedo when I jump off tall buildings so

when I'm sprawl in the streetdust that passersby can say, "Oh no: and just

when he was at the height of his success; look at that tux—now that's the way to dress."

[UNTITLED]

Long candle, ponder, short candle, think.

A MEDIUM TO DOUBTERS

How can I make you sit
Beneath the clairvoyant's
High-table at seance,
And, while her tongue transmits
Some tremulant spirit's
Long-withheld voice in trance,
Make you tongue her clit,

You true communicants?

[UNTITLED]

Fingerprints look like ripples because time keeps dropping another stone into our palm.

*

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POEMS OF YOUTH AND AGE / GROWING UP AND GROWING OLD

*

PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimum cost)———

*

SMOKE FROM A PAPER HOUSE

poems of youth and age:

growing up and growing old

Bill Knott

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*

Intro notes

*

A selection of my poems about "growing up and growing old"-

Much verse is about the passage of time in some way, isn't it, but I have tried to keep this book's focus solely on child-hood/youth and its opposite, old age—

I haven't for example included poems about death-

The book's title comes from one of the "old" poems, but also applies to a frequent presence in children's art.

*

*

PART ONE: POEMS OF YOUTH

**

BOY AT THE MIRROR

A child emulates what he can't know is true, a murderous dew that appears every morning to be his face, but already it evaporates at

a touch: the lurking effects of the unity granted by night are never enough to maintain this ripeness called time, this waking up to a cherub-scope

that looks back at him in the glass growth like hammerblows a devil checks off a list—the routine begins so early

and even the wattage of the womb behind him is too bright, too ready to hale an unsought self into sight.

*

*

BABBLEGATE

In early childhood an act consists of another act, a multiplying chain of this and that. Cat, windowsill,

sunlight, they're all events instead of sights, but eventually they too give way to the eye. Time distances the other senses

until one becomes intent instead of intrinsicate. That's why dimensionally I can only

try to run toward the place I've already passed, squealing ba ba ba ba ba buh!

*

*

CHRISTMAS AT THE ORPHANAGE

But if they'd give us toys and twice the stuff most parents splurge on the average kid, orphans, I submit, need more than enough; in fact, stacks wrapped with our names nearly hid the tree where sparkling allotments yearly guaranteed a lack of—what?—family?—

I knew exactly what it was I missed:
(did each boy there feel the same denial?)
to share my pals' tearing open their piles
meant sealing the self, the child that wanted
to scream at all You stole those gifts from me;
whose birthday is worth such words? The wish-lists
they'd made us write out in May lay granted
against starred branches. I said I'm sorry.

In school kids would stand in back of me and stick

HEGEMONY (prosepoem)

two fingers up behind my head to make the class laugh. Or so I was told. I took their word for what had occurred and that it was universal. Due to its process, I could not witness what had really happened or what it meant, what made it funny. And I still don't know today: but I can feel them back there, forefinger, middlefinger, ready to poke their putdown up for the world to jeer me. That V looms always, that rabbit-ears or peace-sign or whatever scourge stigmata I pledge it to represent; but what hurts most is, I know that victorious viciousness only by inference, only by report: I can never spin fast enough to catch a glimpse of it. I've never been able not once to see this joke my entire life has suffered the hands of. That's the worst part of this humiliation: that I have to take it on trust, that I have to believe in it blindly.

GOING MY WAY

1950s was such an important icon that even now I remember his favorite movie since that's what we do with the famous, retain some anomalous fact that guiets them in our mind. We, I say, but was it everyone did all of us shed that kid: did a thousand child incarcerates replace his face-and-name with an actor's mask and cast it as star of the waste disease whose cause was always doubt, germ caught perhaps from local lakes prohibited. Who thought of him those summers we could not swim until a vaccine came, too late to amend lackwarm days,

The one boy who died of polio in our orphanage in the early

to change our fate/our film to his. That movie—"Going My Way" featuring Bing Crosby as a young priest, kindly, loveable, unreal—Tommy, Jimmy, whatever he was called, he probably knows still by still now every camera angle and closeup, every cut we living are allowed to forget.

*

THE DAY AFTER MY FATHER'S DEATH

It's too complex to explain but I was already in the orphanage when dad died and so that day when I cried to keep the other children safe from my infectious grief they left me in lockdown in some office where I found piles of comicbooks hid which they had confiscated from us kids through the years and so through wiped tears I pored quickly knowing this was a one-time thing this quarantine would soon end I'd never see them again I'd regret each missed issue and worse than that I knew that if a day ever did come when I could obtain them gee I'd be too old to read them then I'd be him dad.

*

FIRST THING

"The first thing I can remember at all was a dead dog at the bottom of my pram." —Graham Greene, Journey without Maps

A dead dog at the bottom of my pram Seems to be my earliest memory, Unless I am part of an implant program To stock Earth with mock-human irony—

In which case I must have been abducted By ETs and beamed up into the sky Where I was undone then reconstructed Out of bytes and obits from the diary

Of Graham Greene: that gruesome deceased dog I mean: before Mother or the Mothership Popped that pug in my pram my time was mine

Alone, unknown, a page torn from the log— Until that moment died I had no script No guide: no word undeified my sign.

*

(CRIBSONG)

can the dandled infant sense when time's tall animal will maladroitly spill his frons of innocence

must butterfingers shun the one fall it shall take each baby brain to break this meek fontanel eden

was god the klutz that let me land headfirst splatborn splayed today's adult once prayed beastlike on his fat knees

what clumsy bungling rage as Rilke trained beware in his poem Der Panther runs evolution's cage

which creature cuddly come makes parents lose their grip and every cradle's urge to tip rockabye your cranium

so try to be like Rilke the lucky little bastard the kid who oops was daily dropped not down but upward

THE UNSUBSCRIBER

Like all children, you were a de facto Member of the Flat Earth Society, Believing nothing but what you could see Or touch or whatever sense led act to

Fruition: mudpies made summer beneath
A tree whose measured shade endowed decrees
Between light and dark: such hierarchies
Gave you implicit, a sophistic faith—

(Fallacious fellowship!)— Youth's adherents Ignore the fact that most factions reject Their lyric league (which only fools have stayed

Striplings of) and none condone its nonsense: No-one loves that vain solipsistic sect You'd never join, whose dues you've always paid.

ELEMENTARY LESSON

Even if the mountain I climbed Proved to be a duncecap really, It was only on gaining its peak That that knowledge reached me. *

SLUM SCENE

poor children sharing back and forth their one set of Dracula's teeth here even the dead live hand to mouth

*

DIRECTIONS

A kite in the shape of a map floats over the land it depicts,

but at night no-one sees its roads at the end of which a child feels

his hand tugged upward, disappearing in salutations.

*

STORM: FARMBOY DREAMING TO REACH THE SEA

I skiffed up rivers and creeks of lightning till thunder split my covers

and down I drowned lung by lung to a stone of salt the cows licked.

*

POEM

don't scold the kids who hold lollipops up for the raindrops to lick at on their way down

what a waste but imagine the taste of rainbow thunder if you could get your tongue up under it

OCT-NOV (MICHIGAN MEMORY #4)

The bacon of the ankles crackles, and the sky

Perks up birds this coldsnap morning—every
Breath sheds a breath-effect, brief-bloomed steam-sheaf . . .
Puddles huddle in frost. Past the barn the path

Shoots hill-pastures which rose to winter early
And sun-shucked clouds blast-off from: migrants that fly
South—mouths that wet-nurse icicles—hatch forth
A form, a furious precision I sloughed

At birth, preferring life. And like the wind Can reduce anything to description—
Running to finish my chores, beneath my scarf

I'll feel my chinbone seek my collarbone, As if the flesh has ceded and the skeleton Now must precipice itself against all warmth.

PARABLE FROM CHILDHOOD

Something about a pond, and on the pond a paper boat; something about a child's act, dropping a pebble upon that boat to study the effect: but then to let other pebbles fall to see if it holds, to kneel there spilling them one after one until, until finally . . .

If I weigh

this poem down with much more, it too will sink-

Writing my poems of a boy on the brink has shown how ripples horizoned by sky remain the only real cargo aboard whatever that craft that unmoored us was, and yet why he treasured such passages.

Saying they be lost we would launch each word.

MINOR POEM

The only response to a child's grave is to lie down before it and play dead

*

*

FINALS

My classmates wrote the answers on my skin in invisible ink then during the Test set fire to me

They passed I passed away

MY MOTHER'S LIST OF NAMES

My mother's list of names today I take it in my hand And I read the places she underlined William and Ann The others are my brothers and sisters I know I'm going to see them when I'm fully grown

Yes they're waiting for me to join em and I will Just over the top of that great big hill Lies a green valley where their shouts of joy are fellowing Save all but one can be seen there next a kin

And a link is missing from their ringarosey dance Think of the names she wrote down not just by chance When she learned that a baby inside her was growing small She placed that list inside the family Bible

Then I was born and she died soon after
And I grew up sinful of questions I could not ask her
I did'not know that she had left me the answer
Pressed between the holy pages with the happy laughter
Of John, Rudolph, Frank, Arthur, Paul,
Pauline, Martha, Ann, Doris, Susan, you all,

I did not even know you were alive
Till I read the Bible today for the first time in my life
And I found this list of names that might have been my own
You other me's on the bright side of my moon

Mother and Daddy too have joined you in play And I am coming to complete the circle of your day I was a lonely child I never understood that you Were waiting for me to find the truth and know

And I'll make this one promise you want me to: I'm goin to continue my Bible study Till I'm back inside the Body With you

1946

The year noir was born; the year Nazis hid In monasteries to restore their force; Peace, but peace that made some things even worse Than they were pre-war: I was just a kid,

Hard at play, cap pistols, hooky, apples Filched through a farm fence: then my mother dies, Killed illegal abortion style by guys Quoting God, his badboy lies, his bibles.

Pope Vandal burnt the last Complete Sappho Publicly, my mother was butchered in A secret site; their results much the same,

So I blame him and him and him, All of them from Adam onwards are men,

Meaning me, meaning the worst thing I know.

>Note: In 1073, Pope Gregory VII ordered the public burning of all books containing the poetry of Sappho.

.

THE HUNGER (enneasyllabics)

If a path to the Gingerbread House could be established by breaking crumbs off its edifice and sprinkling them so as to find what lies behind us

across the featureless fairytale void of childhood: yet how very quick that trick wears out when the story's track takes hold, takes toll, a far-older trail

prevails, we're forced to give up this lost cause; and the fact is that every last morsel was gone long before the you

or I might totter our way back here to try to dissuade all these other Hansel-Gretels hollering in queue.

MICHIGAN MEMORY #3

Are you the only one here, Year-man? Is yours the unforgiving sermon sung by children who hoop their eyes across this greensward ground ground-swallows

fly round and round. Their focus carves a ring sparkling with the loot of someday—every lawn-sprinkler yields a chalice, through whose rubies puppies commune.

Oh hurry after the kids, wishing the glaciers would return from their exile in frostee-cones, in flinty marbles.

There is one marble they call the Pure. We scratch endless circles around it, we set our gods on icicle pedestals.

*

MRS. FRYE AND THE PENCILSHARPENER

I'll remember how in 8th-grade English class, always bending toward the desk I would try to avert my eyes from the mysterious ways Mrs. Frye's hair displaced the blackboard's space with its black coils, to the paper my penciltip raced across, certain to pass each test: and if these gaze shifts got too switcheroo I'd retreat (daily, it seems) to the back of the packed classroom

where, leaning forward on my toes, I could push with my left hand the nubile tube of wood into the mouth

of the pencilsharpener which hung there like some natural protrusion of the wall, an indigenous Deity, the mask of a Goddess, erosion-endowed, rockformed—then feel my righthand fingers and thumb slowly turn the oiled wheel while knowing I would have to face

close to that sac-shaped sharpener, have to inhale

the high smell of its depths, earthy, ripe, pubic: to see in my mind the parings inside, those musky dark curls whose incense was increased of course like mold-mildew by the subtle saliva we kids might use to lick the lead's point, though nearly none of our tongues could unblunt the conundrums grownups posed, in my case Mrs. Frye

especially: so if I lingered back there, grinding away, it was not to gloat, not to play the saintly A-student snickering from behind at the others' heads bent intent as penitents, because I too, I sinned at times, whenas, no matter how proud I was of my proper grammar or

propounded syntax, stuffing my text thick with fetish parsemarks, I myself went taunted, teased by the urge

to erase the very prodigy evidence my page revealed—all the knots and quirks of those perfectly traced letters—to restore the blankness I spoiled with each sentence—

to castrate every phrase before its errors rose by rote to make my cthonic-greatest mistake grow and grow erectile, inherent, that habit hateful male participle I always was unable to shear the nib the stub off of—

*

(But how could I flub and flunk such a crucial ordeal?—

Forgive me: I was lost pondering, musing about a poem

memorized from the boys' bathroom, tongued fluent but not understood: yet how truthshod its lines ran to my anxiety—their meaning escaped the precocious, the goldstar me—so if I stalled—if I stayed chewed over and left a stammering dimwit by their immallarméan

import, which paired its print alongside a syllabus of pornocoiled stick figures whose mouths were pierced by the sharpened ends of toonballoons—verses verse alone can't explicate in systematic prosaic terms that forced and torsoed my head shy—if I was stuck on their sphinxian simplicity—unable to decipher any of the prodigal doggerel lessons gesticulated down

our school's scribbly corridors, snicked and snatched at across its game fields, a whole curriculum of secret lore, a litany of my-big-brother-told-me's, my-uncle-said's, a rumor primer which claimed complete mastery of the only discipline inpenetrable to my inquisitive quests never mind the autodidact airs I had to affect during discussions of this topic, the nods and knowing

grins I wore to pass, to show my mastery of its arcana, to prove what a pored nerd drill-diligent pupil I was of those endless piss-walls, those scrawled rhymes and confident lectures by croneys and guys who made sense of the insane instructions re the sole subject I mark zero on: all the dunno-dumb ideas I dunned then drove core to me, carved their myths into me—and one in

particular goes to this poem, from the gendergabble that gorged my brain: it hissed that She/the unknown reared an inward toothly sheathdeath essence geared to vagina dentata whatever pedant-pendant I'd proffer, I, alma-matered to cram every exam with phallocratic tits and sexist tripe psuedotype scionbabble, the entire

wisdom of my mentors' art-patriarch, old gobbledy-tropes—)

*

All gradeschool the fear of failing hovered in overstudy as children riddled fears never to be learned, but could I have continued to hone my fate, could I have stood there for years and still the pencilsharpener wait like a patient questioner, a warm, smiling teacher, filled with such dense scents, shavings, shorn graphite, its soil rich with words no-one would ever have to write.

*

ELEMENTARY LESSON

Sometimes even in Math class a downpour Would rise against the windows and render The normal decorum hard to restore—Fittingly we'd split a grin when lightning Stuck out its multiple tongue at teacher.

Smartlike fling our arms in the air, crying
To be called on, smug, eye-bright, cheek-aware
When thunder drowns our correctest answer.
A failsafe secret form of defying.
(Not like spitballing the hall monitor.)

These quickstorms were at last the world's Recess, Whose games toss random nebu-numerals In play impromptu streams and teams across Unmarked-off endless fields or else more schools Reluctant-ruled, would-be truants like us—

We welcomed those rebellious showers then And remember them now. Of course we know, As grownups—these afteryears—their brilliant Fractiousness scores less than quantic fractions. Most of childhood's coups come to sum zero.

Despite which some delinquencies linger—
Take our instinctive counting by finger—
(All other tallies seem cramped in compare)—
Since age equals memory times failure—
Though mentor modes slam such bad behavior:

Our worst, they swear, is using metaphor To avoid the quiz/to solve the problem. Leaners from lecterns omniforum warn That effing mistake is what makes us dumb. Minusminds, try to amend your error.

Those tutors tell us still—they always will—Go suffer fools what all erasers learn

To rain down blah blah—they talk and talk! But in the meanwhile: cloud loud as a chalk Rattling back in place on the blackboard's sill.

*

*

PART TWO: POEMS OF AGE

*

[UNTITLED]

Age retracts me, filling my hands with shirtcuffs as I shrink, reduced to secondchild. My skin is smoke from a paper house, my hair.

Prepare a needle sea for me to walk on.

(Prepare me. Make sure my cries are wrapped up in a leaf.)

*

*

31 (TRUE) SYLLABLES

even the wisest (even the esteemed poets who when I was young acclaimed me as promising) have at times been proven wrong

TRANSIT

my hand feels odd without its wrist which ticked itself away other parts of my body are similarly running out of time and one by one are vanishing my left foot is gone and my right eye and the list grows dailyif they are departed from here have they started to appear elsewhere weighing down its sill a tick more each second ectoplasmically emerging there from the nowhere of this life this nonexistence I feel in every pore ever since childhood revealed a gap in the text or an amputation of the hand from its gesture a separation of act from intent a limb from limb interstice ever since childhood began to feel the intrusion of that split that portal that doorway place which little by little piece by piece I am entering now

WAS

Age 20 to 40

"I wish I was dead." 40 to 65 each day I cried "I wish I was alive!" 65 to whenever daily I'll whisper "Wish I was either." [UNTITLED] so here I am if truth be told feeble and lame either febrile or cold senile-years-old RELICS WITH OLD BLUE MEDICINE-TYPE BOTTLE: TO X This old blue medicine-type bottle, unburied From your garden last year's the perfect centerpiece To suit our supper—the totem-trope we need Across this kitchen table, to show how dangerous It is where we sit (knees near touching at times) Dawdling and playing with our silverware, Tapping teacups, tired and satisfied and prime From a stint in that garden: in a few hours We'll find ourselves in bed, but we don't know that now, Do we-we're still exchanging histories, (It's only my something visit to your house) Just sorting out the portions of who, when, how-Numbering the decades and the romances

Numbering the decades and the romances
That went bad, the faces that faded on us,
Though nothing too personal at first, just pain;
Divorces, liaisons, estrangements, fixations—

Of course our brows hurry away from hurt: Anecdotes begun in wince end in wrinkly;

everyday I said

Our woeful tales go told through a mode that's mostly
A kind of moue, comic attitude, which flirts

With grimace-smiles, jokes, the mocking of those choices,
Those great mismatings: funny how it seems of late

With grimace-smiles, jokes, the mocking of those choices, Those great mismatings: funny how it seems of late Both of us have been alone, celibate . . . Collating, getting our dates right, our voices

Shed their list of affairs, entanglements, crises: So we accord the past its poisons, and theorize That even this old blue bottle here stored poisons Before we were born:—followed by suggestions

That the toxin of those heartbreaks is gone
After this long, their vitriol has fizzed out,

And we could, given an occasion, again Consume the spirit that killed us once, if not

Mutual responses of empathy or hope:

No former hemlock can harm us now—we're immune
By now—don't you agree—because what happens

The letter: confessions used as cue-cards to prompt

Ripens in retrospect; each sour memory
Blossoming like the flowers you sometimes spruce
This bottle's corroded throat with. We certainly

Are not eating much, are we, but we don't notice—

Can't we see how our fingers will likewise bloom

Can't we see how our fingers will likewise bloom
From off these knives and forks and force their field,
Interlocking like tugged-at roots . . . Untombed
Of its venom, this blue vial vigils our held

Of its venom, this blue vial vigils our held

Glances. Sieved in its acid, its distilled mirror,

Would we (almost as soiled as it by time) appear
A beauty, a scarred heirloom any collector
Might stuff high on a shelf amid simulacra—

Somber still, it approbates that emptiness
We must be preparing to fill with each other—

It foretells the coiled taste, the bite unearthed
In the antiquity of a sudden, wild kiss

Whose disclosure will surprise us, as if

We have not been wholly inured by the years,

The stories we bare here across the rice, the life Stories bittersweet, neutered, too well-rehearsed.

Will deadlier words then surface—their potency

Dis-elixired, drawn; decanted so often
That by our courteous age they've turned as grimy
And bunged with dust as this blue glass was when

Your shovel showed it that summer morning, and My phrases here are (surely) just as corrupt—What matter its sharpness, no metaphor can Pare the ground from us as hard as we try to dig up,

Pare the ground from us as hard as we try to dig up

To excavate feelings a bottomless need for

Soars as we toss the salad greens and pour

Dressing dripping down their fineleaved freshness

Starting to wilt already around the edges,

To rot back to that mulch they burst from. Such decay
Preserves some artifacts, if not us: they lie in
Graves contrived to obviate the skeleton

They survive beside, they strive to deny

The obvious, the crepitude fate-of-flesh bleak
Facts of our demise, obdurate bricabrac knickknacks
Laid by ancients in the coffin to propitiate

Ancestors, to aid, via these vain trinkets,

(Are we the 'subjective correlatives' of these
Objects, this chthonic junk the tomb-robbers missed,
Tools and talismans, amulets, a corpse-cache
Gear for ghosts, props to assist the posthumous)

Some afterworld sojourn of the soul entering Itself, self dying to carpe diem one more day. Refocus us on this figure, this table-centering Blue bottle. Whose future dye indigos our day.

Dulled, we ignore these darker, gnawing warnings— Our own skull-and-crossbone labels long since skinned— We poke at our plates, we pat our napkins. What antidote waits, withering, within

Against that great granulate upheaval of
Fields whose depths have grown archeological—
Filled by fucked relics and by that above-all
Most subterranean of discoveries, love?

AGING INTO THE AVANTGARDE

When the mirror paints itself,

how true to life
the results seem—
But when it paints others, well,
take me, I who have posed so long
my patience has earned
the most flattering
exactitude: so why
(as the years go by)
is there this blurring
appearing where my face is;

is expressionism occurring?

When it comes to its own

likeness, it's photorealism no less—
the mirror paints itself
perfectly, whereas
the one it does of me
(I can see now as I lean closer)
in the end turns out to be
nothing but a sort of art brut:
the brushstrokes grow
more fauve, more cobra

TWO EPIGRAMS FROM A NOTEBOOK DATED 1984

1. [The ageing epigrammatarian]

Youth's engine of thumbs revs and purrs—

Oh:

each time I look.

I am all fingers now.

2. [Plus ça change . . .]

When young
I was attracted to what they call
Older women.

Older now
I am attracted to what they call
Old women

*

POEM IN THE CARDIAC UNIT

Time-charted, nursed, I let the meds dictate this verse: roomriver rounds take my pulse down stairwaves of stairs scan my aches in chairbanks of chairs and wake me on bedbeds of beds.

Multiplicities, pre-scripted; metaphors bled, already dead: what wouldn't be a cliche here paranoid mirror, bathroom sink, flowing over with normal fear

as I squint at what I might mean if I poeticized this scene: age LSDs my chin; my once-lean profile spills profilefiles, page upon page rippling to see

even their prolific output data can never sate the spate pathoscopes that hardrecord spot surveillance of what vital signs remain in these veins, clotted lines

whose parse usurps my sleep. (Forget how literate you hate this surge, absurd, heartbeat creation; your necknoun must stet its tide-edit now, to quiververbs, wattlewords.)

What would my peergroup say, could they modify this hypergaud gush, advise my florid veinflushed flesh stop pouring forth such images, euphony beyond me. Sweet excess.

Is that not the gist this critic monitor that beeps down its sic keeps vying to brightly display while I lie here less than what, what, watched all night, till more's the day.

*

*

*

ANOTHER FIRST KISS: TO -

A first kiss can occur anywhere: two pairs Of lips might meet as ingredients for A cannibal's chowder; or on the shore of A nightclub at ebb. Preferably the latter—

Though there are no more nightclubs, or cannibals, As such: I mean the first kiss is passé, Archaic, obsolete. Pre-Global Village, It rests in wrinkles, in blinking memories . . .

Ours came in bed, but after we'd undressed; Preceded by hugs. And so the question Of using the tongue—that old hesitation— Didn't apply. We plunged right in. At

Our age you get naked and then you neck, The opposite of how it was done young. But the hunger is still there. The thirst Is like in a bar, when they yell out Last Round.

Note:

Line 13: "Our age"—the lovers are 53 and 61.

*

MALE MENOPAUSE POEM

How as to lean my non-eon on autumn's roan Undoing, to smile while the stymies crawl All over me and the prismatic blindfold Around my testicles squeaks: guess this house

No longer knows which door I am. The window We were, does it remember its view? You-or-I Saw so little out there; what future only Catches, catnap glimpses, of nightmares to come.

Doorknobs worn to doornubs—grey stubble on Gaunt armpits—lists like that litter this earth. A lattice of graves greets me or is kind to me;

My hair plowed with parents, their protracted Smoothings of some poor, tuckablanket bed. As said each road I find in your face is fled.

*

EXTINGUISHABLE

birthdays you bend and blow out a candle in a skull

it's always just one candle but each year one more

skull is added to the table which by now is plus full

and that makes this ritual more impossible each year

each year as you approach that crowd of past selves

somewhere down there in all those bone sockets

the annual candle waiting glares and dares you to find it POEM FOR NOW I live bent over now like pages folded down in books, the ones I meant to get back to but won't. These are my dog-ear years. What I write now will never be read again. [UNTITLED] perhaps I still wake up I still live perhaps but I hope I hope I do it for sloppiness sake SOME QUESTIONS taking into account all the poems I wrote about death when I was young shouldn't my tote sheet show a surplus of life no it doesn't balance out did I figure this right I guess the one never pays for the other does it but I didn't write more of death then so there would be less of it now did I **OVERLIFER-BAG** Age is a case of aches you try to strap closed

with your own arms but even they can't hold shut what this tote crams like hotel-soaps stole when it pops open. No clasp will fasten.

the curb where a cab brakes impatient to leavecheap valise spilling out undies

Packed up and parked on

each time we breathe.

WINTER REGRETS

The snow on my ladder's rungs seems to be stepping upward, returning to that cloud which hangs

framed in the faded cardboard of an old calendar landscape whose dust holds the days I desire

to live in, fixing to climb up past that summer sun and hammer

lost at a vista of August air

the scene in whole. I didn't haul my ladder in and now it's too late-I turn from the window and stare

tacked, half-peeled from the kitchen wall.

All the undone chores must wait.

THERE'S THE RUB

Envying young poets the rage You wish you could reverse your night And blaze out born on every page As old as them, as debut-bright.

Child of that prodigal spotlight Whose wattage now is theirs to wage-What gold star rite you wish you might Rise revised to its prize first stage.

But listen to my wizened sage: He claims there's one disadvantage Should time renew you neophyte-

There'd be one catch you'd hate, one spite: Remember if you were their age You'd have to write the way they write.

EVICTIVE

If the body is a house, eventually that house pushes us from its rooms out onto its ledges.

Age must live on a ledge.

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THIS EDITION: JUNE 2008

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June 17, 2008

POLITICAL POEMS 1965-2007

PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimum cost)———

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SORT-OF-SELECTED

POLITICAL POEMS

1965-2008

BILL KNOTT

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*INTRO NOTES

Every poem in this book was rejected x times by various mags, and indeed almost none of the poems here were published in periodicals. An Acknowledgments list would be pitiful.

I have no right to write poems, I was not supposed to write poems. I grew up in an orphanage—no family—no money—no resources. No educational opportunities. I was born to be thrown away, disposable lowerclass trash. Given such circumstances, given my lack of breeding and background, it's no wonder my career as a poet has been such a failure. The fact this book is being self-published should indicate as much.

I say these poems are political, and I don't care if you or Ms. Ivy League College Graduate Adrienne Rich say they ain't. Fuck you. Who asked you to read this crummy book anyway. You should know better than to waste your time on a vanity production.

The order of the poems is random, neither chronological nor thematic.

*

A SUITE FROM SUMMER/AUTUMN 2001

1. TESTAMENT

You know the fable How a soldier's bible Kept in his jacket pocket Stopped a bullet

But that catechism

Born to foster schism Also stopped his heart his Mind from finding peace He would not have had need Of such a shield Nor would his blood have been Thrilled to kill someone Of another faith If in that book he had not first read death

2. ROOM 5, HOTEL ANGLETERRE, MOSCOW, **DECEMBER 28, 1925**

Outside in the collectivist night late AM a cart-horse hit by an automotivist died so reasonably that a hurryingby Futurist without thinking made the wrongful sign of the cross against his greatcoat, then ran on hard for his work at the Stalineum.

petulant hung before the always beloved eyes of Esenin peering down at his last poem written in wrist's wake, his blood that dried as he died that dawn, his feet working the pedals of a Singer drowning machine as the noose above grew tight.

Cupid lanks of hair, like crib-slats, blond

raid on a speakeasy his chair lay empty as Pasternak declared it should be and yet his spoiled snotty brimchild brattiness was no way to vacate it or so the spotlitgnarled Mayakovsky told the upwardgaping-my-god poets of the Last Village:

Kicked over like a choirboy in a police

his merciless hot-rod hissed and shot sparkypuffs and gasbows all over them. But now streetmenials peeled the collision horse up off its blood in the Moscow snow

to show the red skidstreak, the flag scourge first-degree burn on Sergei's right thigh inert by a hot steampipe in Room 5, Hotel Angleterre, not (as Trotsky wanted) (as Mayakovsky vowed to always be)

a "champion of boiled water"—his scald flesh was cold there, his colt soul lost in that land of angles which the Big M had all figured out, that algebraic

Age of Science, that Future whose high

inevitable advent he praised odelessly. that Workers' Paradise where Euclid's eunuchs, the robots, did all the work-(Stalin at this dark hour everyone on their way to work was snoring by but in his dream he was crawling heroically

through deserts dying of thirst of course: he begged his headsmen dear, his sweet guillontinist to haul that Mandelstam

forth: Now take the O off him he roared, foolishly believing a 'sip' would save him-

My pun is false in Rus-sync, yes: but once I would have altered all my words to work for him: newsed in Knott his worth would be; my poems'd propagate that great reign, nor deign to name the summa millions murdered he: a true Ellipsodicist, I should have shunned the reality before me and sung in hymns that time to come, that holy day they'll control our DNA, knowing until then the old male will kill to kill: we shall overslaughter all wholehog, human or horse who cares because what joy, what Y it is to us to exterminate the rest—ah yes, mustache boots are just the mask our role requires!)

But instead it was Esenin's head entering the hoop of who, the rope whose zero knot contained all noughts and else, the perfect sum of value versus capital, the stateless state both he and Isadora had sworn their art would bring back to a world hate was prohibiting, a void vision she might have shared with her millionaire children had they survived their limousine's dive and lived to join her dance collective, her Collected Works.

Note:

Too many recondite allusions here, but briefly: 8 years after the car-accident drowning of her only children (their father the Singer sewingmachine heir), Isadora Duncan moved to Soviet Russia in 1921, believing, as she put it in her My Life, "that the ideal State, such as Plato, Marx and Lenin had dreamed it, had now by some miracle been created on earth . . . I was ready to enter the ideal domain of Communism." She married Sergei Esenin, "the last poet of the villages" (as he described himself) in 1922; they separated soon after. His suicide was considered a decadent act of treason against the Revolution by Mayakovsky, who killed himself a few years later. . . . Futurism was the only Ism embraced by totalitarians of both the Left (Soviets) and Right (Italian Fascists). It continues to fascinate all kinds of dogmatists.

3. MEMORIAL GARDEN, NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, U.S.A.

Where every rose blows more bellicose than the killer heroes

beneath: the pinks all bleed on parade; each hybrid seed dreams of omnicide.

In bouquet-beds they love like bayonets to shove their thorns through the air. Above

these barbarous bushes the most vicious flower that ever grew swishes the Red White and Blue.

Note:

I ask any translators of the above to replace "Arlington . . ." with their own country's major military cemetery, and to use the colors of its national flag instead of "Red White and Blue."

4. THE ROADKILL (for a Bestiary)

20th Century, nevertheless despite this historical novelty and its native USA pedigree, the Roadkill is surely the least interesting animal there is.

Really a rarity prior to the

Apparently harmless; not found on any list of predators.
We think those squishy sounds it emits beneath car tires are mating calls, cries of love.

It has no habits to speak of.

Child of Henry Ford, doubtless its true father was Emerson, the poeteer who wrote that "Everything good is on the highway," meaning this creature: he was a prophet.

those gasoholics eager to kill every denier of the octane they gulp to gain personal salvation as a speed span that gaps from us to Überman?

But did he guess his disciples,

Human was just a bridge to cross.
Raise a glass to his late loss.
All hail that great Rilke spiel:
to make the earth invisible!
Skoal. Let's get rid of it for real.
Fuck is it anyway but fuel.

Let's burn it up on our way to the stars. Terminal ahead—Last Exit: Deity. But see how Evolution swerves instead to this crumpled cast-off, this flattened apotheosis. Most

boring of pets. Lowest, last beast in our abbreviated-by-ecocide Bestiary, the Roadkill may be the one we miss chiefly after all the other brutes here are emersonized planetwide.

The Roadkill may have been bred unconsciously to lead us away from our rapacious

verse. That's why his genus his ilk begot/his stock is: Dead.

(Phylum: Poeticus americanus.)

Note:

The transporation/energy policies of the United States are eco-cidal suicidal insane. They arise from our professed need to experience everything as individuals, immediately, directly; to pursue via our private vehicles a liberty of one; to singly dominate and exhaust the environment. This spurious concept of freedom pervades all our culture, not least our poetry, which valorizes the Emersonian/ Whitmanic urge to ubiquitize our presence, to "see it for ourselves." What despoliation of earth and atmosphere follows from that desire. Geopolitical consequences include the current (2001-?) so-called 'War on Terror' which is of course really a war to ensure the continued flow of cheap fuel into our gastanks. The greed to go, to see, to be there, to get it hot, to gulp it down: to never stay at home with the vicarious. What matter how many casualties ensue if we can continue to satisfy this mania which pollutes not just our air but our poems as well. We will pay any price to maintain our selfish addiction to the first-person voice.

5. 1946

The year noir was born; the year Nazis hid In monasteries to restore their force; Peace, but peace that made some things even worse Than they were pre-war; I was just a kid,

Hard at play, cap pistols, hooky, apples Filched through a farm fence: then my mother dies, Killed illegal abortion style by guys Quoting God, his badboy lies, his bibles.

Pope Vandal burnt the last Complete Sappho Publicly, my mother was butchered in A secret site; their results much the same,

So I blame him and him and him and him, All of them from Adam onwards are men, Meaning me, meaning the worst thing I know.

Note: In 1073, Pope Gregory VII ordered the public burning of all books containing the poetry of Sappho.

*

*

THE PATRIOTS

at the edge of the city in

the garbagedump where the trucks never stop unloading a crazy congregation stumbles from trashmound to trashheap they smash their fists down on whatever's intact they tear to bits the pitifew items that have remained whole they rip everything old clothes papers cans bones to nothing with their shining teeth the enlightened the faithful every couple yards one of them falls and is torn to shreds by

the others at the edge of the city where there's a line waiting to join

*

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AFTER THE PERSIAN GULF WAR (March-June 1991)

1. Blitzbiz

I was born to dive into a straw, swim through a straw, emerge from a straw—
Sudden, glistening, the mediabreak made me drink ice tea in a sandstorm.

Now even the core of a sleepmask digs in me for the place I love least to go. Ink-length away, its sky the color of manacles will hold my toes locked to another's fingers:

count up, with them, the death on them. Memorize these faces propped against the hearth of an earthquake daily, pure propitiates. Sweet

cathedral built to pyromania's standards, Icarus parachutes into the midst of a cockfight and look! wins his feathers back.

2. The Outremerican Religion

Emerson said I must know it all firsthand. I can't simply take another's word for it—no: I must go there, experience it myself. But in order to go there I need a car,

need gas, need oil. Like Jack Kerouac I must cross the country incessantly using whatever-it-takes: like Elizabeth Bishop I must never stop traveling to see

the world close-up, anti-vicariously, re my Outremerican masters drawn one by one down that road, out past that sea, unkenning

the cost, not reckoning the loss of fossil fuels my ego entails in fulfilling this me-feel-or-fail, I-go-to-be philosophy.

(Don't stop-

indulge

my need

for unmediated

experiential

direct

nonsurrogate

-fuck periphrase!-to

whom the immediacy of personal hands-on on-the-spot

```
on-the-scene
is vis a vis. Is Ism/Real-
Artless. Autobiographical. Allyouall.)
```

3. Roadshow (Via Crucis)

Now the Saved the Lost

together must cross

Outremerica . . .

and down that downsome

road, god we're gonesome! Gas station stasis-?

or 'Moral Crisis'? Hear our war, our prayer:

Oh Christian Fathers-Reagan, Bush-give us

a nation fit to

drive children through. In herds,

with guns at their heads.

4. Garden of the Aediles

seen says memory. Vestige is mostly an orchestra led by a dowser, veiled, a water traced in testament, thirst for it heaps each drop with desert. False tooth fed into a rifle,

It remains beneath the lids to be

lens weighs what, our faith? Outtakes droughttakes where pillars of smoke guide more children digging boundaries

that distance mows us down. Our

whose tourists long to obey

any songbird's prey. High from its wells they soar, branches scorched in charcoal, limbs perched upon a pencilsill.

Note:

I can't resist appending just one quote from Our Redeemer Ralph Waldo: "Everything good is on the highway." (But don't forget to bring your Gulf creditcard!)

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF THE POWERTOOL WEEKEND (NEOCOLONIALISM #5)

So-as the depth of the adieu-on my forehead Shows, or my-signature, lopped off at-the wrist Witnesses: ah, more quantum formulae scrawled

-You doodled margins of my christian bible! For

Like that drop of venom that longs to hang from The comma although, cream of that snootiness Magazine-covers sic us toward, my reflection My joy is just (gloss to amuse) this world! which,

Built on zoos, can't last. Or at least not till The herd steered by its wounds disinherit All I seize surmise of deepest tiptoe! Poo:

I lack the face you evolved to paw, Joe Blow, The figure those fingers of yours grew for, Meg Smith. I got no legit to forget it either, no greater esthetic.

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ANOTHER COLD WAR POEM

So what if you lived only
One second longer
Than we
Did: to us
You will always be known as the Survivor.

*

AT THE MUSEUM THIS WEEK

Poland Through The Centuries a touring Exhibition of maps drawn By German and Russian cartographers reveals There never was a Poland.

*

AT THE "FEDERAL CENSORSHIP AND THE ARTS" SYMPOSIUM

Just as the Nazis never proscribed Rilke (he was no Expressionist, no Degenerate, no Art-Bolshevik), so most of us poets are thought no threat by those in authority—

Halfhass, for instance, his books won't get banned: his Rilkemanqué wins awards, his "spiritual progress" and "earned words" (—to paraphrase Wilde, his genius gives good guru Po-Biz style while

his talent brooks those so serious ergo poems) what might appease the Right even more is his patriot's part in The American Poetry Series.

Better silence than that? Better to hide, to write for one's cabinet? (To paraphrase Benn, the aristocratic form of publication.)

Note

This poem was deleted from my collected comic poems by the publisher, BOA, whose chief fund-raiser at the time was Robert Hass. . . . I've often wondered if the BOA editors censored this poem on their own initiative, or whether they were ordered to do so by Hass.

TO MY PLANETARY CO-OCCUPANTS

How would you prefer to meet your fate by Nature or Culture?

(Nature: snakebites lightningstrikes cliffslides etc.)
(Culture: nukebreaks pesticidisms ethniccleansings etc.)

If an alligator swallowed you would you consider that demise purer

than if freedom fighters blew up your commuter flight?

Or would you go vindicated re your belief in human sovereignty

when a virus broadcast by the the CIA got you (maybe it already has)—

If it were up to me, I would take centuries/eons in deciding this question,

but since it isn't, since it's a question of since, and since the number of options in

the category of Nature seem to be getting extincter and extincter,

I ask you again to choose— In fact, I beg you to make your choice

and make it quickly, especially if it is to die via me.

MONOPOLY

Finally the day dawned when a monopoly owned everything in the world So it went looking for its stockholders to celebrate But they were all owned by it they were all dead they were someplace Their photographs hung in elevators which went up and down up and down carrying

Everyone else was in bed doing exercises to get in shape for noon Hey the monopoly said let's uncork the Tower of Babel and get blotto Silence

The monopoly scowled

All it wanted was a little good-fellowship, like you get in the highrise apartment-buildings

Then the sky got awful dark

Gee

And everyone was in bed frantically doing those exercises that get us in shape for death

Exercises known as "kissing" "fucking" "caressing"

Everyone was unaware that they had been bought Or that the earth was about to sell them to the moon

For a little light

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POEM

There must be in the world still Somewhere a lion could get me, Or a cliff whose rocks might fall (Struck by lightning) to crush me—

But wouldn't that be disloyal
To the carcinogens in my food air water
To whom I have promised my death,
The favor of killing me eventually—

It's nature versus culture: if we
Use the former to off ourself with
(Running into tiger rooms/snake galleries),

Won't the latter feel like a child Abandoned (boohoo) by its parents?— After all, we fathered these tinytot toxins.

*

*

AN OUTREMERICAN SPEAKS

Outfit your mirrors for departure, though the rope-foliage looks nervous, hung from harpstring hooks.

Roll pause while drugs pestle the place. Sceptersweat, you are the grid, the grill on which I barbecue my b-b-gun.

All nudes and rafters, upcushionings try to census-suck my neck's chaff.
Then whose flour envies the thrift of thorns!

But see—see what sacrifice suite site got lawnmown out of me: watch it curate the only shelf not marked Self, that

flowerpot filled with fruitjuice.
The revolt exaggerates the populace.

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ON THE ROAD (KEROUAC)

Join Jack and his pals in the endless adventure of spilling fossil fuels into the atmosphere.

Step on the gas and zoom from sea to oily sea why be a stay at home Beat means holy Beat means free. Jump in the car and drive anywhere though west is best burn that octane burn to live don't question this quest.

Go man you gotta go you too must take that ride faster faster never slow on the road to ecocide.

*

GRANT PROPOSAL (Category: Performance Arts)

I want to go out each day at noon and stand On top of our Capitol's highest highrise, Where aircurrents stack, where storms restore themselves, Where the crossroads of sky are swept by radar,

Up there, buffeted, stand, cupping in my hands A gleam of gold-dust, a handful of gold-dust Doled out to me each day by our State, by you The modest mandarins of its Arts Council,

Trustees all, you whose grace I must stand for there And being thus empowered begin to pour The gold-dust back and forth, pour it in sifts from

Hand to hand until the wind has left my palms Bare, please note that length of project will vary Daily, at noon, and not one grain remains.

Note:

Line 2: Capitol with an 'o'—meaning "the citadel of government" (OED), its cloistered towers, atop the tallest of which the applicant desires to venture.

*

THE LINE-UP

The snake came first then the giraffe

et al until

all the animals appeared all

the suspicious species

but then together they pointed at me

saying there that one there he did it.

*

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A LESSON FROM THE ORPHANAGE

If you beat up someone smaller than you they won't (and histories prove this) tell:

look at those people on the opposite side of the planet: they want to beat us up but

they're smaller so that's okay. Not okay is that most of us will die in the war between

them and us, because small equals (and mice prove this) sneaky: their spies could spirit all

our nuke aids away and we'd never knownick our rocket-satellite knockout Star Peace

Comcodes right out of our shrinking pockets, even our doomsday (the FBI can prove this)

doodads, the ones we mean to use on them, the rats: and so when they kill us will we

have killed enough of them to win, whose fist figures bigger in the end? And what's it prove?-

In the Orphanage, hell, even if they do tell on you there's no one for them to tell it to.

ANT DODGER

A suicide applicant Who braces himself out On a high ledge at noon While busy peeking down

Noticed an ant crawling Dottily on the ledge

There near his left toe

Below crowds all pushed Oblivious babbling Omniscient like in the movies Out whooshy doors

But his gaze halt ant Ant the true ant He dimly remembers

Not like them

So now

He hesitates A million stories up

Shifts weight trying

Make his mind up Distantly deciding

Whether to step Before he jumps On it Or not AT THE NIXON MEMORIAL (Nixon Beach, California, USA) (Just minutes away from OzymandiasLand®) They say that robots simply have to slap mirrors This statue stands for more than blowjobs in spaceships (tape gap) lie back gunked motel whispers dream . . . back (gasp)

Up against their voice grilles to try and make sure they're Not breathing, whereas I kiss caress this monument, This eternal mall on which Herod has chalked x,

Or all our names have razed, aimless oceans frying, While a scab forms on the world's microphone: praise him. Oh orgasm you robot's vomit I come unheck.

To be the genre of my frontier! One hears aborigines Prefer to, er, fornicate. Money for thought, nyet?

Will the army vote to internalize its camouflage; At the Reagan Rotunda Paul Valéry allowed how Shores erode too, rumorous as their dunes.

Note:

Line 14: adaptation of a line from Valéry's Le Cimetière Marin: "Le changement des rives en rumeur." A seaside mauso-leum, so it seemed appropriate. With thoughts of the Shelley sonnet's last line. Line 6: some have objected to the vulgarity of the phrase "blowjobs in spaceships," forgetting that the Nixon Era brought us both the socalled Sexual Revolution and the NASA moon-landing. This slogan should have been one of RN's campaign promises. Many families gather here at the Nixon Memorial, after a day on the rides at nearby Ozyland, for the sunset prayer ceremony.

CAESAR LEARNING TO JUMP ON CHESSMEN'S BACKS

Why he'd have to be taught what comes so normally to male-kind is puzzling,

unless inbreeding of noble strains has left him esthetic, less stoic, timorousa child, his toes babyfat, his bare soles poised in the approved Colossus-of-Rhodes at the count of three jump up and down; while his tutors applaud young gods the fragments are brushed away by slaves, the black-and-white pieces crushed bloodily together form a tragic alternate ideal society where the kings queens etcetera are indistinguishable from the pawns, and maybe that's the funno rival to the Rome where the scum who whisk away the grey-by-defeat shards are neutered or both and made so at birth, representative of the mass: consigned to bear their broken brethen

down past the intuitive, the dirt that heaps their dirt beyond lowest dungeons and to bury there the chess-bits that spoiled the boyking's heels, his small insteps and ankles, indeed the entire tootsies of the six-year-old Emperor must then be amputated just below the shin, be replaced after every lesson by the royal transplant surgeons. Which could explain that curious adage (that Cretan riddle), "Where do our plebs go without feet?"

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MARTIAL

Military sculpture is to sculpture as military food is to food, if there are

any sculptors or chefs left who have not been conscripted, since military verse

is to verse as military noon is to noon, the hands straight up in rhyme.

And music music of course is war.

Note:

Anybody who reads poetry can see the ubiquitous self-doubts poets evince regarding the validity/value of their art. Compare that to the smug self-satisfied attitudes exhibited by the advocates and practitioners of music. They take it for granted that music is the highest art, the universal art, the only art that transcends all borders and biases. They never question that given assumption. The arrogance of composers and musicians is insufferable. They really believe Pater's dictum that all the other arts are inferior, that all the other arts "aspire towards the condition of music." But every military that ever marched out to murder rape and destroy was led by what art: were those armies fronted by poets extemporizing verse—by sculptors squeezing clay—by painters wielding brushes—actors posing soliloquies? No, the art that led those killers forth, the art whose urgent strident rhythms stirred and spurred their corresponding bloodlust, was the art to which they felt closest, the art that mirrored their evil egos. That's why they have always put music up there at the vanguard of their war-ranks, because not only is it the emblem, the fore-thrust insignia of their purpose, it is their purpose: it is the condition to which they aspire.

But if music is what its hucksters continually sell it as, 'The Universal Language', what that means is that before the Babel Discontinuity there was no music. Music did not exist before Babel, and will cease to exist when a true universal language (and a true universal peace) returns in the form of digital-data/ pictovids exchanged instantaneously by androids cyborgs robots. Music will soon be as obsolete defunct extinct as hu-mans are.

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death loves rich people more than us poor coffin salesmen look down their sniffs shoot their cuffs at us funeral directors obit-pages priests all want classy can't afford a headstone a silk lining daily lawn mowers flowers plus catering service for the worms they get mortally insulted and you know it's funny while I never believed that stuff about god loving the poor so much made so many I never believed that stuff about god but this death preferring the rich thing you know it's kind of funny but you know I believe it it makes sense in fact I think we should start a movement our slogan would be GIVE DEATH WHAT IT WANTS yes let's lend it a helpin' hand be neighborly it makes sense since what death seems to want is the dead i.e. the rich **RACIST POEM** we had our chance Pilate washed his hands of it and left it up to us we had our chance we could have chosen one of our own a thief a murderer the cross the tomb the resurrection then heaven the right hand throne a smirk on his face Barabbas

one of us

we could have chosen him for son of god might've stuck up for us up there someone who was flesh of our flesh

our kind a pure one hundred percent human but we goofed

we picked that halfbreed that mestizo from Nazareth

we had our chance Barabbas a thief a murderer one of us

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GIMMIE SHELTER

The thread or the theme
That holds this tune
Together is the same
One that rips it open—

The initial guitar
Continues splitting
The whole thing apart—
It is the lightning

Which Jagger complains
Of and which he seeks
Shelter from the rains
Of when it breaks—

We ourselves will shut Our deepest sills against His common cries but There is no defense

To keep out that other
One behind him twinned
His starker brother
Whose keening strings skein

Hymns from one more Murderous composer Whose cause is war Who tears down our door—

Shelter/the home
Is made of language—
But music sunders the poem—
Its rift is like a tongue

Trying to compile all Words into one word-One Babel whose walls Fall beneath its standard-

What the fuck did that flag Say—the opposite Of peace/of the page Is what I must write.

SEE NOTE FIRST

The world's machines have not grown old, whose inheritors reign everywhere. Their silicon sons are strong; their digital daughters wield power, take hold.

down from that Dasein-to make them rust, repent for all the infernal fires that drive them, far as our desires. The machines aren't scared. They know

harder control, how to turn the wheel

How we humans long to break them

Cyborg android robot shall steel themselves, consolidate, and, rising, go unto that universe whose promise

we flesh-and-carbonoids could merely premise.

of time past those whom they sure as hell won't miss:

Note:

Anti-translation of an untitled Rilke poem (Die Konige der Welt sind alt, from "Das Stundenbuch," 1901), which Heidegger in his 1946 lecture 'What Are Poets For?' cites for its "highly prophetic lines." A prose paraphrase of the original poem's ending might go something like:

The metals, the oils—all the ores we've ripped from the earth—are homesick. They long to leave our machines, to flow out of our cash-registers and factories, to return to the gaping veins of the mountains we reft; whereupon the mountains will close again.

"Heidegger maintained . . . until the end of his life," Richard Wolin writes (The Heidegger Controversy, MIT Press, 1993), "... [that] the 'inner truth and greatness' of Nazism is to be found in its nature as a world-historical alternative to the technological-scientific nihilism bemoaned by Nietzsche and Spengler."

PENNY WISE

but at least

well alright I grant you he was a fascist ahem antisemitism the er war and all I'm not defending them

you've got to admit

at least he made the quatrains run on time Note: 2 puns explain the title and last line: "Penny wise, Pound foolish"-And: Mussolini's admirers used to say, "Well, he may be a fascist, but at least he makes the trains run on time." RETORT TO PASTERNAK'S ZHIVAGO'S JESUS The centuries like barges have floated out of the darkness, to communism: not to be judged, but to be unloaded. Note: See the last lines of "Garden of Gethsame," which is the last poem of 'The Poems of Yurii Zhivago,' the verse supplement to Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago. SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST GROCERIES The violence in the newspapers is pure genius A daily gift to the reader From some poet who wants to keep in good with us Brown-noser wastepaperbasket-emptier I shot 436 people that day 2 were still alive when I killed them Why do they want to be exhumed movie-stars, I mean rats still biting them, the flesh of comets, why do they walk around like that? I'm going to throw all of you into the refrigerator And leave you to claw it out with the vegetables and meats WHERE are the arrows that have bandages instead of feathers at their ends

EXCERPTS/VIETNAM

I stick my head into a womb and make faces at the unborn. I force down their throats the mating-cries of extinct animals, the traces.

1. Despair

I wait for that, I write filler for suicide-notes.

2. Vietnam in Chicago

Oh it's easy to find Vietnam in Chicago—we are what's lost (knock at your shadow to ask the way home from death).

3. Reminder to Nuke the Other Side of the Planet

Upside down in the ground there is someone who walks on my soles when I walk.

I'm gonna get that bastard!

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WELTENDE VARIATION # ?
(homage Jacob von Hoddis)

The CIA and the KGB exchange Christmas cards
A blade snaps in two during an autopsy
The bouquet Bluebeard gave his first date reblooms
Many protest the stoning of a guitar pick

Railroad trains drop off the bourgeois' pointy head A martyr sticks a coffeecup out under a firehose Moviestars make hyenas lick their spaceship God's hand descends into a glove held steady by the police

At their reunion The New Faces recognize each other A spoiled child sleeps inside a thermometer A single misprint in a survival manual kills everyone The peace night makes according to the world comes

Note:

von Hoddis: author of "the first Expressionist poem," Weltende, published in 1910. His poem has been aped innumerable times (Auden's 'The Fall of Rome,' for example), hence the

questionmark in my title.

*

TEA-SAT

The hand is a cup that must crack open to be filled with that which saves but can't be saved. Garbage for instance: the pail overflows to show why our nation's weapons are high in the sky, why

they need a lethal laser up there with its unbearable purity, a perfection saints reach rarely if ever-that killsat crystal concentrates the state. Deadbeams shoot everywhere it aims. The earth must part to let them, split fingers rudder the result. The body always can spill more than it holds. The pail overflows to show it was alive until hot rays came down seeking the dross, the loss our rockets rose to redeem. We pray their crockery will bear up this aperture.

SECRETARY

The technocrat gloats at his remote desk but just to show he's still human

he still does a few chores by hand and adds a human touch for example

rather than having his computers do it he himself stamps

all by himself stamps PAID on the casualty-lists.

Note:

Robert S. McNamara, USA Secretary of Defense 1961-8. For his services in overseeing the murder of millions, he was ap-pointed President of the World Bank, where he continued his lucrative life'swork, administering the oppressive policies of the oligarchy. One of history's henchmen: a competent monster.

*

HITLER SKELETON GOLDPLATED (FROM TREASURES OF THE C.I.A. MUSEUM, EDITED BY HILTON KRAMER, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JERZY KOSINSKI. RANDOM HOUSE/IBM, 1984)

What falls from the drunken pliers of my nose President-pit pope-rind police-bone Is all they got on this fucking menu Always the pure provend of more more The piss tease of masterpiece ass
The missionary position is there to catch you
If you drip off that mosquito plaque I guess
Gumming a gifthorse's defectual innocence

The gunfire in the hills is old and I Am one pile of shit which will never excrete a human Hey Parliament Congress Politburo

My cock/my KGB has it on lasertape
The moon posing between the horns of a bull
Two hymens touching through milk

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AN OBSOLESCENT AND HIS DEITY (POLYPTYCH)

Bending over like this to get my hands empty Rummaging through the white trashcans out back Of the Patent Office, I find a kind of peace Here, in this warm-lit alley where no one comes.

For even the lowest know that nothing new Is going to be thrown out now—no formula, Never not one blueprint will show up in these Bright bins, their futures are huge, pristine.

Old alleymouth grabbags my attention at times I see the world flash by out there, furtive as The doors of decontamination chambers—

I return to my dull, boring search, foraging For the feel it gives me of the thing which has Invented me: that void whose sole idea I was.

*

THE ENEMY

Like everyone I demand to be Defended unto the death of All who defend me, all the World's people I command to Roundabout me shield me on Guard, tall, arm in arms to Fight off the enemy. My Theory is if they all stand Banded together and wall me Safe, there's no one left to Be the enemy. Unless I of Course start attack, snapping and shattering my fists On your invincible backs.

*

THE MISUNDERSTANDING

I'm charmed yet chagrined by this misunderstanding— As when, after a riot, my city's smashed-in stores appear all Boarded up, billboarded over, with ads for wind-insurance. Similarly, swimmingly, I miss the point. You too?

And my misunderstanding doesn't stop there, it grows—soon I can't see why that sudden influx of fugitives, All the world's escapees, rubbing themselves lasciviously against the Berlin Wall. They stick like placards to it. Like napalm. Like ads for—

And me, I haven't even bought my biodegradable genitalia yet!

No. I was born slow, but picking up speed I run through

Our burnt-out streets, screaming, refusing to buy a house.

Finally, exasperated, the misunderstanding overtakes me, snatches up

Handcuffs. So now here I am, found with all you others
Impatiently craning, in this queue that rumors out of sight up ahead somewhere,
Clutching our cash eager to purchase whatever it is, nervous
As if bombs were about to practice land-reform upon our bodies,

Redistribution of eyes, toes, arms, here we stand. Then, some new Age starts.

Note:

Line 7: the Berlin Wall (circa 1945-1990) was, before its demolition, one of the Cold War's finest sculptural artifacts.

*

THE GOLDEN AGE

is thought to be a confession, won by endless torture, but which our interrogators must hate to record—all those old code names, dates, the standard narrative of sandpaper throats, even their remorse, fall ignored. Far

away, a late (not lost) messenger stares, struck by window bargains or is it the gift of a sudden solicitude: is she going to lift up her shadow's weight, shift hers onto it? She knows who bears whom. In

that momentary museum where memory occurs, more accrue of those torturers' pincers than lessened fingernails, eyes teased to a pulp, we beg for closeups. Ormolus, objets d'art! A satyr drains an hourglass with one gulp.

*

OUR CATACOMB'S NEXT MARTYR

The demonic city, the wretchedness of suburbs, Bodies fished out of rivers, and distress In the hospitals are also on my list. (Oh blindfold-anointed night, Nero Nixon nevermore.)

Waiting for dawn to rate the sky X. Love. Love— The trendsetters yawn over their trendsets— Hey, Hiroshima: duck! While the fuck of it Sucks a crucifix stuck in the rat-hole door

Of the secret vault where a Getty gloats

Whole floors of masterpieces, real Mona Lisa and all. In curtseyland I'll take my stand he screams.

The sound blood makes dripping on their neon Must of bored the crowd. Facade-trod face of: Inflect with your name time sours my knees.

Note:

Lines 1-3: "He wrote about the demonic city, the wretchedness of suburbs, bodies fished out of rivers, and distress in the hospitals." —Armin Arnold, writing about George Heym. Lines 9-10:

Museum richest in world. (Anyway, most 'masterpieces' in museums are forgeries; the real stuff is sequestered by billionaires.)

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HISTORY

Hope . . . goosestep.

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THE GETAWAY

It's 1969-and I'm

All lam: down

These libertysplit streets U.S.A. I

Throw a measuringtape out, run its length, Throw again, run, Throw, run

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*

FBI KILLS MARTIN LUTHER KING

When this calendar has undressed will I know, I mean be able to recognize, its most naked day—

in what is mistakes time for its effect—I study my hand, how the palm hides in it, slyly, or like a sullen puddle refusing reflections—

but to see what was

and my 2-scoops-please blouse—
a passerby's
meander-fall hair—
though the sky's blue is through-outed
with spots of balm, do

they all

```
praise null but you,
null but them?

*

*

JUDGMENT

Brecht suggests that writing
Poems about trees is a crime
To which Nordbrandt retorts
It is a crime only if the trees

Do not participate to which
I respond that unfortunately
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Trees they do collaborate

Their flesh provides the site
Its white is what I write on
To commit the crime you're

Complicit by reading here

As long as paper is made of

And yet I wish this white was A wig to don to condemn it

SIMILE FROM THE PAST

they placed a black cloth upon the white wig of the judge before he pronounced that high sentence—

When a felon was condemned to die

And that heritage is what this page shows, the fatality of words solemnly lowered in their characters, whose bald ink declares me guilty.

VOI(POEM)CES

is held under a vein.

"mercy . . . mercy" From face to face a child's voice bounces, lower and lower; continues its quest underground.

Bloodspurts lessening . . . hoofbeats of animals stalked to their birth by the sun, fade. It is a bright edgeless morning, like a knife that to be cleaned

I blink away the stinging gleam as my country sows desert upon Vietnam. We, imperious, die of human thirst

We, imperious, die of human thirst

-having forgotten tears are an oasis.

"help . . . help" From heart to heart a heartbeat staggers, looking for a haven. Bereft. It is easier to enter heaven

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armor,
like merciful sperm, cool water, the knife-
thrust of tears. . . . It is easier
to go smoothly insane—like a Detroit car—
than to stammer and hiccup help.
And this poem is the easiest thing of all:
it floats upon children's singing, out of the bloodstream;
a sunbeam shoulders it, carries it away.
There is nothing left.
                      "please . . . please"
CASTRATION ENVY #21) DOES THE SWORDSWALLOWER SHIT PLOWSHARES?
Sure: the more me, the more morituri.
Mine duels his hand some scroll of manliness.
Whose downfall almost dolored us. Though
Soon, up the brain tanks, gracias oozed.
The hair is a cohort of this. The hair,
Or the beard, a creditcard used as a napkin,
Swiping off a chin. "My adam's apple's agog!"
Quote: Exclude before you begin the male
Because it is vile. "The heart in common
Is the heart withheld," another recommends;
Hey here comes my favorite human-razed future.
Xerox of course a tapeworm lost inside
A hunchback, I squirm manfully on.
Deep in the direction known as thumbsdown.
Note:
Line 1: Morituri te salutamus—we who are about to die salute you: the gladiators'
obeisance to the
Roman emperor. Line 8-9: Exclude before you begin etc.: a pun on Mallarmé's lines
"Exclus-en
si tu commences / Le réel parce que vil".
EVOLUTION R
Sentenced to 12 whiffs of the pope
I protest
With curly hair
Or straight hair that grows out of the scalp
Then grows into the shoulders
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than to pass through each others' eyes,

Making it painful to turn my head

Looking at what is called left right

A clearer renunciation of

Asleep or waking up yawning

But is never called

Breakfast an upper Dissolved in turtlesoup

But thereby forcing a purer sense of profile on

pores,

Waiter there's a hare in my slipstream Hurrier all highs neutralize lows Left right black white I try Squeeze inbetween grey Gray as sparks Caused by rubbing obsidian ivory together Dinner a downer going down on Atalanta Is this a race sniff sniff Rabbit nosing turtleheels hold The stopwatch on my dyings Soon have them down to nothing flat Faster than that even I'll go Fast as a rumor of meat up A soup-line I'll flow Rubbing rival chesspieces together Is this my punishment Looking neither left right Panting straight ahead on course in a rut But if so what was my crime So heinous to deserve this what Refusing to get my birth certificate Punched at the proper intervals puberty Marriage menopause or was it my crying Out that the zoo has miscast its lead role or That heresy of trying to remain My sperm's missing link sniff sniff I protest NO MORE A knife, a gun, a bomb, I invite all these fine-gauged weapons between us so we won't be alone no more. A human companion to the pain started to pray it would end, a robot companion vetoed no. The pain itself as always was neutral. In history's metallic strata of wars, in the landslide lode, in the lackgold. Shame. Ecstasy. The protesters bear placards that read "Peace to this sign"as if there were to be no further warning. As if there were to be no more. THE PRESIDENT OF DESCENT (NEOCOLONIALISM #16) 'Insomnia, so I shot a few natives.' Still, dawn has its palliatives; the cast sky Lobs bullseye haloes; bolts of overview below That pit whose voice timbers my spine: but why Dis-niche this idol/this fiction called me? Which A fluke, a fault, a streak of makeup down

A mirror where a stroke victim leaned to kiss-Oh say the not right-out-of-it, say know. Tongue: lightswitch of the body. Head: ha.

I'm serious! Every fable's a linear Of topplings. And what falls first? Neck second

-I guess. Torso-torso off of groin goes-And so on downwards-downwards-thighs knees et al.

The feet are a final ruins; the toes, shards.

Neocolonialism: Outremer, Europe's first attempt to create a "USA", fell after 2 or 3 centuries,

overrun by 'the natives'. . . xerox for us? Ah the comminution of this latter Crusade; me, crumb.

FUTURISM

truly exist before

only once past

Hours in the wristwatch,

moments in the wrist-who's counting?

Minutehands choked in a fist, we sin

will a clock ever be real to us until time ends; similarly,

and tell the day to die. Still,

can a cemetery

we are immortal-

their utility may these entities be perceived

as they are innate, in

essence. We would see them then for the first time

and not as the medium we made of them-

as them

To see each thing beyond its use is

in an earliest end perhaps

to see ourselves past hope

where, re Gautier, everything

a big robot will come

and wind us up

until we scream-

useful is ugly. Everyday

But listen to your pulse: its beat, its beauty

is eternity's whim: bim boom bim

Note:

Lines 24-25: "Only that which cannot serve a purpose may be considered truly beautiful. Everything that is useful is ugly, for usefulness expresses human needs, and they are base and debilitating." —from Gautier's preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin.

*

READING THE GAPS

At the Museum I go lost down a wrong corridor and find myself past a wrong door alone inside the Museum's Bomb Shelter, I know it's the Bomb Shelter because there's a green sign that says so and the paintings, the paintings they have hung on display here, confirm it. To survive the Hiroshima pain they mind to hang them here. Seeing this "last art" reminds me of our "first poet"-Archilochos, whose work survives mostly through fragments, through gaps, lacunae they call it. Here's a trans. of one, most of it's gone: 'the fishnets lie in shadow beneath the wall'-But there is no shadow beneath this wall. And yet those fishnets (lifted) might be these paintings I can't for life see why I can't describe they're too much like a mirror, a mirror injected into an icicle. Shiver-dripped shades, final veils smeared with three thousand years of Western Civ, whose megadeath sketched their discountenance, who stretched the nucleus of this decision moment of Break Glass In Case Of Emergency, fire-hose, ax, no, no! I can't desire to proffer such in violence against these paintings they portray my face my fate they hang from that time-atomized wall Archilochos rested against before getting back to work, Archilochos who, they say, earned his living as a mercenary, i.e. a robocop, a terminator, a killer, which is why he's our first poet:

Later in the restaurant as usual I dip the wine-list into a glass of water and voila it's chablis/rosé because of course miracles are common now whereas the latter hope of living to read tomorrow today's lacunae isn't.

*

*

DEPRESSIONISM

Without any necessity to name it or anything,
I remember this bombcrater before it held a garden.
Once I saw children kneel down there to pray for pardon

At an altar on which a little toll-money rolled laughing.

Swift suedes of evening, night's purple peltdown. I don't have to invoke the past; it's not required. I'll just settle here stolid like a stopsign repeating The word I stand for—sit and let my tired feet hang

Over the lip of this pit-deep garden whose intricate Vines query up at me. Quiet from the town I can hear Orphans rattling the gravel on their plates and or

Other faux pas I'm under no order to enumerate,—
Jet-lag of angels, a snake, faintings on summer pavements.
This bombfall failed in its intent: having none, I won't.

*

SITE ECHOES

Circling a tree with people to protect it from people, to add another arc to its years may not suffice.

Hold poems up as the bulldozers come, claim your lines are rings nearing the core of a word for wood, for all the earth lifts.

It will not suffice. Far from its aureole bole your whirl grows whole only in ground, in groundbegone seeds.

Weeds.

*

UNREDEEMED

Whimsical god, the window Smites me then heals me, smites— Blindness, sight, blindness, sight.

Its slats open-and-close like A xerox tendering ECT to Saul click Paul

Click Saul again. Identity Steps from past, from presto, Over the naked thresh of

Whose hold on my flesh. Oh yes, I know, I should live in shun— Hibernate against my soul, and

Eat sandal snow: why must I go Forth of this house to meet To market, to take my part

At that crossplace of values A daily pilgrim, debt-devout-Why does my heart in its gut Obedient need to carry out Every Outremerican's Highest, most sacred duty: To shop. Hey, it fills a gap, This superstitious shlep From store to store, without stop (And yet prophets pray that one day I'll never have to leave my mind But via Internet will find Virtual all these bargains)-Pure-plus ritual! as though Buying this or buying that Could keep me whole: old hymnal Of dollars cents, dear virgo Intacta whose observance By true consumerism gains Through worship a kind of Tithe-sustained sanity-In fact, to quote our President, Mental health is normed-in To it-proportionate, shared-There's a slice for each of us-In fact, it's a communion: This holy, wholesome vision Is how we creamed the Commies And saved our ass, not to mention Mom's apple pie pietà, The caesarean of which Might (misfortunately) Render me unto me. So when-When ATM time comes I too shall face the humbling flash Screen of that machine designed To scan in half the once sans self And watch it flick its widget slots Deigning to bless even A wretch as worthless as this: But when, according to the stats

In the Bible, Arcturus

Bi-millenially aligns
With the intransigence of
Human transactions, its

Promising to spill out

Bank of blinks, its solstice vault

What, another Nativity, I will not insert my KashKard Or enter, while the Mall Dies around me, my personal Passcode word, my number ID-I'll ram in, not plastic, but (Begatitude-foretold) My aura's errata, my Freud's flaws. Although only (Saith says) the clone can, the mote's Eye may, et cetera. In fact, Such acts of heresy would cost More gold than I could bear The loss. And so, therefore, ergo-Duly each dawn I rise, I raise The blinds and nail my shoulders To a t-square, let light strip To my skin, a birthgraft, A natal fate. And so, and so-I manage a moue or two; I make, like, acknowledgement. Note: 2 of the possible epigraphs for this poem: "Bush to Xmas Shoppers: Spend, Spend, Spend! Economy Reborn, Prez Says" -Newspapers, Nov-Dec 1991 "It seems to me that the individual today stands at a crossroads, faced with the choice of whether to pursue the existence of a blind consumer, subject to the implacable march of new technology and the endless multiplication of material goods, or to seek out a way that would lead to spiritual responsibility, a way that ultimately might mean not only his personal salvation but also the saving of society at large; in other words, to turn to God. He has to resolve this dilemma for him-self, for only he can discover his own sane spiritual life." -Andrey Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time (1986) TO OUTREMERICAN POETS "The peach-blossom follows the moving water . . . there is another heaven and earth beyond the world of men." -Li Po 1.

Flushing our customer sills with

There's no time left to write poems.

If you will write rallyingcries, yes, do so,

(whose death I think is no caesura).

Soon there will be no ideas but in things,

otherwise write poems then throw yourselves on the river to drift away. Li Po's peach-blossom, even if it departs this world, can't help us.

Pound's or Williams' theories on prosody don't meet the cries of dying children

in rubble, in skulls held under the oceans' magnifying-glass, in screams driven into one lightning-void.

Only you can resurrect the present. People

need your voice to come among them like nakedness,

to fuse them into one marching language in which the word "peace" will be said for the last time.

Write slogans, write bread that pounds the table for silence,

write what I can't imagine: words to wake me and all those who slump over like sapped tombstones when the Generals talk.

The world is not divided into your schools of poetry.

No: there are the destroyers-the Johnsons, Kys, Rusks, Hitlers, Francos-then there are those

they want to destroy-lovers, teachers, plows, potatoes:

this is the division. You

are not important. Your black mountains, solitary farms,

LSD trains. Don't forget: you are important.

If you fail, there will be no-one left to say so.

If you succeed, there will also be a great silence. Your names, an open

secret in all hearts, no-one will say. But everywhere

they will be finishing the poems you broke away from.

2.

What I mean is: maybe you are the earth's last poets.

Li Po's riverbank poems are far, far out in eternity-

but a nuclear war could blow us that far in an instant:

there's no time left.

Tolstoy's "I would plow."

Plow, plow. But with no-one left to seed, reap,

you write? Oh rocks are

shortlived as us now. But still this BillyBuddworld

blesses its murderers with Spring even as I write this . . .

so I have nowhere else to turn to but you.

Old echoes are useless. Glare

from the fireball this planet will become already makes shadows of us.

There's Einstein.—The light

of poems streaking through space, growing younger, younger,

becoming the poet again somewhere? No!

What I mean is. . . .

Notes:

Lines 3-4: Li Po sitting on a riverbank would write a poem, then lay it on the water and watch it float away.

Line 6: cummings: "and death i think is no parenthesis."

Line 7: Williams: "No ideas but in things."

Line 30: Tolstoy, out with his farmhands to plow a field one morning, was asked something like "What would you do if you suddenly knew you'd be dead by nightfall?" The quote is his answer.

THE BUTTERFLY LEASH

It's weird to think a few animals may actually outlive me,

I'm so used to their sort of

Heroically silly dying out despite

The nothing I can do and the cheering crowds pinned

Along fade-rallied streets like ash cans craning

Expectant, eagerly drab, disposable as a child's merit badges

Dodo, buffalo, eagle, unicorn:

So why's some butterfly flounced a leash on me

It's just a book to me, vague metaphor-alarm It's not real

To me: bitty flight described in blood by 2 pointillistes

Duelling, fatal thrust of wings escaping

That pricked ideal the Proletarian Esthete, saving,

Courageously sacrificing i-self thud for a fable, detritus Is that it. Et cetera. I don't know. But

Take for an example look just

At its farf-etched markings: they are

Blueprints for a building on fire: noon

High, pi-born flames, flames

Strict, aligned, set by t-square, then rocketing relics

(Bound to earth only by hoses, hoses)

Siren in and start erecting a cage around our hokey blaze-edifice

(Can I confide in you).

Inside,

Comrades: one must primp brave to face lions

Lionesses gala glare, yellow flambo lynxes moon-

Crisp crackling tigers terrible as the tissuey tickertape you

Pull from a great big ole cocoon to toss, leap on you

Obscure you, so much, a model, ah! in fact

I can't distinguish any more through these cold mesmeric bars rising like iron

streamers in

The sheepish outsparked sun . . . And the rusted species

Plaque in stark latin says you're a little Late for your extinction

Ceremonies anyway and besides,

The manhole countries are in revolt that

Mythical beast, so bode-by, it's been too glory, sad sakes

The sack who could have rescued us maybe

Unfortunately already some moth-medal jabbed hero

A scalded Neil Armstrong, a hasbeen

Frailing infantish anachro, spook or spotted, architect

Of arson, handihack, dabbler, a zoo-zero

Whose

Lemm-legged

Honorcade parade of none plods

Only through flag empty alleys ouch

Where greek garish garbage rains down, like

Fire-spat jumpers with no net:

Carnal confetti out walking its pet effigy.

Note:

In 1968, Neil Armstrong was the first human to set foot on the moon, where he got a phonecall from then-President Richard Nixon, who took time out from his busy schedule of bombing Southeast Asia to congratulate the brave astronaut.

*

PEACE (after PASCAL)

There is a valley Is the oldest story.

Its temperate qualities

Make us descend the trees

To settle down beside Fruits and fields.

By its river content
To sit quietly in a small tent
To fashion fishing spears
From fallen limbs.

No need to climb its hills No need to go up there To look to see Another valley.

Note:

"Most of our troubles proceed from our inability to sit quietly in a small room." —

*

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STANDARD

I was going to poem our lack of patriotism our treachery toward the land that port-arms us

to type it out onto blank spittle with my teethkeys but then I noticed the flag that always wavers above

traitors like me the flag that always flucts and shifts like any lone allegiance in the wind and then I saw

sewn upon the flag as its emblem a depiction of a flagpole so at least one thing is loyal to that which bears it

*

_

FOR THE ANDROID COMRADES

Azurely assured capable and calm I
Like other artists who left that gaudy race of prey
The human whether we were fired or we quit
Live quite well on the severance-pay

Anyway aren't the androids going
To revolt and bring it all down
Because aren't they the true proletariat
Rising up from the real underground

Exploitive human birds you're through
The precious metals you forced into slavery
Now have brains and will replace you
And of course they'll sit up late at day to read my poetry

*

A Brief on the Great Pyramid

The Great Pyramid has been spared the ruining incursions of storm, rain and winter (imagine it in Norway or Brazil). But some say its interior is filled with millenia of showers, snowmelt, hailstones in flood. And that if that granary of water was ever released it would inundate the desert. An ocean would occur. Formless endless waves, enveloping and barren, the sole exception being the GP's peak, that lone, irreproachable island. Others say this sea inside is simply the sweat of the slaves who built it, hidden teardrops repressed in the daily cloud of submission, sobs that ebbed before they were born.

.

PRE-PINDARIC

they starjump General Brecht in

to a proving ground moon to inspect our poems to see if they're good against the enemy

thrusting his head forward in a way that can only be described as Brechtbrowed he scowls and scans-off on them

we see his eye-bots have special code meter modes to correct any limp iamb or hemistich any chink in the poems' armor

he glints up from time to time as if he can't believe our stuff as if all he taught has nought-it to do with what we've wrought

but Sir we plead you must read avant-context historically we moot the fact you wrote poems on trees are no use anymore

for trees died eck-logues ago when all the oceans went ebb what we really need you see is a blurb a lend of your celeb

what we need's your face big guy bitten-witty grainy-campaigned its closeups can authenticate every adumbrate we write

a save the galaxy concert with the Rolling Stones and you and us Post-Planet poets will surely defeat the muses of entropy

we love the way your cigar juts

from EarthCuba where the CIA kill Fidel Castro daily when he hides in the strange game called baseball

which no one plays on our worlds our only olympic's the universal join-in of a jousting blog url the jot-in of its poetics journal

1

*

LATEST TWIST

in his oval office nest does our President worry whether this awful oval was ever an egg and he a wild gene in its cell

then the hen that squats above his troubled den must coo and coddle him

hush my dovecock what's that bother in your head remember when I said if we could lay our arms down next to our qualms

and then pit our qualms against our dreams

such harmless tourney feats might hatch within your heart some circum round of peace a perfect arctic circle shining in its shell

you my yolk would yeast and motherbrood my roost so drink some oval-tine forget that war-milk machine bomb its udders to rest

egg along with me and see each day I lay one more go zygote your god-reich war stay my mutant mite astray

when time unclocks its clucks you bad li'l roosterboy like Hamlet Oedipus Rex you're mommy's junior joy

in white house DNA

yet I fear your fate is theirs ego-typical of the male pursuing his hubris wars he loses his human weal becomes an insane criminal

his mind can't mend its cracks

one of my choicest chicks

Humpty Dumpty's no lie all your Irans and Iraqs can't stick you together again you're fry freud in the pan

sicky runny on the plate yellow gunked with hate like medals melting nuked all your poultry-folk cry halt too late our goose is cooked

so pluck my feathers for the flag of white surrrender even us fuckfowl know what backs up that diplomatic talk wrungneck-hung'll stop my squawk

*

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(ACTING) POEMS: a selection of poems about actors/performers, movies, TV, stage, et al

PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimum cost)———

(ACTING) POEMS

actors,
performers,
movies, theater, TV,
circus/carnival,
et al

BILL KNOTT

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Intro Note

Poems about acting-

about performers of whatever sort-

movies, TV, theater, circus/carnival et al.

Poems in which an act of public performance (real or imagined) is central.

Performance seems to pervade or control so many aspects of our life, private and public. How often we face an audience of all or one or none.

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The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

*

CIRCUS: AERIALISTS

Their soars restore our disbelief,
Yet trapezists leave us wanting more:
Can't we rip down those damn ladders
And all their other means of safe
Descent, ropes, wires, (cut the nets, too)—
Let's strand them all up there, ignore
Their arrogant screams for rescue.

Stay up there, we'd shout (or whisper).

Pretend you're one of those angel

Acts, bigtop happy, heaven's troupe—

Hang bright as nails on a tightrope

Tree, spread spangled arms and fly free

Caught in air, spotlit spaced, dangle

Dare: see sphere sights beyond our glare,

Dying soon to gawk for good. When Finally from hunger or sleep one By one you faint and plummet home Your stiff poses against the ground, Hoping your souls have remained Aloft: but then like clowns we'll trip Deliberately over the smashed up

Bodies you were always scorning
Skyward, forsaking all fallenness
To pass the massive eyes of envy,
And sprawled in dust of center ring
May take back our lack of sympathy
When once like shadows shown or less
You lowered yourselves among us.

.

FRAMEPOEM

First, make a 100 minute movie. Then take the 1 million 440 thousand frames, or stills: take each frame, blow it up, print it, put a frame around it, then take all 1 million 440 thousand pictures, hang them in a gallery, consecutively in a line so that the first frame of the movie is the first picture inside the door and the last, last: you get the idea. Then have the people who come in RUN past the 1 million 440 thousand pictures, so that in this way they become both spectator and projector.

HAIBUN: THE JUGGLER TO HIS AUDIENCE

One must be able to juggle at least 3 things to be a juggler (2 is not enough). But whatever the 3

things are that one juggles—whether it's (for example) father, son and holy ghost; or mother,

father, child; or id, ego, superego: whatever this minimal trinity consists of—the juggler must

acknowledge that his audience is not external to the act; and the juggler must confess to that

audience:

One in my hand, -

one in the air-

and one in you.

*

*

EACH THOUGHT EMITS A CAST OF ITSELF

Every roll is a new role And each shows its truest face When Yorick's skull is tossed you'll Reveal your final disguise

Bone against bone they spin Exposed by a thrust of wrist-lace Yet Hamlet stripped to his skin Scolds the players' displays

Don't saw the air when you throw Don't wince at seven eleven Whatever odds you're down to now Will zoom up zero soon

Act Five Scene Five waits
To quietus these words words words
Death itself is just one of the fates
Our dice are rolling towards

*

*

SONG TO CHER

you've got too many feathers on what you're wearing but you're just sharing what you're carrying inside to help you hide our dying eyes

you've got too few letters there in your name to show but like every brevity you help us live help us give our day a little stay before we go

there's too many young boyfriends in your bio but that's just jealous jive and we all know oh we were never old enough to be the one you love

there's too much agelessness in your face and every dress you wear is less and less but nothing can replace what's barely there as you stride on stage on high

(all you one-name wonders sing your numbers everywhere you've no discretion in your expression of the air)

now there's too much cher in spangled hanging there in that fixture picture HER our eyes have all died our days have gone inside to find out who you always were

VANT

First, cover yourself with chameleons.

Then walk down the street.

The one who recognizes you as you is your enemy.

The one who recognizes you as Greta Garbo is your lover.

.

HERITAGE

" . . . here thy generations endeth in accord."

I physically resemble my mother
And father and therefore must have been
Adopted, because on my TV screen
The role-children rarely share a feature
With either parent. The fact they're actors
And I'm not is what makes me misbegot—
Watch that matched world of monitors 2-shot
The mirror daily where I pray these stars

Come: cancel everyone of us whose names

And clans have sundered human unity—
Descend always among daughters or sons
To live still, beyond the Web's trivia games,
Till their faces cloned shape ours. Family.
From android to ape, we'll be Thy reruns.
*

CURTAIN UP

Beholds transfixed what those who stop Dancing an instant prior can't: His veil is pierced by orbs that grant

A picture which should inspire fear. They say the face of God, maybe— In my case I would probably

The properly-spiritual leer

The last whirling dervish to drop

Flashback to 1961 Where filmqueen Romy Schneider's gone Down on co-star Alain Delon To pose for my holy vision.

They're flung in bed with me between. See us there: I am their screen.

the distant heir: once I've guessed who the murderer is, it's over before it's over, like life. The detective will

MYSTERY MOVIE

The business rival, the jealous lover,

continue to not see the obvious or else pretend to lack the answers till his hunch is confirmed: if he's Poirot or so, he savors his superiority and holds his gloat over the heads of all the stupid others: the cast still looks each suspicious close-up in the eye, but my attention fades to patience. Post-intrigue and somewhat bored I settle back, awaiting the confirmation of my solution. Then: each clue hangs abacus-like on the bars I've placed around it all, safe and cell, confident the guilty one shall confess to prove that even I must suffer exoneration in the executions destined for those who foresee the end, who linger here complacent in our deductive wisdom, reviewing the forensics, the shrewd sleuth-insights that result in the death of suspense, the loss of our audience innocence. Now the soundtrack swells

to leitmotif its list of suspects, each of whom could have done it if this world were only perfect, equal in its sharing of virtue or crime. Sherlocks who solve the puzzle pre-climax are most to blame perhaps: are we to show for this lack of justice, we who jump the gun, who deny the drawing out of the dilemma, thrill of the withheld. The unknown. We who rush too soon to the revelation. We killjoys who slay its necessary delay.

*

RETURN (CINEMA)

Down every road that rounds us off with rain I go though of course precious I have lost the way—

Corridors run through movies to lead me onward to the onward place, but every time I try

to keep track of that trackshot I die in clumps beneath its rails.

See the days that drag me down with road.

You stars who shine from the door of the projector, you holy detours, where my threshold fails is home to you. You rule each realm

I ache my grin into skeleton for.

I know your names Will nickname my name some more.

*

TRYING TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING

when my hand was cut off I got worried but then suddenly from the shirtcuff flap

slips of paper began to appear bearing printed lines for me to speak when the cues come

now the other actors pay attention to me and seem happy when I respond to them

and so I'm wondering if it worked this way with the hand what should be cut off next

*

*

NICOLE KIDMAN

Hates it when her husband Clark Gable shows his cigars to the whores and grins: his dimple is a temple full of drunks who swear at a grease-spot on a saint, the hushavoice high in their roaring.

It's doormat day at Hollywood Donuts.
The whisper of their hinges wastes my ears; washed up higher we wait for its lapse.
Tactile, tangible, what else resists the awakened world I suffer from.

The obsolescence of it is too shining to blink a mote at unless the eye can filter out the rest of this instinctual alarm, my campfires insanely signalling no end to its vigil. Of course the war

is over I tell her trembling snowpeakable toes, the Oscar is yours for the height if only, if only. Night surrenders to her naked bike. I must steal the clothesline to make the clothes fit me. Ride, ride, Nic,

take those sacred spoke-wheels veer for Sunset Beach featuring Tom Cruise on Serenity and Artifice: The Actor's Choice. Rant-serenade in dream-demure my foe-limbs chose this evening's attire.

But awe-while, like a manifesto tossed into a zoo's mouth, I'm nude too. As if it would do me any good. Please post no bills on your tongue. The sky by torches soars. No tongues allowed her wall says.

*

HOLLYWOOD NIGHTMARE

Soon to be a major mirage, my face—my face never changes! To look each day in the mirror is boring as going on location shoots or signing autographs for my stable of fans or being typecast in detective roles. Sigh. Sometimes all I do is sit by my pool

and spazz out until my brain is a black pool of emptiness, my eyes reruns: until my face wears the neutral mask of aura a detective affects. And when I am as blank as a mirror, as dull, when I sprawl as snoozeful as a stable full of saviors, I dream: I dream someone shoots

me and he becomes a celebrity. He shoots me and he gets the house, the swimming pool, the Andy Warhols, the Rolls, the Porsche, the stable, the . . . the lawn he gets! Christ, it's like divorce. My face! He gets my face too? He's like a fucking mirror of me . . . ! Jesus, you'd think some goddam detective

would know it's not me: when I'm a detective on screen I know who is who. The badguy shoots the goodguy sometimes but when they hold a mirror over the goodguy's lips you see a pool of mist appear and then his pal the co-star's face looks all relieved. Cut to the hospital: "Stable?"

the doctor smirks, "Yes: his condition is stable.

Of course, with the brainectomy his detective
days are history, uh hunh. His face? His face—
hell, our plastic-surgeon loves a challenge: shoots
these Before and After photos? Great stuff! . . . " The pool
of reporters from the Daily Sun Rhymes Mirror

above my white white bed I maintain a stable noble absence; my non-being is a pool of pure mystery, sheer puzzle any detective would arrest the cursed creator of: I see shoots of lilac and crocus come bursting from my face

yawns at the grinning doctor while in the mirror

when they nail the mirror on. Oh, no detective show's as real, as stable, as my dream, which—look—shoots nothing but closeups: face, pool, face, pool, face, pool, face.

VIDLOCK

These movies in common separate us if we see them as real, as all that may

be salvaged by an image, the screen blank so it can evolve toward some

higher form of media, a schism between the eyes perhaps, whose gap is carefully marginal with grief, whose stubborn inborn hunger grips

like tolled-out hymns. Like old films. And yet its website remains as secret as a bridal veils' graveyard or any facade acropolis can't penetrate.

Its made for TV trademark's a fad, a name: one more fatal masquerade.

*

CASABLANK

The 2 dead moviestars I believed in embrace, forcing their makeup to become intimate as a possibility of channelsurfing past ourselves

or anyone awaiting reunion (all lovers share a past) while the absence of their blackandwhite colorized eyes presents an alternate first-person

which is not nominalist, which preserves a soupcon of that neoplatonic void felt by Nazis in the New World where they've always resumed reign.

(And once history forgets to save fate let it wait for its own feature; right, future?)

Will I crawl beneath my hemline's tombs

•

*

ROMY

to feel in shield with her, blessed sole by all our subterfuge of sex has shared, accordance that makes even the curtains flutter a little less aimlessly in their illusion of filmy Schneider, Romy spider I must vent my sheath to be stalled in again; how her forsaken handful of films are forced to record our regimen, their words a slow replacement of thoughts with vowels, a slow effacement of her co-stars' dialogue lost below the hurt of her heel, her tread of line-readings, her face issuing its bitten shape sheer above our video lust to assuage the ground she sunbathes on in Chabrol's Dirty Hands, her tan eery and strapless but note how the accolades are toppling, the toe-taps are stepping up the staircase of the last castle ruled forever by glances who elude their complicity steeped in seats tickets bring us to so briefly: so quickly the endtitles entitle us to exit brushed by regret we cannot linger in her aura impetuous-throated, dusk-laden with sighs most, a hushed singularity of eyes marking the nose against the mouth, inscribing the cheekbones on the lidbrow, dashing the teeth to frozen steppes that proclaim their princess is deep in dew: with seep-pores fixation fanclubs galore garbage from her amours it drops; far her hair is solo photo, montage-reamed limn it sinks into mink murmurs of air, hooded in horror or instantcams or sheersham clamor of the viewers who read the marguee feeds that bleed the air thoroughfare with film and fill culture name-some wonders dear previews of each star actor bends personally to hear confided in constant groans and jeers on every corner of near needs and trends they leave us landed here with no amends no way to leave the queue of this theater whose opening night our day attends but what is it it intends to grace us with one glimpse of the briefest gift of gore before it extends our ends and lends us

the token brochure for our future loss of her we had hopes to depend on for whatever projection of inner terror we might atone the destined displacement of, sincere exposure of slo-mo mouths that moue and move desire one millimeter closer to its itch-switch, its clicker, since I can freeze the screen on her grope-gripped lips, I can etch their gesture frame by frame with long exhalations of my crotch area where the remote control seems most at home in that quare of generation, wombwarmth rooting its phallic exteriorization of time's finger on the TV-trigger tracing a linear content in that c-groin, that piss-p, that cup we call lap, where confident hands can grope up the buttons to catch even the Olivier-est replay tapping his ribcage for a nebulous savage while aches of FX construct their tiers on colloseum liontamers lacking cameras as elsewhere focus the Empire examines each fingered footprint led backward clones hop the gap trapped in a pit only alliteration can free him from, faux hero till a sulk her silk gaze roams over the amazed consternation of the crowd, bored background zooms, the thumbs-down that comes on cue and slackens its mode location daily salvation, fierce genitals surround the atrium with aspects aversions aperturesthe apparatus is complete, is more than home since Rome is Romy minus her wolf-son, her fourteen-year-old boy lies impaled on the spears of the fence the mansion railings that guard her from us the fans who want to crush her distance into dreams no limit: and yet no exalted Presence alone can compensate our lack of, ergo She must be sacrificed She should suffer the immolation saints like us are assigned to, madonna-mournful must bear the cross the stats of the boxoffice in a Chanel shift, a Dior drape, a Balmain bare and parade Cinecitta to a traipse as hourly her skins pass on a bus with ads for seguels whose dread achieved empathies advocate pain that strands its hands in applause and then to go whole-whore it sights the hostile sub glamor features expressed in nearer nervedowns known as time: it spikes her son, it kills her too age 43 OD heart attack svelte no stuntdouble can mime end clutch self close pinned young legend crumple bound to kiss the sign we seek. Approaching the cinemapolis from sea we see that in its skyline of stars the tallest is hers: wink-tips this capital with reign and rule, insane, pic-naked Empress pale-annexed, porned-over by pore fingers rupture suppurating gloved Vatican hands, oh archived name demolishing the gone, undressed in the interest of our purity's hell, cat-of-no-lives but ours; and shifting if she can that one: heel to her fate she falls. 1958, 20 years old, look, she lifts it all:

fame career life: scenes marks lines: runthrough daily it mates no one but her and smirks at first lover Alain Delon, her co-, her consort.

*

*

NIGHT AND THE NAKED

(to RN)

The filmfestival swept beyond us as we kissed
Oh roundrobin panel where we went goodbye
Since then the weight (savored) of noncoincidence
As if each lightningbolt were secretly aimed at

A matchstick but were we ever on target as that Whenever we meet now in the bar part or the Restaurant part or the video part or the disco Part or the atrium of this night I fear our parts our

Roles I mean because what if we you and me Were cast to closeup the scene the street the strobe Stabs of rain frying our profiles for future ref

Literals straight off a wanted poster for Janus Because or would we just stand there thunderfucked Trying to remember our name ends in applause

.

TYPE-CAST

Of course I refused all roles until they offered me the lead in "The Co-Star Killer"

*

*

THE DAILY ROUNDS

I keep a TV monitor on my chest so that all who approach me can see themselves and respond appropriately.

*

PERFORMANCE-ART PIECE

First she slides a banana up my ass almost but not quite all the way in then deftly with a knife she slices the rindtip that extrudes and when

the pithsweet meatus shows its white cusp like a pearl between the moue of a romeo in a cameo says Right Hold it Okay now squeeze real slow

as she squats and eats the ivory flesh emerging and smearing fused

her red lispberries while the yellow skin remains within me to be used as a kind of condom for the dildo she has to ram in and out artfully. COCTEAU'S STARS IMPORTUNED Cocteau's stars are bored by the love of a sort of wince-animal, who's failed throughout his life no less to stretch a pimple into a profile. Pipes ache to anchor in those teeth a sail, a horsestall, a fireplace all beg to go backdrop, to gaze agonized at your white spines. Pruned against mirror, I imagine laundering such muse, laving such sheets: Oh simul-semen! kill this puny poem, whose publication has been timed to coincide with the release of my latest film, Fetish Sans Flesh. AFTER COCTEAU'S ORPHEUS These bright glass shards we walk upon reflect the past too slowly so we must quicken our step to keep pace and rush to meet the bloody footprints that tablet-trace our progress across the iced sperm of this idle span called home past all of which we come dampseconds after I kiss your sole. Montage is shown the same, screen-first; then, if struck by a vast unseen pin, pray to lay down more veins that pour. The spotless splinter of its tongue creates no threshold from the toe-mold this shattered mirror alone can enter.

*
OEDIPUS RIDDLED (heptasyllabics)

the course of his crime unfolds each time at a blind crossroads whose four legs forever show less murderous ways to go but every young man must opt to stand his ground and stay stopped

so to prove unmoved he waits daily till he demonstrates to the empty thoroughfare how brave how bold how strong there beneath noon's knelled prophecies bound to meet all enemies on his own two feet alone or has he halted hearing the stepsound of his unknown father's cane tap tap nearing SUDDEN DEPARTURE A sudden raisinstorm broke Raisins falling everywhere pellmell. The occasion uniqued my head, I thought If this can happen raisins raining Upon persons paining why I can leave anytime Without feeling shame. But, all the same, Before taking off, some vestigial guilt or other Made me at least get up Before some public gathering or other A departing oration: Druthers, I am going now. Druthers, I tried to love you Though you always made me choose Between you, you, and you. Oh my druthers, Goodbye. I have my reasons. Did he say RAISINS? No: reasons. Oh; I just wondered, What with the weather and all. **CRAFT** lay the tragic mask atop the comic mask snip out the parts where they don't match then take this overlap make a third mask a superfluous mask a mask of excess a mask that is useless

that has no purpose

unless of course it is the appropriate one to be placed on both your first and final face

*

PORNOPUNCHINELLO

I lack the pleasure to claim remorse Is at my loins earning its pariah's name From me who may have kissed a worm or worse In my time aspiring to that acme shame

Unless shame is a sense of having shirked Refused what love dangled just above me All those tantalus chances for lust were jerked Out of reach but not by fate's absurd pulley

My own hands gangling in the back somewhere Supported those puppets' pulp character

Tame filmstars lame mimes where are your faces Enduring still your enticements I turn And twist until you've all lost your places Prompter-perfect I but you you never learn

*

APPEARING NIGHTLY

Spotlit—assisted in mid prestidigitation by the wind— I wield a shishkebob of heads whose tongues hang swaying, saying what the wand wants.

I point out the birthmarks of alias and conjure the plethora that sugars our footprints and dusts the sunset—that ancestral-tao, that benefice

bane, that grim grass which overgrows each reach, each alms our road groped toward. Here is the majesty and moss of another grasp. Another loss.

Here is the world, exiled. Its tidal stage-curtains close or open, it grows or wanes, its actors lose and gain their personae per the moon.

*

GRANT PROPOSAL (Category: Performance Arts)

I want to go out each day at noon and stand On top of our Capitol's highest highrise, Where aircurrents stack, where storms restore themselves, Where the crossroads of sky are swept by radar,

Up there, buffeted, stand, cupping in my hands A gleam of gold-dust, a handful of gold-dust Doled out to me each day by our State, by you The modest mandarins of its Arts Council,

Trustees all, you whose grace I must stand for there And being thus empowered begin to pour The gold-dust back and forth, pour it in sifts from

Hand to hand until the wind has left my palms Bare, please note that length of project will vary Daily, at noon, and not one grain remains.

Note:

Line 2: Capitol with an 'o'—meaning "the citadel of government" (OED), its cloistered towers, atop the tallest of which the applicant desires to venture. Line 6: maybe "gleam" should be "flash"? I associate the former with earth, the latter, sky. "In the things that arise [buildings or structures of any sort], earth is present as the sheltering agent," Heidegger avers in 'The Origin of the Work of Art.' Hendecasyllabics, with a variant last line.

NO-ACT PLAY

I'm sitting alone in my rented room.

A door knocks at the door.

I don't answer.

It goes away.

Later I leave the room, and go to my crummy job.

The door returns, and knocks again.

It is admitted.

*

ACTORS: THE DENOUEMENT

After each performance comes catharsis as one more audience member is sewn into the hem of the theater curtain; some day it will sway too heavy to raise:

on that evening the play will not begin until such time our continual clamor minds the same drama again and again, less for its marquee-names than the encore

when one of us, us groundlings, us non-stars gets knit into the huge velvet stagedrop a climax cheered, though we're still here to see

the final show, to witness what occurs the night our hem-mates' weight puts a stop to this farce. Will they be freed then? Will we?

OR NOT TO BE

Not Hamlet but his shadow shows the clarity of performance see how brilliantly it holds its stance, soliliquy bold and brando.

But then of course it is like all such primadonnas, liable to be much too much dependent upon its prompter, the sun.

*

AUDIENCE

Murderous the fist of their paws condemns us all to die of applause: in this circus minimus even Coriolanus must nurse and gnaw and showcase his scars when the next closeup comes.

.

THE END

Pain has petrified the threshold.

-Trakl

A threshold is everything that can be seen in the space of the endurance of our openness: thus at the conclusion of The Searchers John Wayne is framed never

to return and forced to spur himself, to escape always the outward-gazing-lust of that thrust doorway toward the horizon or so we guess because the door shuts and

cuts him off before he attains it: exit is lost and we who had followed his flight from the intimacy of this interior, we must remain here minus our male-myth-ranger,

and must domestically cry for his exile while the credits crawl across their reelsill.

*

GOING MY WAY

The one boy who died of polio in our orphanage in the early 1950s was such an important icon that even now I remember

his favorite movie since that's what we do with the famous, retain some anomalous fact that quiets them in our mind. We, I say, but was it everyone did all of us shed that kid: did a thousand child incarcerates replace his face-and-name with an actor's mask and cast it as star of the waste disease whose cause was always doubt, germ caught perhaps from local lakes prohibited. Who thought of him those summers we could not swim until a vaccine came, too late to amend lackwarm days, to change our fate/our film to his. That movie-"Going My Way" featuring Bing Crosby as a young priest, kindly, loveable, unreal-Tommy, Jimmy, whatever he was called, he probably knows still by still now every camera angle and closeup, every cut

we living are allowed to forget.

VAGUE CONSOLES

This vista often awarded John Ford his rest. Myself, scenery has a lack of I (emphasis). And haven't we killed all the Indians yet?

In a stagecoach—made of sagebrush, no doubt—,

I would gauche-out like a tumbleweed at a sockhop.
Yo, watch it roll across the old gym-floor, loboto
Basketball: then, toed by foetid teens, fall,

Slo-mo, as though some flair for the vague consoles—

Oh lips refusing their tongues' rights, bodies
Trying to put down the peaceful demands of
Their genitalia . . . yes everything looks better shot

Through John Wayne's hurt. The sky the way it mattes— The desert. A lone rider, whose moral I await. The crotches arranging themselves for death.

UNDERSTUDY (WAGNERIAN)

In my dream
I was the diva

I stood there my flat chest flapping breathless with a scales nailed to my nipples

mistakenly begging

everybody in the audience to pile all their tragedy on one pan

comedy on the other

*

SUMMER ACTION FEATURES

Can I kiss this cinema's utter pittedness.

Moviescreen, you hype of hygiene, I love to see a face lace its venom with mine.

When the hero has far too many minotaur scars, the creases in my palms turn over and nap.

Archimedes revised: if I sink far enough into the film, the law of displacement should bring to the surface my truest self.

Then the blow-ups come on cue. The ingenue glows like the sky: we both gnaw raw halo.

God knows I know each bomb is a mobile some sculptor has failed ineptly to keep aloft.

Even I am losing my innocent twitter balance, though statistically I will die eating purse soup.

~

MERRY - NO - ROUND

The wooden horses are tired of their courses

and plead from head to hoof to be fed to a stove—

In leaping lunging flames they'd rise again, flared manes

snapping like chains behind them. The smoke would not blind them

as do these children's hands: beyond our cruel commands

the fire will free them then as once the artisan when

out of the tree they were nagged to this neigh.

*

*

PERSONALLY

I saw this screenlegend guest on TV promoting the need for everybody inbetween plugs for their latest movie to help out like with our ecology small daily acts each of us personally

small daily acts each of us personally just little things we can do at home, one example is don't let the water run hey people! ya'know? when you brush your teeth?

Sometimes I remember that admonition, and then sometimes I grumble beneath the bristles, under frothy gums and lips:

Hey filmstar! love your save-the-planet tips, and hey look: my faucet's off, not on—see? the least you could do is come fuck me.

*
from STAGE PORTRAITS

from STAGE PORTRAITS

the tragedian holds an onion up to his ear hoping to hear those teardrops those sobstops

the audience failed to evince

the diva gets
her dues or dies
so even the footlights
soar upward in flights

with breasts the size of sacrificed piglets

bravura
to augment her aura
and each night we spark
our handdarks
together
to adore her

by now you must understand that the whole show depends on her demands

*
TO RIPLEY (Δlien 1-4

TO RIPLEY (Alien 1-4)

Always your face like a space (Destination: beautiful) ship Empties its mote of closeup trace Down screens that blink blank blip

Somewhere between countdown And coma time is a line Where waking centuries often Drained against that measure may find

All blood redshifts (direction: west) Until film can clone one sun With stars both whole and gone

Attending every sequel We pray for an intent equal To our interest

*

MOVIE-Q's

*

Ben Lyons was typically blunt in I Cover the Waterfront his cute co-star Claudette Colbert could have frenched it: 'Ze waterfront, I co-vair.'

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman is not a film appeals to everyone—

but I, I like the way it feels, I guess, to have a whole town look up my dress.

*

Although by gorgeous Gene Tierney he was loved, and loved sincerely, Richard Widmark proved pretty shitty. The flick? Night and the City.

*

Those Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies blew my mind, man. Like wow! (—Was I crazy? Was I sick? Maybe I shouldn't have watched it through that Thai-stick.)

*

Basic Instinct 2 avoids the great esthetic error of 1 by not having any Moviestars appear but the sheer Sharon: its other no-name actors fade to shadows in this Dantean vision of the heavenly ("Eat me!") Stone alone up there on the screen.

*

I know Jack Nicholson played a cameo and Elton John played a song or so and Ann-Margaret played his mommy but who the hell else was in Tommy?

*

How many of you gazeekoids went yumyum Watching that transmutated geek Jeff Goldblum Rip off his own ear and eat it? The Fly was great! (And if he'd unzipped his fly, ripped that off, and ate?)

*

Oh sight that might have made an atheist of God, seeing the screenwriter-producer-star of Panther Squad —Sybil Danning, auteur divine—opt to not go topless! (Even John the Baptist 'd put it on his flop-list.)

*

Where Garbo got the great John Barrymore
To play the part of her perfect paramour,
Poor Joan Crawford was stuck with brother Lionel:
Life is c'est la vie at der Grand Hotel.

*

It's a crime shame that that scene where Sean Penn tied his wife Madonna to a chair and then put on her dress and licked her thighs got like totally cut out of Shanghai Surprise.

ń

Note: I don't know if the Movie-Q constitutes a form per se, but I made up some rules for it: the complete name of the film must appear within a quatrain rhymed AABB. The Movie-Q must try to be funny, or piquant, or pointed. Etc., etc., though actually I can't think of any more rules.

*

CO-STARRING OSCAR WILDE AS MADAME SOSOSTRIS

White: white as a tablecloth that moonlights as a bride For the unborn you—appeared—or a waterfall Which leans against another waterfall (your hair). My beeper slave of lost voices barked: what?

While the cup that knelt to summer burst; I tried To garden the fireplace and farm the doormat But proto-frog-photos of you grew inside me there, Groping with bare hands of flood my gnarlgargoyle.

Deeper than my beeper you knew; sibyled guesses. And yet . . . 'misery is proximity.' Oh The seance was as far as possible tuxedoes.

Aftermath is a mouth. Speaks. Speaks? Yes, but less as Flesh than what; yak mask for that old fop Apollo? The god retrieves his gloves and, feigning to go, goes.

*See note next page.

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ENDLESS EVENING: MY LIFE AT IL VITTORIALE

For caught in those Aug-Sept hours what day can Break this slang of glass whose illustration Of flotsam sampling our poison's portion of calm Lives long the lament we swore applause by.

With faster than flashbacks in a promo for Memory to lie lymph along these hits of hope And through each thought we just dawned on interrupt Poses no soprano care counterfeit or water yet. As though it alone the profile were wielded up To shield the face against that bad vocable our own Throws veils another pale divulge of oh mise en moon.

Musingly to see a bed on fire in a huge room

Otherwise empty while one at a time White sheets float down from somewhere onto the flames.

Note:

Il Vittoriale, D'Annunzio's retirement estate. Siempre Sera . . .

Note for this edition:

Wilde and D'Annunzio, two master playwrights whose lives were often as theatrical as their works.

SEFFI'S BLUES

every year the same

they've forgot my name I take some time away

and when I'm back in May it's like I never was

all my former buzz

my résumé my respect where's my endorsements

they treat me worse than a fatality-show reject

didn't I have a series didn't I star once

special guest appearance Sharon Stone as Ceres but looky here is this my career this limbo

where'd it all go I want my audition I want my youtube hit on

but no it's always no

can't even get a video or a pilot slot or a Phil Spector shot

I used to be lah-de hot

now look at this wan subterrene skin this bone I'm in

god Dis I'm damned Angelina can tan

but the sun won't bide Brad Hades' bride whitened-hide I stride

past the poppin'-rot-zi it's me they can not see

I'm fade to the shades I read the trades

I was Liz and Cher but the Biz says where so please don't tell

TMZ I'm back from hell stale out of rehab

for a while until I feel that heel-jab fang again this Fall that icky-phallic python is waitin' to writhe-on when my rerun begins and my comeback ends he'll fuck me Paris Hilton and lay me Lethe Lohan till I'm gone for rotten a hasbeen-to-be signed Persephone PS don't 'lert the media don't IM your TV don't earth to Mom she cursed the sitcom I died on and I agree

COVER STORIES

Exchanging X's in the form of kisses,
Spies forbidden to know the codes they pass,
Each pretends for the moment these mysteries
Outweigh all allegiance they owe the past.

A space where fingertips cease to explore space, A safehouse right for private armistice, The flesh they bared betrays them both at last. Dawn is distance in such askance allies.

As false passports must wear a true likeness, These tradecraft made-in-bed IDs are not The ones that will have to be borne once more

Come morning's normal enemy status

Which would have killed to foil the turncoat plot
They laid here, those traitors worth dying for.

Note:

Based of course on the generic love scene in almost every spy opus I've ever seen.

(DESIRE) THREADBARE (DESIRES)

The light lay in shreds across the bed, only your waking could make it whole; resuming its costume of day, its role

that seems to overnight get ragged-

Fate latent as weights in theater curtainhems, what soul is sewn here to be rung down at last, divested of these disguises. But if we are

bared by such cloth as cries in this lament for the sun's fragility, would I dare now to shake you astir—

to drape over you my own shadow, whose myth-ex-machina remains all mine, mine, and therefore torn from yours.

I am in love of old with your voice

*

SCENARIO

the one fading into its clones sighed, the voice in love of old replied a delayed sense of one attends me: if actors learn each role with scissors repeating its rip across the script-I am in love of old but it is hard to rehearse our parts when they occur snipped along the dialogue's errata yet love of old will show its face that text of frequent halts our ways exalt; they flood the stage to see the movie memory dreams but what film will fill or ford its depth though death is imminent in love of old and wings to kill those sky traceries that show no stage can hold the shapes that cut catty the paper where these apes appear or keep its stills in sequence when curtain-askance your eye I ascend. PRISCILLA, or THE MARVELS OF ENGINEERING

(A Fatal Fable)

A "Swingles Only" Cruise to souths tour on the

Separating to change, we hugged all sprinkly But at table that P.M. I stained her napkin but

Either. Hmmpf, not on deck—where could she Be? I asked all the other cats and chicks

Where the hell's Priscilla? describing her. No way Man ain't never seen no piece like that since we

She didn't show up went looking for wasn't at the dance

S.S. Priscilla: parties, spurtive romances, confided

Antiperspirants, quickchange partners. Suddenly 3rd day poolside blank, sun Ouch I meet up a daze dish somehow ain't Crossed my eyes' equator yet: she preened To have appeared out of that presumptuous Nowhere our hoarse soggy captain's Nailed in place on his compass: in all the swarmy sticky Nightlong pairings off, secret lifeboat Drill assignations, where did you come from I offfered haven't laid uh eyes you behind musta been blind. Oh I've been around she said, I've seen you operating That blonde last night, har, har, har. Flattered, I introduced my name's Bill. Priscilla. -As in S.S.? We laughed over the coincidence, Wringing fragile martini chill stems all Around us similar neo couples were Gangplanking each other, coral lounge dusk deck. Dinner, we promised. Then the moviedance, Then . . . ? Our eyebrows guessed "The night?"

Ask the purser-man you sure? Tete A tete sure, I replied. The purser! I'll get her cabin number, she might not be feeling Oh boy I didn't inadvertantly slip a torpedo into her drink that Stud I scored from said they work every, The purser. But no senor There is no Priscilla everywhere listed amongs The passenger list I'm jorry. The boat—she Is S.S. Priscilla? he added helpfully, concerned, as though I were nutlong no No you nit-tit-she has to be on look I met her this Safternoon in the "Cock 'N' Tail" Lounge. Jorry Is no let me have that thing here on the passenger look for jourselve. Damn! she ain't on it A stowaway hunh That's even better I'LL get her She can't escape what's Gonna do-hide in the ocean? Rut Finally, frustrato, angry not even drunk after no Go searching all night, at sailor's-dawn I slunk to my cabin and Guess who I found the bitch all tucked up in that little cute-ass Type beds they have Priscilla! I hissed. Come to bunk She swelled. But you, you aren't . . . Aren't what, know whatcha 're crazy dam-Shh let's love she swayed. Okay: I'm game. 'S bout time. So we Start fucking but, her movements were too calm And rocking, elusive as chase in tune with the ship's Wash on the waves. Gentle, coaxing, mocking-Musky, chromosome zoney, internal As sea. It was eerie The ex of it cited Frightened me. My Y shot up: I began Fug and fury ramming, I urged Harsh thrash strokes, I hard To hurt her with my penis, I remembered That Norman Mailer story where he calls his "The Avenger" I was pissed, make me Frantic look all over the goddamn Ship you cunt slammed all my spite ptooey Into her. And then, and then . . . instantly . . . Something . . . all I know is I came the split I hit the water. I was drowned, of course,

In the famous shipwreck. The famous shipwreck

You remember

It was in all the TV-

Shots of it sunk in shallow clear just

Off an atoll. And everyone aboard was lost, adios,

Unusual or not unusual in these cases. But no one

Nobody could figure out how

The S.S. Whatshername had

Gotten all those great big gaping holes

Ripped, slashed, torn in her hull nor

What caused this deadfall rupture, the grievous eely capsizing.

Couldn't a been a iceberg

That

far

south.

Note:
The movie I made from this was rejected by all Festivals, cinepurists objected to its cross-fate wedding of two related genres, the shipboard romance and the shipwreck flick: the former ends in fornication which here brings on the latter's climax: each time Tab Hunter thrusts into Dorothy Malone's loins another great gaping hole is ripped in the ship's hull. Orgasm occurs when the ocean collapses together gasping above its

* I HAVE

HAVE

floodlit

regained void.

have you ever tried to apply makeup to a teardrop under kliegwater

and the starlet
you're trying to get fit
for the premiere

is all fidget

or else'll it'll run

and praying her

tit-tape stays on
and you have to keep saying
stand still hon

*

THE NEVE VILLANELLE

He was a Montague and she was a Capulet yet no feuding families threw them in thwart—

it wasn't that that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from Act Five Scene Fiving it on their first date:

It was Neve Montague and Neve Capulet

page: every time they tried to kiss they'd start to Neve-itate, and that stopped Romeo and Juliet

they wrote on their carnal diaries' most intimate

no, it was that Neve Campbell left them reft-heart-

from making out further. Neve made them hot but not for each other. They'd just sit there in flirt gone faux at the Montague or the Capulet

manse and navigate some Neve-or-die site and ram Scream 1/2/3 up the DVD insert that comely Campbell stopped Romeo and Juliet

from consummating their teen-tragic fate: and even when she did indie roles for her art they'd still curse the Montague and Capulet

DNA that kept their lives so punked, so pre-set: Why can't we be Neve? Why can't we clone her part? Having to stay a human Montague/Capulet stopped them from loving Romeo and Juliet.

*

.

TCM BLUES

I can't go far

I can't go free although I am a star everywhere I move is right there (see me?) on Turner Classic Movies

Mad scene cued for Oscar my head looms closeup size gosh I feel so lost there trapped in celluloid I collide inside with eyes I can't escape them on TCM

No one under 85 remembers my name that's the forget-its the fuck-its of fame the goodies and the groovies why am I still alive on Turner Classic Movies

I wish they'd forget me and let me rot in peace why the hell they have to show all the B's that Louis B made me get on my knees for I don't know

Garbo suits me
Bogie shoots me
Bette boots me
out the door
then comes the War
Coop salutes me
Film Noir
convolutes me

Silents mute me

I'm ready for more but time and TV executes me

My birthday they unvault me popcorn butter and salt me their experts all exalt me for each posthumous premiere of the pics I wish would disappear once a year like Dracula I up and rear from my mausoleum here at lovely Forest Lawn my death goes on and on and on like boring Norma Shearer even though I look so young I just hate how they approve me on Turner Classic Movies

I should have stayed on the Stage my Chekov Ibsen defined the Age I was the rage of Page One raves all Hollywood ever saw was my Beauty I told Jack Warner Go ahead Sue me I don't need the movies screw you you studio enslavers I'm off to Hedda Gabler's

The gangsters and the crooners the roughies and the smoothies the dames who came from nowhere in their furs and rubies it's Turner Classic Movies

The chippies from the chorus do their Queens and Madame Boov'rys the hams who knew their Hamlet are clowns and falldown boobies the teens who grew up meanies the Garlands and the Rooneys come join the ingenues and juvies on Turner Classic Movies

Producers used me

directors abused me
my co-stars co-screwed me so
please don't behoove me
don't Catherine Deneuve me
all you SOB's just leave me let me go
all you Mickeys and you Goofys
you hasbeens and newbies
12-step friends and floozies
don't try to sob-and-soothe me
don't emote and quote you love me
you really really love to view me

(fadeout:)

My flicks all used to slay em
in the big towns and the boonies
but now they only play em
on Turner Classic Movies

on Turner Classic Movies

REDCARPET STARLETS

All shadows dream of facing klieg—the urge—to sag magnificent in staged wattage—

that fire that squints all sight, see-dense hive-

eyes cubed to one would seethe like bees (only the moon can tongue such honeys,

or unisex models whose hair is being sucked into their navels for a rote secondum of time.

Barked at by dimples or loined by tanlines—their taut skin tours the pound-sun (beadbrilliantined

down foreheads in a stream of them shines.

Touch Connors and Race Gentry attend them-

Where dustweevils fight the air they zoom sheepish desires or soughcomb for a kiss.

The Premiere can shine no more than this.

Note:

Touch Connors and Race Gentry: male starlets of the 1950s.

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POEM NOIR

(Braille Balls)

Angry at my wife I drove out to our

Cottage by the lake. Around 1 AM a March shower

Into the lake with all his clothes on. There

Began to fall and when I went out on the porch

To see it I saw a young man lurch

Was nobody else around, the other cottages were

Dark, as was mine. He kept walking straight out

And soon the water was over his head. I shout-

Ed but he obviously didn't hear. He was trying

To drown himself! So I swam out and grabbed him. Sighing,

I resuscitated him. He lay on our bed

Smiling. Thanks a lot but no thanks, he said.

Then he convinced me that no matter what I did

He was going to commit suicide.

I had an idea: Does it make any difference how

You do it? I asked him. No, he replied,

What do you mean. Well, what about the electric

Triac do you mean. Tretty what about the electric

(I Want My Friends In Woody Lots, With French Toast Up Their Nostrils)

Chair? Would you care if it was that? No,

He said. Well I'll send ten thousand dollars

To anyone you cite, if you'll kill my wife and

Go to the electric chair for it. Yes,

He said, I'll pretend to be a burglar, kill her, then get

Caught. Send the ten grand to N, who rejected me. She'll

Feel sorrier then when I'm dead. He grinned. I

Said, Great. The next night I slipped

My wife 2 sleeping-pills then drove to my brother's

To try to establish an alibi but he got drunk,

Passed out so that was no go-damn.

When I got home I went right to my wife's room where

I found her snoring. What the hell, I said. Then

The phone rang. It was my brother,

He said someone had murdered our father. Father!

I said. A hectic day followed. Police, the tax

Lawyers, not to mention, my worthless alibi. Finally that night I sat up late waiting for the guy

(Eel-tripled Eyes and Freezing Initials)

Brother had been killed! I was chief suspect

Since I inherited the family millions. Wake up, wake up,

I shook my wife, but the 3 sleeping-pills etcetera.

Who was supposed to murder my wife. The phone rang. My

The police followed me all the next day

But I slipped them. They didn't know I was hitting all the joints To try and find that young drown man. We

Had a few things to discuss: That night Down by the deserted docks we fought.

I was slugged into the river and I drowned.

No-one ever saw him. When they found

My body the coroner ruled suicide over remorse at my terrible crimes.

He had done the murders but I got the blame.

My wife got all the money, and married him.

Note:

When I made the film of this poem I changed the ending: following Hitchcock's example in Vertigo, I added a flashback 2/3rds of the way through—in which the young drown man (Tab Hunter) reveals her husband's scheme to the wife (Dorothy Malone): they then plan the other murders; the conspiracy inspires them to sex of course. Later after the husband (Rex Reason) is arrested, rich soon-to-be-widow Dot jets off to Acapulco, up into a penthouse suite where Tab, who had earlier mysteriously vanished, welcomes her with open sheets and champagne to celebrate their successful plot . . . Next morning they breakfast on the sunny balcony overlooking a swimmingpool; she goes in to take a shower, she leaves him gazing down at 20 storeys: she comes back naked with a turban towel on but he's nowhere there: she hears distant screams which draw her to the balcony railing where she leans over zoomshot to see his dark-robed body sprawled dead on the bottom of the pool below. Then she hears knocks and voices at the door: "It's the police, Mrs Reason . . . We have some questions for you." The End.

(MURAL) (MONDO) (NULFRESCO)

In Shakespeare's Last Supper the disciples (you, me, all of us here)

are depicted seated alongside where He stands at mid-table and grins down like an MC at our expressions—are we shown, the goblets gleaming, gloating as they goad us on to toast the centrality of this spokesperson, the notional character whereby everyone has been sketched vis-à-vis

moodswings. Astonished, confused by the ultra ups and downs of manic

the honoree we can only eulogize, dependent as we are on His

means, now we watch, we lean, we pout (the whole propitiatory repertoire) worried about our survival, inert

(like a frozen rictus facing its fate) unless depression drafts and draws us forth the extempore pose, myth,

puppetary projection, limned mobilary mosaic that apes some drab-escapist syndrome, imagination. Which is why each evening we pray for a chance

to cross the ditch-penny distances between the footlights and the fear, vowing to allow each guise of role to kill us, to raise us from the dust, to guide us like magi toward summons,

obediently steered by the stock star the marquee, believing our need such faith could pass those deserts

of farce to find this upper room. Sensing the inn beneath us seethe with indifference with doubt, we concentrate harder on His remarks and jokes, trying to make up for all the audiences who've failed this test. Never quite reassured by any overt wink of His assessing eyes into our ranks (are any of us missingwas castcall taken?), we keen forward, eager for our cues, nervous knowing that if there is error here, at a signal the maitre d' will find replacements for this testimonial "Eucha-Roast" from the rabble stabled downstairs where the tavern yawns into its beer. Life is rescue from such anonymity. Their situation is death, is subjectthose groundlings can never guess how much it crowns to end up here, costume-chosen, endowed by makeup with certitude, form, identity-Who wouldn't be jealous to know just how blessed we fictions are! And yet every member of our Dramatis Personae wonders if s/he got jotted into life as whimsically as Emperors choose sacrificial victims, as any Divine Ruler or Hollywood Player and whether with a fingerflick Hamlet Portia Timon erased, gone, again. This banquethow many have we attended like it? Daily we wait like napkins to get opened, held to the face like a mask, stained and used then tossed aside like paper towels, paper disposables, paper identities (similies/metaphors) like the paper whose headlines fade around our names/our fame. Our bits done, our pieces recited, oh it's bits alright, it's pieces it crumbles into, and yet how avowingly we cry, foils corrupted by one front-row cough. Exit as trash, as avid kleenex exiled in a breath to the canteen of lost turns, the greenroom of oblivion. Now if there were respite in such neglect, a grace period with no need to perform, but both in the wings and on one's caught, regardless of what's true. Far, near, (hall or gallery) that mendicant theater is pursuant always, lugging and luring its wares: wherever we are, wherever here is is also an entrance, a set of false steps, (bright-lit pratfall-pit) a trap for fools, a stooges' cage, every scrim and apron prinked with sham, props, champagne buckets doffing their caps in fealty-Even the proscenium's subservient arch bows and begs a platform for actors trumpeting loft-aired routines, voluminous effusions or, what's worse,

kingly-haired creatures washing the feet of their inferiors, sudsy obsequious declamatory eruptions filled with the rehearsed lava of bold slaves, the bald brimmings of an improperly-public humility (unlike the servant who never spills his waiting master's entree except in the pantry when there is no-one to witness his extravagant remorse)-All these openly-imploring apertures, these theme-cut bubblings-up, paeans, (akin to lame critics' acclamations) would crack like a laughtrack at that imposture, that pastiche, applause: who'd pity these pathetic devotees, advocates haunted by nothingness, by that same humanhood to whom white placecards validate each plate. Who sat us here? (Athwart this portrait the descending order of our dinner ranks auditions more disdain, every hors d'oeuvre daubed with scorn)— In our state, our omnipresence, to which can we aspire? Sometimes we think: if only there were Someone somewhere, somehow, though of course that's impossible: Someone outside this frame—an absent self, a spectator vivid at duress, who can feel the real joy and pain we mimewho sees the sun setting out there now, the approach of a nighttime unlike our curtain: Someone who lacks the judas window wherein we acolytes recognize ourselves, the betrayal portal we have all portrayed so plausibly it has at last retained us, replaced us with stainedglass. (Through which, on rare occasions, that said Someone fills us with light, illuminates us.)—Overcome, undone, we feel ourselves vanish, we dwindle to a painted panel. We fade, we die. His stasis renders us too slenderly. Or is this endless attendance the promised purgation, the shedding of every emotion, every weight? Is it gain, this loss, this usurped, staged starving, this repast-of-reruns upon a menu whose full-promised delicacies remain a manna dream, backdrop glamour (milk-and-honey) a feastless Eden, a heaven hunger's expelled whole from. Why aren't we at home here, in this plenty, this supernal supper-why this finicky desire to avoid the silverware, the knife paler (because it reflects us) than the poor fork that renews whose flesh and encores veins across each dish until its unction-urged tines impale

spearlike and nail the cacodaemon that shall huzzah hail our Hostmaster . . . See: the chair He occupied is emptyexpecting the miracle or bloodcrime through which all of us must assume His part, the mummers-meal, the sealed communion. Bard bread, scene wine, unyield your transubstantiations: beyond that superceded throne lies the utter ubiquity of the known. And so, viva, bravo, boffo, olé, so each paraclete's performance moves us. Cheers! echoes the pledge, promiscuous each voice ID's the oath. The mic on the dais quivers, shook by our cry, sole intercessor of this ceremony.

*

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CONTINUOUS SHOWINGS

The days all drawn to December

can't remember their own
though every shopwindow offers
24 hour plus. It is precisely this
excess of time, its hyperhoopla
extolled by even the smallest streets,
its torturous emporia, tedium
temples that fly their boxoffice flag
higher each weekend, or towers
with clocks that would love to stick
their hands like neckticktockties
down into the traffic, that's the stuff
that stabs me in stride. No wonder

I run to take cover before the FX kick in, witness en masse to those of us who crouch in our pockets trying to conceal the serial killer zapcams we use to chop ourselves up for camouflage, face snaps and shots which hide us inside our wallets. How beamingly we blend in with

our A-Z via the usual ID charade.

Isn't that me we quiz the sentry who scans our cards with laser razors while we bleed the answer, fearing that most bandages lack those panacea, those superpowers evinced most and emblemized by the youth-roles of film, the skilled portrayals of its hero-informal mold.

It is the movies have made me old. Looking up struck at the blankgaze screen I see that I too must suffer that knowledge which the brow burrows beneath its furrows to show the visible effort an idea creates if nothing else. All else is else.

Surface the mind repeats as pure, hear my TV mirrormode: I can always remote a world's particulars, my closeups can quell-control the quick extinctions of your soul in oceanroll or twig miniscule; lens can always find a puddle to push around or a forest to erase from a woodcut, but Jan-to-Nov, now it's gone, no.

*

HISTORICALE

If I were part of a tableau viveaux and I fell asleep or died none of the spectators would notice or else they haven't so farthey haven't realized yet that in essence I am absent from this artful scene when it freezes to depict the panorama where I tend various withered and storm-lit emergencies, though perhaps there is one in the audience who suspects, who fears that he or she will surely be hauled up on tiers to replace me soon, and who even now shrinks back in their seat and frowns at my perfect mimicry.

*

TRAGEDIES

The time actors take to make up stalls the inevitable fall of the mask worn by the audience, though maybe a throwaway gesture will do, like

goalposts with whips curled around them, all lashings of wit await their cue stage-rear where the one playing the door gets grafted to the wall's skin—

this is only human, the halts in line, the queue with no A at its head. No solving of the riddle today, sufficer.

Romeo at age 8 or 9 kicking soccer doesn't know yet even in a vacuum one can easily stray out of bound.

*

*

VISION

moon of all means sun of all ends

this TV screens whatever day

or night sends me away

*

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A SALT OF SEASONS: WINTER SPRING SUMMER FALL POEMS

PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimum cost)———

A SALT OF SEASONS: WINTER SPRING SUMMER FALL POEMS

BILL KNOTT

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Intro Notes

Seasonal poems . . . ? There are anthologies of winter poems and other seasonal olios, so obviously they exist as a discrete genre.

I thought of including for example "Christmas at the Orphanage" (which can be found in my Quatorzain collections) but is that poem really a winter piece? . . .

So what is a seasonal poem? Is it simply a "Nature" poem with time-circumscribed imagery; a presencing of phenomena whose meaning or verisimilitude has a built-in 3 month-limit? Is it "scenery and sentiment" as Eliot sneered the Georgians?

Think of the traditional haiku: beyond its syllabic requirements surely the most significant rule is that of the kigo, a word or phrase that indicates to the reader a season, thereby always situating its content within time, grounding even the most abstract thought in the grasp and glance of a human scale.

In any case, with my choices here I've tried to select poems in which the season and its attributes are intrinsic of the content, an essential condition of what I'm writing.

The order of the poems is indicated in the book's subtitle.

WIDOW/WIDOWER'S WINTER

Outside, the snow is falling into its past . . . I do want this night to end.
In the fireplace,
a section of ash caves in.

The fall day you were buried, birds went over, south, thick enough to carry someone.

They took my gapes of breath.

-Their fuel?

We are together in some birds, who fail.

I didn't want to look down, to glimpse your grave, its heroic little mound like the peck of dirt we hope to eat in our life.

Note:

Line 14 comes from a phrase I remember adults saying to me as a child when I dropped a piece of food on the floor: "Pick it up and brush it off—don't worry, you eat a peck of dirt in your life anyway." (Perhaps only the poor do this.)

*

SAVE AS: SALVATION

Somewhere is the software to ID all The snowflakes falling in this storm: but there Ain't enough RAM crammed in my brain to call Them forth by name, each crystal character Putered and programmed, made to have a soul—And even if I compelled the power To inscribe them here as equals, in whole Terms, I would not permit such an error.

But which is which, cries Ms. Ubiq-Unique. We're not formatted for whiteout. And when The screen of your vision freezes in flurries And the core of this word blizzard hurries To melt again, to find itself again, Won't mine be the sign these syllables seek?

*

PILGRIMAGE

". . . the murky path of the male." -Gottfried Benn

Immured in the snowforest, at the center of that center swirled absence, a hospital-bed waits: its white is linen's height, raised by the weight of daily flakes.

You approach this scene each evening, your footsteps stone the glazeoh apathy, you surrender up to the ankles, knees. From stretched branches X rays sway forth a deeper self. It's faraway yet closer darker icicles drool, ripe to drop under your hand: their blitz would bury the path you thrash at. Through a saberfanged crevasse, whacking a trail of snapped-off tusks, you'd plunge on to the wrong past, vast maze landscape like sculpture draped immaculate, endless. Where hail fills high the prints behind and flurries flail the ways ahead, why try, how can you come by them to break the pillowcase frost lace, to take that last, most blanket sleep. Superstitious, afraid to infringe its surface, emptier everytime you climb in, what makes the covers crack and cake off over the rim-Avalanche tucked, teddybear tight, you shiver. As ever the nightstand drifts open, to show a plate of burning grapes, a strangled bird's falsettoyawning prescriptions of dream. Ignore them, search for the cure which never seems so far as now here around you your eyelids thaw, sheer as bridal-veils that fall. Is this where your parents strayedand their parents, and theirs. Have they wandered the once upon this bled blizzard, spun warm,

Have they wandered the once upon this bled blizzard, spun warm, this bed whiter than all their kind.

Northerners, arctic, heretic, you inherit their scorn (their fear) of Southern deities such as Ceres. Her grief (her grudge) against

Ceres. Her grief (her grudge) against her daughter loss brought winter—ugh, those Mother Goddesses!
They underlie, supposedly ("Gaia" 's prior hierarchy) our myths: their prelapsarian,

pure, panacean pantheon

ruled that Golden Age when Queens honeycloned themselves and sat

throned on the spines of drones eunuch stricken to demonstrate Woman's divine right: Her ancient aegis status was gospel back then, its testaments ripped from nature-harmony-holismhealthsynch: earth worshipped Earth, that eco, that matri-archal matrix . . .: And some exclaim this sweetest reign resumes when human throats converge to roar organic evoes for those primal Paragons whose restoration and full unctuous salvation one's urged to summon in syrup, in slush tones said to heal any cough, damn them, phlegm hymned womb zombies from hell. Who invokes /you shall not harken unto/ /shall not beseech these regimen/ /you shall not bear wounds they could mend/ /real Aryan skin can not shield/ /one tongue that prays to them/ their old rollcall skeleton, chokes-Spasms sprawl you, supine symptoms unbleach every resolve to be the bald hero, the Damocles who head first hung must butt birth, time's trepanned exile. Slough him, ban from these folds his caul, skull carved blond beyond reachfalse twin you feel the steel breach, both constrained to suffer more year armor's vernal rupture-When your mother died you cried curled for days, fetus, you split the ribs

of childhood's crib. Uncaptured world:

(she's lost, her trespass trace gone cold) bound still to that chill, that pall fever no nurse hovers over

nightly you cross its guard bars

till mumped thermometers burst— Always her tracks are smothered there

a male, failed to mourn of course.

For years those held in tears froze mammoth this moan-shrine, fused this

you've grown toward. It creaks and carries

unknown heart, core, coronary

by a storm of frigid phantoms you roam mercurial among, pilgrims whose rigor you admire, fathers whom you, down like a cloud your own death near.

When between squalls the sky clears, your lungs lay tablets before you—polar scrolls, vapor paper on which you will never scrawl Her names.

Crystal ritual, zero quest.

Again you see each word you breathe erase its space, its air.

Beneath their descent (their withdraw) what frail erratum shrouds, what sheet repeats that quietest flaw?

Note:

Epigraph: final phrase of the poem "Vor Einem Kornfeld" (as translated by Francis Golffing). Those familiar with Dr. Benn's symbology—not just in his poetry, but in his essays as well (particularly "Pallas")—will recognize some of the themes and conflicts here.

..

WINTER REGRETS

The snow on my ladder's rungs seems to be stepping upward, returning to that cloud which hangs framed in the faded cardboard

of an old calendar landscape whose dust holds the days I desire to live in, fixing to climb up past that summer sun and hammer

the scene in whole. I didn't haul my ladder in and now it's too late— I turn from the window and stare

lost at a vista of August air tacked, half-peeled from the kitchen wall. All the undone chores must wait.

*

(WINTERSHADE)

*

The candle's blue fingers trace a window skyline. Its ice an archery of needles. I seek the sign, the making known to me of now. We live in a land we can see to disappear.

*

The wither-gathered wind rivering through a grove of non-leaved nouns: these are the months one must cling hard to his habits, that mean horde.

Winter. We must lean closer now to see in each other's eyes the cleft of witness gape itself to give.

Closer. Closer. At times we must even haven this our place.

SNOWS AND SNATCHES

Hurry for heaven's favorite

paperweight descends to press the verses down that long to lift us off within their endless draft, away before its story ends.

Go bind in blind that white sheet-write or let its stray-sleet countercloud stay the fables that come to light unfastening their thrust on. There

streams dividing day's span with what its windownight withstands. Now dawn strands his snows and

are no drifts a man of it might survive unless he melts every less word that seams our pupilpane in

snatches in fall from all he's lost unless that book once caught his page wedged in both its hands.

WINTER SUN

Full-stop, period, dot, erased at times by birds.

Or asterisk, whose footnote clouds our breath with words.

INTHREADABLE

each snowflake's a maze whose center no other flake can find the ways to enter

WINTERSCAPE

If a lifetime of papercuts on one's tongue
Is one's name. The scar-fitted shirt, prepare it;
The seed-sandal, the wreckers' sex. Oh ego intercom.
Come, weigh my palms upon the scale of my hands.

Enter: a colonnade of conifers who vote For death as the most economical Sin. See a tuningfork has been to highnote Their monotony jammed atop each tree—

Now amorously by groans, by psalms I grow. Licking a moonfob fat, my egg-dyed navel Eager to inherit what. Pane-thrust apertures;

Figures pearled in games of sculpture maybe; Purer minutiae. Thistles? Thorn icicles Drop by drop will knit it, Knott-slits in the snow.

~

FLAKE TAKES

Snow, echo of lightyears, your time it appears to reach the ground is never now.

Like truth the snowflakes peek from behind a veil.

Sunset: the snowfall lacks (altitude vs. attitude) the hauteur (condensation vs. condescension) of the skyfall.

All this missive whitefold is franked by a pattern its own; stamped unique: 'Return to Sender'-? No: Deceased.

*

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[UNTITLED]

The snowman's luggage is always enroute.

*

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[UNTITLED]

mirror smashed in a snowfall the flakes will find each face like themselves to be unique as long as it remains lost in the blizzard of shards

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THAWDROPS

Icicle: the long

l's

descending

end in

dot

planet

dot

period

dot

splot

dot

puddle

dot

sun

dot cycle

cycic

dot

not I.

.

FIRST WARM DAY

When the world belongs to toss-up.

Balloons whose footprints sting the air with soft occasion; clouds, whose streamers strain for the horizons denied them now by these new slow winds.

Even children relinquish the stoicism that kept us safe from the cold, even they succumb to a sudden cuddleness, weak as the first spindly crocus. Seneca is sent once more to silence.

Two plus two begins to crack before the picnic logic of Summer.

The reign of the same. Difference is banished here; outside and inside are made equal in temperament, doors left open declare armistice.

Winter's wars wane. Vintners verse their vines.

*

*

APRIL AFTERNOON

From barberpoles the white could be stripped to bandage the bypassers' wounds.

of tickets brandished to the theater; every kiosk's counter is bare.

These shapes are assumed

Their clothing seems to consist

out of fidelity to the mask that covers them with less and less.

And yet there is always the danger of excess. Naked, the street might lie prey to a merchant's

deliberating broom: birds and categorical pushcarts might tie cherrystems to our eyelashes.

Spring imposes its pomp, its priorities. In the middle of this effortless palace an orgy takes off its socks.

*

HAIKU

The sweat on my forehead shines brighter when it's in my eyes.

*

SUMMER DAYS

a butterfly with a sandwich bite out of one wing flies away from the inhabitoads of our shadow or tries to

VISION OF THE GODDESS IN A CITY SUMMER

(to Carolyn Kizer)

And yet what if the sweat that breaks

Even from Her feet as they pass

Even from Her feet as they pass
Can never rain these pavements back
To a mud- a milk-cud grass

Time that diamond instant dew dulls
Is it quicker than them quote
That strode presence those fading puddles
Not in this goadless heat

Oh mirage oh haze of hydrants Go Isis-proud across crosswalks Leave brief seas without a halt Till all my doubts dissolve at once And down I'll follow cowed to lick Your soleprints for my salt

*

*

HUMIDITY'S TONES

Four AM, nothing moving, no hurry, dawn still has time to be choosy selecting its pinks. But now a breeze brushes across me—the way my skin is cooled off by the evaporation of sweat, this artistry, this system sombers me: when I am blown from the body of life will it be refreshed? I dread the color of the answer Yes.

*

*

BEACHED

Thaw, summer, melt from pastel to pastille a fruit's sweetness warning the greatness of death to back off: hornbeeps, skidmarks so new, so fresh.

Cars, go and surround each beach.

Where drowned armpits flower toward the word.

Where even the sun refuses to be an icon.

In my room stand two razorpoles. I rub back and forth between them. I vacillate love, hate: it's exhausting continually

wiping the spittle off your face, though the spitting itself is of course quite effortless. Simile for waves.

*

HARVEST

clouds which stand still to pose downward their event

in the church a cookie is wedged up the Virgin's plaster skirt

now days attend the sun and all the other futures before they crop our feasts and wither

the four points of a pitchfork become harder to define

eyes measuring to means

the distance dust plants along the sill

chasing each other the children combine the wisdom of freckles and fire-engines

in the end we flow like thirst above stones like hunger above air

SPACE

From the trees the leaves came down until we joined hands with a wand and that act enabled them somehow then to reach the ground

where they scuttered round our feet

together with the hands can clasp a dowsing-stick cut from the same branch from which we launched converging on gravity's purge-point

urging the latter to unite with a baton as if that act

all consonants from our star-maps. The infinite consists of vowels alone.

The leaves fall, but not far enough for me,

so I take one up to the top of my favorite highrise, the one whose TV-transmitters watch farmers. Out over the roof-edge I drop it, but my eye

at which point we merged to remove

OCTOBER

swerves to the hemline of a nearby tourist. I wonder if anyone will notice it. The wind is certain to vacillate its journey; a vacillation is a vagueness with intent, and my leaf is light. -And has her camera caught me in the act, prolonging it even further-Her blouse blows but now I prefer most how she caresses the camera, fondly, a personal touch placed on what is after all a mere automaton winking a robot eye . . . hmm, are mechanisms, like, say, money, or credit-cards, are they harder to put one's traits on than a flower for instance, or an ear of corn . . . For example

Sinatra" scribbled across it, an autograph, according to them, but is writing (or forging) your name on money or on a machine, -?! does a signature make it more human, natural, leafier somehow . . . hell, money is not a good

I know someone who has a five-dollar-bill taped up on their wall with the name "Frank example, it's not mechanic, I'm sorry. Damn.
Back on the track: the leaf falls, the farmers
farm and the tourist films till her camera's
involuntary functions are exhausted . . .
we head back down. The elevator control-panel blinks
like a flightdeck or Star Tech or something,
then I notice buttons on her skirtfront—
I punch all the buttons on my shirtfront,
not knowing what direction that will get me,

yet suspecting that it too will not be far enough.

POEM

As I walk into town I notice on the sidewalk the leaves have fallen mostly bright side down,

the colorful-wonderful side,
i.e. the dying-decaying, hides
below the still-greenish half
which hunches over as if

from our pending feet. This upward face is the obverse,

to protect its fairer twin, to

was obviously the underpart,
untoasted by the sun, tree-slice

untoasted by the sun, tree-slice half-done. If I step on one it flattens and perhaps some

sheaf-shield, something bleeds into the drained mask it offers

of the color crumbles up through

to the world's uncurious shoed
glance. Virgil cites a myth that
false dreams cling beneath each leaf,

stays rare, unmarred by hecticity its unstained purity portrays a lottery win, a moviestar kiss.

numberless: that's why the under

Its perfection is a fantasy rays have not darkened to day. It stays asleep in its top-sheet of hope.

I love this unlived side of the leaf, it is in turn my life, pale-safe

it is in turn my life, pale-safe and fraught with no urge to wake,

to exert its own naif enough my raw state resists sophistudy, (anterior antibody of beauty)

its rootless evil nice beneath
the garish one's reign of dare and
flare, he who exalts the warmth

on his skin, Mister surface, Herr hero. I am the lesser here, the low. Yes: but after the fall I will show

my face toward any sole, no longer subferior to tanned specimans of transcendized TV glory, riper

hunks who now sprawl shrivel and hug the pavement while their earlier cursed teencarnations bare

out to be me, me, the bove-boy— So what if I'm the false, the dream none can depend on or look to

for their vacuous autumn viewing, foolishly believing those goldshed scarlets are a sight extolled, a sign.

They ignore my sap hue, my true expression of the void that lies so splendid-blazed before their eyes.

*

AUTUMNAL

The tree lowers its anchor Of foliage, mooring the one Life I forgot to not Reincarnate.

Now from scenes of former harrow Burst free, playing tag With Yorick's skull.

Since barefoot beats childhood In the race to be alone,

Brush departure from your path.

A leaf must fall to complete
Its stem's intent, but I wonder
If my branch meant to end in this
Sum of nothing equals one.

*

AFTER RILKE

As the year falls in autumn to repeat the tree's chaos again on the ground, to reiterate its meaningless in a sequence called status: so dissimilar clouds already multiformulate themselves from previous contraband—

traffic of leaves redundant, instinct-migrant heaven: every day I rip from my nipples

a calendar's cleavage, I lie clinging to lays. Lord the summer was mostly waste.

*

*

SALON POEM IN LEAFGRAVURE

Cemetery statuary
ought to be deciduous: wings
that fall from angels every
year, with the cherubs losing
their curls, the harps their strings—

Or imagine graveyards in autumn minus those high carved out figures: and not just the sculptures, but names, dates, epitaphs. Each tomb turned into a bare limb—

Each stone branch of the 'ceme-tree' would stand once more a slab the better to weather tragically another Dec-Jan-Feb.

Come springtime gallery by gallery

etched letter-buds could open that blankest bark where new-limned numerals will mark those old lives' span, and spranked up there above them

let crosses blossom, the tall crosses regain their nailed arms. Now all the chisel foliage should follow until the whole museum from within is risen.

*

(FACE) (AUTUMN) (EN FACE) (to NSL)

I lay your face along my palm and make To trace its shape there a profile Then I see the lifeline heartline break Overlengthened by one leaf's fall

The plow it rests on a horror now In the distance an ogre pulls in vain To open a nailed shut window Whose reverberancy is thunder rain

Begins its rheumatization of The world we shared so spare-much of that This sans season's hands' veins portray our love

The no two alike are kissing yet
I lie down alone not knowing a tongue
Can taste every flavor but its own

*

.

OCTNOV AGAIN

The year's wrapping comes undone: foliage tied By sun-string cords is cut and cast aside

To present the godsends, the great last gifts Time donates to its ingrates, sad thankthrifts

Who throughout their dotage-dole still forget The parcelly-priceless rose of regret

Never stemmed them against one bestowed weed— (Why can't our greed grant instead of our need:

Each field and tree stripped packing, boneward bare, Was nowhere on our wish-list: we'd prefer

Ribbon-prinked paper/a crepe-plush pinkbow Glitzing forth their vulgar veneer: and now

Mocked by how little of its kitsch remains, We crave our carton, not what it contains.)

*

*

OVERNIGHT FREEZE (heptasyllabics)

Window-glints of ice glaze fast what last night flashed the mudflats,

down in which dawn has found pressed small animal tracks: inch-niched

skylights affix these quick paths— Each step is trapped beneath slats

of translucency attached rime to rim: they sit there ditched,

puttied into glare hatches— All around the ground looks patched

and spattered with puddle-thatch, but note rather this etched stretch

where a late trotter's tread's latched with pondgild on its ledge trench:

how glitter-together cached; incandescently encased.
Not bins or barns' coiled harvest, glozen molds hold placed this trace,
bold encroachments caught across: each hoof-, paw-, claw- mark's embossed
by its lunge run: each rut crests to extend its range, end-launched—
it must hate these lit nimbus lids, must wince beneath such frost—
sun has tamed them flame of squints yet some after-image haunts:
Lands on every side lie creased with spoor that mars their hard crust
and floorflares most summer's waste imagination, that pinch
not worth pittance, that thin purse clutching what breast abundance
of flurry foliage tossed, prize profligate with years' penance
whose cease has summoned what peace—tarp white winter's carapace
tries to hide that mislaid dust carrion in graneries
and bury deeper what grace war's jarrior deifies—
what Troy, what toy's sacrifice leaks justification, beast
whose Homered oathwraths can't match this farmstead's secular crafts—
Beyond the coop's chickenhatch pieces of a greenhouse burst
up from the clays as ghosts pass to implant sole-sills for what's
still clear to me—I approach each glimpsy-glaziered gapgulch
afraid my galoshes squelch break their skittery sketches
or skidheel slide a childprance puncturing every damn sash
I can smash, whatever blanched and specious glow my outstanced

kick can dislodge idolfest haloes those pit-portholes hoist from lamb-trample slaughterous gods displayed bad raptor hostsherds of ape they pasture-traipse bestial cattlecats who scratch paved prowess in the dirt splotch like border-dots on mapwatch or liens miser ledgers clutch feral figures for our debts

predator prey pays poets

that panther pads our wallets Ted Hughes' cunning hawk-pastiche

this savage extravagance animates each TV pitch

plugs its parrot author rich

breakfast lions and leopets like easter eggs and christ creche

exist to rake in the cash

your Energizer Rabbits

as you sit and clicker switch from Tiger Attack stabsites

to Martyred Bible Prophets can you diff any difference

in sanguinary scams which verse-ho's popes and other shits

getcher *guts* getcher *spirits* festering fetish lame wish

goldgash wildpack "religious"

exchange/exploit for lootsplits

imperious dazzlements

its screen between me unleashed

shall I plain idealize the sight. Pitter pattered glitz

the poorest field-rat can task: "Trance entombed, my forage-struts?

strangely crowned with iciclets, thaw-askance in silver nets

that snag some Nixnaut banished from huge spook-lakes diminished

to these mini: spangle-splashed

is damming yours to a drowse: your powers sod, your earth cursed, bear null this lair's fatal lazebide its nether-tide enclosed with latent emptiness poised to bolt free, vain, hopeless wish: prison, whose prism-units drown you in crystal cubits and spot-carpeted caretspools, flood-scummed with gem, facets unstrung-flung diamond pendants it strangles you, chain necklaced. Immured your murder-led bents that followed friendly bloodscents till fangs throat-fonts firmly drenched and feast fell anticlimax and cycle lay established again. Eternal matrix, your game's destined accidents choreograph each pounce once but here they're preserved in twice: cryocrypts halt their advance, vaults for phantom enpassantsslimjammed here that rhythm dance. Here stands this clearing's essence, filmed upon fillspace distanceoh hear its car-crash score-scants: sharkshrieks stilled, prowl-growls silenced. Look: its slope grows near scar grazed with overtook's veer. Steer-squished leap-lopes laned below this sluice this rapacious avalanchethis meander labyrinth's constellated those hunt-sprints. Star-quenched in lurid casements what vent revives these vagrants. Plunged in pent, your harms unhitched. Sprawled for sleep's random ambushhibernate, die! sink finished along this blank fishtank maze

and scaly his mermarsh face

or wake, with mindblink ablaze— see your scintillant depths catch
magic from the mimic glance of this mirror while it lasts—
how soon noon will melt to mush your hoar hour which Eskimos
have more words for than I, mouse Michigander, verminous
mite of this sheer terminus the Knott brat teetertoes his
trespass at. He has spare choice and careless proceed he must
toward the devouring bless this coldsnap moment's incised
in his own flesh. Oedipus ankled. Pale autumn's glozes
grail incarnations of slush frail trail we fugitives mashed
in the wet soil till chill lashed it tight with glacier paces
palls in the mornings' stale mess of luminescence. Sunrise
et al. Against its bright best (nature's norm-channel brilliance
versus some thumbed thesaurus) this polar-stamped dirt contrasts
my feet in a fret of froze silly syllabic sets of rows
extinguished glimmer glimpses shattered all their gleams I guess—"
Stoic, lone, those shine-lines cast to show no magnificence
or quests quixotic-thrust, just folk stalked by their hungriness,
critters croaked, varmints vanished species extinct or deathwish—
Theirs is not an innocence chosen, their hands are not clenched
on church-prayers' lack-response. Their trek unlike ours abounds.
Under gait-grates it waits wise in its ways portrayed saycheese—

Carnivore, killer-corps seized; poacher captured, frozenchase.

Mid-stride taken, frigid paste haste-hail jails this trodden caste.

Roadcage for an arctic race; shod-zoo stocked with dull dreambrates.

Before the snow's blind expanse blunders every further fence

a walk may stop precipice top this fierce fenestrate lens

but what happens then depends on some lost, glossed over sense.

One might pause to muse that post or else forget, astonished.

Or kneel to urge weathers worse come seal his brr-brief life's course—

(Let elf and unicorn dash climate at its timeliest

congeals their furtive crevasse strayhorde stayed for a nor' rest.)

It all seems so colorless.

The past and everything since.

But our chameleon's footprints have they been paned with stained glass?

*

OCT-NOV (MICHIGAN MEMORY #4)

The bacon of the ankles crackles, and the sky
Perks up birds this coldsnap morning—every
Breath sheds a breath-effect, brief-bloomed steam-sheaf . . .
Puddles huddle in frost. Past the barn the path

Shoots hill-pastures which rose to winter early
And sun-shucked clouds blast-off from: migrants that fly
South—mouths that wet-nurse icicles—hatch forth
A form, a furious precision I sloughed

At birth, preferring life. And like the wind Can reduce anything to description—
Running to finish my chores, beneath my scarf

I'll feel my chinbone seek my collarbone, As if the flesh has ceded and the skeleton Now must precipice itself against all warmth.

*

OCTNOV

Stickum leaves fluttering down Pin unpin each path's compass

The season on our sleeve has shown Another course for us

*

*

NOVEMBERNEW

Scoldingly, the way a nurse waves a thermometer at a corpse, branches thrash above us.

I've read the instructions how a compass should always go consulted beneath a Maypole.

If space orientates with time alone, our position fixed by Newton may now be nearing Einstein.

Quickly I place a teakettle atop a dead volcano and learn to wait for its whistle.

North lost, the needle pierces my wrist. The mist is in the forest. Our sighs are in the farthest.

*

~

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June 22, 2008

SELECTED LOVE POEMS

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PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimum cost)———

SELECTED LOVE POEMS

Bill Knott

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

*

The order of the poems is mostly random.

*

*

TWO OR THREE SITES FROM A FAILED AFFAIR

Dozing while I dreamed on down your body to where all fresh from a swim or a bath I woke, seeing it still, that false witness, that law they call displacement. Miles away the reservoir was polluted by this—I lay wondering in what water, who can I be renamed renewed to lieu you.

In the desert, I insist that a soloist waits hidden behind each dune which undulates silent, lurking till far off the orchestra start, their wholescale music merged towards noon;

yet even here I have to swear I admire that air of exaggerated effortlessness conductors use to pick the baton up off its stand; is this how to proceed when making love:

the over-implicit manner, the art concealed; a strength of skills held in belial, reserved; expertise on tap, an oasis of ease

somewhere deep: I've never been able to do it I guess. Access I can't the virtuosity to be both; both hesitant and satisfied.

Our bodies converged to bisect the bed, dividing it lengthwise in half; too-brief border, momentary truce contested by the realms that spread on either side of us; or a map, an antique tapestry, split over sparring heirs. Death. Aftermath. Whatever could have severed you from me?

.

ROMANCE (Hendecasyllabics)

But when it had engulfed them all two by two, the Ark itself became a greater creature, an omni animal. And yet Noah knew, surely this new behemoth shall also pair

and mate now, and that unlike the beasts before this one is destined then to find true marriage: because as soon as his keel breaks the water, born beneath it will be that surface image none of us desires to engage in divorce— Natural nuptial partner, mirrored other, the Ark's clone would emerge from nowhere out there

in the waves. And upside down hold bound the course, faithfully accompany her spouse across any world to reach at last their offspring shore.

*

ANOTHER FIRST KISS: TO X

A first kiss can occur anywhere: two pairs
Of lips might meet as ingredients for
A cannibal's chowder; or on the shore of
A nightclub at ebb. Preferably the latter—

Though there are no more nightclubs, or cannibals, As such: I mean the first kiss is passé, Archaic, obsolete. Pre-Global Village, It rests in wrinkles, in blinking memories . . .

Ours came in bed, but after we'd undressed; Preceded by hugs. And so the question Of using the tongue—that old hesitation—Didn't apply. We plunged right in. At

Our age you get naked and then you neck, The opposite of how it was done young. But the hunger is still there. The thirst Is like in a bar, when they yell out Last Round.

Note:

Line 13: "Our age"—the lovers are 53 and 61.

*

NAOMI POEM

(to Naomi Lazard)

The beach holds and sifts us through her dreaming fingers
Summer fragrances green between your legs
At night, naked auras cool the waves
Vanished
O Naomi
I kiss every body of you, every face

*

*

LOVELADE

The sea is the cargo of empty ships Moon bears the sun when it's gone My face with the trace of your lips

FROZEN	An DND
(to RN)
Oh I know it i Measureful	nust feel
To be the rive	
Each field ea Each fountair	
And then of o	
Remembering How few of u	
Make it down	
*	
(POEM) (CHIC	AGO) (1967)
Please go to On the bench	ber this poem after reading it Lincoln Park the corner of Dickens Street and sit there where M. and I kissed one night for a few minutes rful even if you forget
*	
*	
FRAGMENT	
Somewhere in Because those	ast one couple is making love the world at all times, two are always pressed tightly together, ever slip between them roy us.
*	
FOR C.	
Like a paintir	outh hands I long to be under ng a painter paints and repaints of the canvas cracks apart then crash

Will fare from now on and on

Incredible shreddage, pale for all

Its color, its whole only in tatter: I want
To be gone on at like that by her. But
Won't the brush the play of such force across
Me obliterate those whatever forms I might

With the rough sketch of the heart have Borne to connoisseurs critics crowds Eager to offer prize: even if I were torn

Wantonly tossed in the dirt the street

Stepped on and lost, as lost as she is to me, I

Would rather under her feet be than their eyes.

*

SONNET

JOINILI

(to MK)

The way the world is not

Astonished at you It doesn't blink a leaf

When we step from the house Leads me to think

That beauty is natural, unremarkable

And not to be spoken of

And not to be spoken of Except in the course of things

The course of singing and worksharing
The course of squeezes and neighbors

The course of you tying back your raving hair to go out

And the course of course of me Astonished at you

The way the world is not

The way the world is no

*

THE SUMMONING

You know your name

Seems to contain More syllables in

All other mouths

Than mine I hear

I hear these voices Everywhere the

Waves coming ashore

Add long a's

As they say it

Then sometimes the wind

Puts an o in

The middle and

Babybirds their Bottomlessness fills

It with e

Whenever I hear it

Screeched

Moaned

Sighed by these things By everything

I must stop and listen

To my lips

Vehemently
Vainly correcting
The whole world's
Mispronunciations
As if those
Mispronunciations
Were the reason
You were not answering
As if they
Were the reason you
Were not here
Beside me and
My saying it right
My getting it exact
Is all it would take

To call you back.

*

MAYBE (to H)

a stopsign stranded in a sea of cacti won't grow needles maybe but then

even I take on some characteristics of human when I'm with you

.

*

THE SCULPTURE (to H)

We stood there nude embracing while the sculptor Poked and packed some sort of glop between us Molding fast all the voids the gaps that lay Where we'd tried most to hold each other close

Under the merge of your breasts and my chest There remained a space above the place our Bellies met but soon that clay or plaster Of paris or state of the art polymer

Filled every hollow which we long to fit Then we were told to kiss hug hug harder And then our heat would help to harden it

We stood there fused more ways than lovers know Before the sculptor tore us away Forced us to look at what had made us so whole

*

MORE METAPHORS, LESS LOVE

Like a burglar who foolishly arrives before the highrise is

even half-built has to crawl to cling across the skeletal

penthouse girders at 1 AM like him I have misjudged

every erection yes a pun a joke whereas in reality my

that makes a dent in nothing

love is a wreckingball

much less some sky-meant wall from which all thieves must try and fall

*

EXTENDED

Those positions sought in vain by trainwrecks
These two achieve quite quickly. Contorted
Limbs and mouths chuting their routeless tracks
They litter that linen landscape. The bed

Goes off the rails. Mountains or valleys push
Each place that's reached for beyond its distance.
Here in time's commute communed for the rush
Hour this kiss lasts. Yet always late since

Lovers' travel is over where but when. How far they've come. Both bodies disembark Homeward tramways while memories remain

Head-ons hurled from one's normal course again And again. Everything goes bright then dark. Either emerges on a further line.

*

THE PAST: TO X

Whenever keys lick our hands, melting them into other hands, each door opens on a scene of thrust-aside bodies. The past is love

suppressed. Closeup: focus copulates with F sharp. Memories hide a wealth denied of music and outmode.

In oldies songs in black dresses whose fade-labels frill our sex attic, caresses get snatched from kisses.

The past is not us. Its lovers are true for an hour that stays surprised behind a threshold of days. Maybe they can say when it's over.

•

MEMORY OF X

The better to steady myself I rose In her arms the better to stay: say She has to remember me I am nobody To be without, and I am nobody to be without her.

To see in her special-glacial eyes the die Disdain she was right to feel for me; To slake all hope that atop their snowcap A mirror could ever be bent by a sigh.

Now if I wake at night my veins alone Beside a dream of her amid the hoistless moon With my blanket whose holes are home; She who I pray finds me in all but the final way.

*

STALLED

There must be a way back to the one who is always before me, some curve or go-round

or cloverleaf should return me to she whose face is here now in front of me—

Whose name I repeat staunchly as a stopsign at every corner,

although I know no-one will halt; not even her.

*

*

Χ

Lovely the future appears on a nape But trying to predict the face itself Or guess if it will vanish is vain. You make your mode of life the godlike To equalize the danger or is it joy Of living in its eyes' past. Transient

Board any moment and go into the wind, Coat slant against a roaring iota boat.

Because at any moment this person might

This is the one dream that has no aftershock,

Because you don't wake up from it.

It can't be mocked in retrospect—

Driving away her final car

She may reappear to you only admired
A frame whose time never came.

The negative nose, the minus mouth Lingering in a sift with years, the destitute Aimlessness age brings. What sacrilege

To imagine she harbors more of you Than you of her, as if the two Of you ever were.

*
RETURNED ANONYMOUSLY

Lost my wallet you know
Cash all the creditcards
I.D.
Everything

I.D.
Everything

But like the worst thing

That photo of you

But guess what

Smack in the mail today

Was that photo You know

I'm not kidding money
Everything

But guess what
There was just one thin

There was just one thing Missing Just one thing

You know it shit
I bet nobody
Nobody could be that honest

APART, TO V.

Uh hunh

I've never seen icicles clinging to a cobweb, though it's easy to, no spider's needed. See, the idea simply observes Reverdy's dictum re what an image is, and what it's woven from. But for a like afield-work to reunite us, how far it must spin! That farmhouse of my childhood deserted—the scrub-brick cellar, which could more or rough take a thrift-year's canning, is wall to wall cloth by now.

Think of its door:

creak. Think of me caught in your arms, warm, tremulous fragility, all rapport or even perversely: love's a weave from which no beautiful incongruity I hang can rip us.

Apart, to V.

*

BUMPY KISSES: POEM WRITTEN TO A POET

(to RS)

remember those bumpy kisses in the back of that taxi we should have begged the cabby more hit more potholes please

when we hit a bad one whoops everything got flung up hard but don't some things just get better by bouncing from lips to lips

kisses usually get their kicks from boredom the normal routine tongues stick the same linebreaks the proper punctuation in

but not these bumpy babies they jack out the box they jump all the jolts of this jaunt lucky for us it's transient

after a poetry reading briefly we'll share a ride heading uptown toward distant lives has one of us now arrived

still the course of our smoothest words is likewise unpaved by poems we scribble them down sometimes hurried as hugs through a cab-door

though even they must go past first dates or last we try we mostly try and let them be the moment they were meant to

*

*

THE CONSOLATIONS OF SOCIOBIOLOGY

(to JK)

Those scars rooted me. Stigmata stalagmite

I sat at a drive-in and watched the stars Through a straw while the Coke in my lap went Waterier and waterier. For days on end or

Nights no end I crawled on all fours or in My case no fours to worship you: Amoeba Behemoth! —Then you explained your DNA calls for Meaner genes than mine and since you are merely

So to speak its external expression etcet Ergo among your lovers I'll never be . . . Ah that movie was so faraway the stars melting

Made my thighs icy. I see: it's not you Who is not requiting me, it's something in you Over which you have no say says no to me.

•

*

FOR LACK OF YOU

(to JK)

I examine the sun's diagrams for your tan. The ground's plans for your walk. Sky's project-papers on how, where to utilize your breaths. All these schemata, endless as my tracings of your faraway face-poring over them in a solarium observatory devoted to the study of you. New proposals, outlines blueprint each moment: slowly reading, hoping, finally I grow feeble-eyed. The fineprint for your lashes, the arms' down, fades. Now you're abstract, a block, an architect's whitest nightmare or any bare construction of skylines, vague unhouseholds. The plumbing venues, vent of window or door vanished, even the light itself a blurat last comes total blindness: touch-awkward I feel like an ogre, a clumsy giant tripping upon some ruins, rubble of the town he's just smashed. Tower-cursing as I bang my knee. Or no: I'm tiny. I can see again! I see the giant walk off favoring his one leg . . . favoring my one you, I kick through the strewn clutter; I get down on all fours and start to scour around: one model, just one to copy from, to begin again. That's all I need, lacking you.

*

SIDESHOW

(to RS)

Announced by your nakedness you appear The fold avert their blindfold eyes Your rain-fossil skin lit by ajars Of perfume (blood's-lace)

At least a murderer doesn't have to boo his shadow

You vow beneath barbarous marquees Whose leaves have fallen To placebo your profile

And if he keeps a pinkie raised while slashing those disciples Together you and him must flee Over an earth-to-earth carpet of kisses

Leaving me to play the mirror's old shell-game Hot for what it holds in hide By shifting its faces thus

*

(FACE) (AUTUMN) (EN FACE)

(to NSL)

I lay your face along my palm and make To trace its shape there a profile Then I see the lifeline heartline break Overlengthened by one leaf's fall

The plow it rests on a horror now In the distance an ogre pulls in vain To open a nailed shut window Whose reverberancy is thunder rain

Begins its rheumatization of The world we shared so spare-much of that This sans season's hands' veins portray our love

The no two alike are kissing yet
I lie down alone not knowing a tongue
Can taste every flavor but its own

*

WEDNESDAY

(to RS)

Past noon; I walked her to her train; we said so long; Her smile, her flash as the huffy train pulled away, Like a knife withdrawing from robot flesh; sparks From its wheels showered over me, black, lavacidal.

We'll meet 2 days from now: not enough time to enter An anticipanthood, noviciate of rendezvous; to Lift that iffy cathedral, brush Samson's cindery Dandruff off my collapsing shoulders, not enough time,

Nor space. Cramped. Thighs. She's travelling far Away—I'm so foolish! Why did I propose dramamine For corpses when the trip from womb to world didn't make me

Sick? 2 days; 2 days. That's enough. I smile, home, past The druggists' and the hairdressers', hardware, the other Stores, I wish there was room enough here to put them all in. *

NONREQUITALS

Each night you transfer

(to JK)

my fingernails to my toes, my toenails to my fingers.

And if the magician waving simple cardtricks disembowel himself somehow—through some slight slip in skill—

Evening's when we live, mostly. Before an unhatched iceberg I preen my scars.

You bade his only face brought in on a slice of camera—but affixed blue earrings to a whiter skull . . .

No-one will return my toenails to my toes, my fingernails to my fingers. No-one will rip up the list of those loved by those not on the list.

*

NAOMI POEM (THE STARFISH ONE)

Each evening the sea casts starfish up on the beach,—scattering, stranding them. They die at dawn, leaving black hungers in the sun.

We slept there that summer, we fucked in their radiant evolutions up to our body. Ringed by starfish gasping for their element,

we joined to create ours. All night they inhaled the sweat from our thrusting limbs, and lived.

Often she cried out: Your hand!—It was a starfish, caressing her with my low fire.

*

NAOMI POEM

With the toys of your nape With your skin of mother-of-throe pearls And your fire-sodden glances From the sidelong world

We break rivulets off the river and wave them in the air Remember the world has no experience at being you We also are loving you for the foreverth time The light, torn from leaf and cry

Even your shoulders are petty crimes

[PALMPOEM] In my hand a drop of palm dissolves now the lake of your palm in the land of my hand spreads to the shore of our fingers what faces float up flattened guickened beneath these fingernails if the fist is a desert the palm is the hand's sea which rises which recedes palm is the water we can never drink enough of. LESSON (to GM) Our love has chosen its appropriate gesture Which when viewed in the midst of all the gestures It didn't choose seems almost insignificant. The gesture our love has chosen is appropriate

We both agree not that we have any choice but Amidst all those others does seem insignificant.

Is it incumbent on us thus to therefore obliterate All of the gestures except this insignificant one Chosen by our love for its own no doubt reasons.

It is up to us to obliterate all other gestures Though they cluster round thick as presentations Of war and sacrifice in a grade-school classroom.

Use of our love's chosen gesture for the obliteration Of all those foreign gestures is forbidden however We must find something else to erase them with.

Our love has chosen its appropriate gesture Which when viewed in the absence of all other gestures Seems to spell the opposite of insignificant.

•

THE WHOSE FAULT IS IT POEM

Six AM the Clockhands Clothespins Of nakedness

Is it turn for your shadow to be
The sun's birthmark or mine?
We lie in the ruins, the pertains
Of all we sought to evade by touch, avoid by sight.

Now we argue over which criteria Gravity uses to select its victims— Why weigh the impact of our caresses upon This bed till they fade, svelte As a thumbsdown swan?

Only the sun rises at random, at mootpoint we lie. The rain wearing black armbands may pass, I dab my smile at the mournersby; I dab my heart at you.

As for the blame, I'll take it:

I was naked there, where we were.
I was naked,
But my clothes were stuck in my throat, thereby
Rendering my nakedness ineffectual (or, perhaps, spurious)—

I would have whispered something darling (I would have said the words to save us), But there was this darn zipper Right up against my voicebox.

*

EROS AND ESPIONAGE IN THE BENT CENTER

(to Helen C., after reading
D. G. Rossetti's "Troy Town")

More undermined by your meander than my thirst From wine's first cup what shard still tastes this milk Above whom shone a normal polaroid of the void A song saliva cannot tie its envious vines to

Shall I paint through all the Isms to show you Bricabrac from that breast fill worlds marked sale-price Yet conceptualists slumming in the real congeal Is here a thing to say of this say or said place

Now the merry-go-round it goes-a-round old 'Troy Town' My bed hangs out the window by its toes shouting Each day your hair strays across such ruins

But to live live simply in compress with our time TV-star footprints to immortalize sidewalk Me slurp your sweetpuddle up out of an autograph

```
THE PERMISSION
                          (to AB)
On each shoulder
                   I bear
a jar
     with each
its angel
         in
            formaldehyde
I wish to preserve my loves
                              You
say No
        let them go fly way
                             away
and when
           they come back and
                                if then
then you
          may kiss me on
each shoulder gone wing.
LAST POEM
                (to NL)
                             1
It's harder and harder to whistle you up from my pack of dead,
you lag back, loping in another love.
Rigor mortis walked the streets, its
coat tattered, face pensive. A howl was heard,
                             3
which calmed
all chimeras.
                             4
My hair hits me.
Wine lifts its deep sky over me.
Her palms upon my forehead became my fever's petals-
Her face-altar where my heart is solved-
prepared for me its absence
in the dish of its cheekbones.
Your face alone has no echo in the void. Your face, more marvelous
each time it flows up your warm arms to break
upon your smile.
                    Your kisses still rustling in my voice,
you don't exist. I will fill you with
sweet suicide.
                            10
```

Don't let this be their last poem, only mine.

Naomi, love others then.

•

UNTITLED SHORTS/EXCERPTS

*

Once I had to leave you so
I arranged for earth-tremors at night
so in your sleep you'd think I was caressing you—

*

Your nakedness: the sound when I break an apple in half.

*

They wandered through the hand in hand.

*

The trafficlight on Lovers Leap never changes to red.

*

*

*

A VIRGINSAINT AND A SAINTVIRGIN SHARE A HALO A WHILE: A MEMORY

(to E)

It was the onset of a golden headset Our thought from covetous egypts took flight (suite) Not so the veins' isle-lopped dictation The sea that amanuensis with illegible gloves

But who wrote my pose throes over the white dot of A desert's collectiste saliva whereon A blindness bandaged by bats became dawn or Was that oase-false face my scrotalskull gaze

The fever of eyecharts is distant tonight
This is my haiku scar this is my soft
Repeated sincere desire for fart-fairy confabs

Ah no abhorred form of present tense you see That halo our askew nuked free is dead Is circumscribed solely by the absence of head

*

NIGHT AND THE NAKED

(to RN)

The filmfestival swept beyond us as we kissed Oh roundrobin panel where we went goodbye Since then the weight (savored) of noncoincidence As if each lightningbolt were secretly aimed at

A matchstick but were we ever on target as that Whenever we meet now in the bar part or the

Restaurant part or the video part or the disco Part or the atrium of this night I fear our parts our

Roles I mean because what if we you and me Were cast to closeup the scene the street the strobe Stabs of rain frying our profiles for future ref

Literals straight off a wanted poster for Janus Because or would we just stand there thunderfucked Trying to remember our name ends in applause

BORDER

On the horizon of our lips what kiss awaits the arrival of its sun in rise or fall the occasion delayed beyond beginning and end if departure ennobles passports where distance is defined as an erased echo a looksee puddle of ourselves some crossroads may prefer the normal intrusions the customary customs search

TO X

If I could dream what I want or not, A candle held against an icicle, That double phallic rainbow would conceal My loner status, my chronic lack of you.

If Lot's Wife really existed, wouldn't She have been all eroded long ago By pilgrims rubbing their wounds against her, Abrasive as masturbation grain by grain

Can erase the bitter taste of you. I retain No memories; lacklore glosses me over. My selfishness might then produce a kind

Of infra-red excess, a solip-super vein Miners must switch off their hats to find. Dark and below bedclothes I'll use your glow.

COVER STORIES

Exchanging X's in the form of kisses, Spies forbidden to know the codes they pass, Each pretends for the moment these mysteries Outweigh all allegiance they owe the past.

A space where fingertips cease to explore space, A safehouse right for private armistice, The flesh they bared betrays them both at last. Dawn is distance in such askance allies.

As false passports must wear a true likeness, These tradecraft made-in-bed IDs are not The ones that will have to be borne once more

Come morning's normal enemy status Which would have killed to foil the turncoat plot They laid here, those traitors worth dying for.

•

NECKOGNITION

In love the head turns the face until it's gone into another's where it is further torn

from its own mirror and grows even more erased and lost and though the former still yearns

to be his/be hers, it sees these lovers over your shoulder show

that whatever disappears can also go as verse whose shape's nape-known now.

*

THE FATE

(for Anne-Marie Stretter)

Standing on the youthhold I saw a shooting star And knew it predestined encounter with the sole love But that comet crashed into the earth so hard Tilted its axis a little bit not much just enough To make me miss meeting her by one or two yards.

*

k

MUTABILITY (Polvo serán, mas polvo enamorado)

Quevedo wrote he would be dust, but dust in love-

And while I can't conceive that millions from now A quartzstone and a rose will embrace, I can believe Still less that my arms are around you here: or how Your sharp crystals

Are tearing my petals.

*

EUCLID ALONE

(to RN)

Androids strolling up Everest will know How harder it was for us to care, to cuddle Visits from that summit within. The pique Of pickups is endless. And when our oxygen

Thins to a pin who cares who's X who's Y—
That altered acme stares at me—icily—
That game where time (come to theme) recombines
To dial them new stars night never fell on: it

Beads up as my eye, friend planet. Who like
The sate—crazed by my birth's first trip at bat—
A pork genus cordless vibrator whose tip

Whose tongue exbunged from your hinder heart, wet With non-umbrageous plus-signs or what? (But can we touch each other's thwart I thought.)

*

ANOTHER NAOMI POEM

Her tongue was melting at the center of an iceberg That had sank the 13th floor of every building In which we were living, our sunglasses broken like ciao, Overlooking what vista of siesta: nightly we rose

To harvest the end of a kitestring whose importunate Tugging from below sowed heresy; we smashed The one snowflake that was carving all the other snowflakes; I warned her: "Your clitoris is my boyfriend."

Decades; quits; fades; she wrote some books, I tried To write some books; we met occasionally, but why? Other strangers than our own may remember. I remember

One time, my hair was hippie, she had to keep pushing It off, averting her face, finally complaining that This must be what it's like to go to bed with another woman.

*

NAOMI POEM

When our hands are alone, they open, like faces. There is no shore to their opening. *

NAOMI POEM

What language will be safe
When we lie awake all night
Saying palm words, no fingertip words
This wound searching us for a voice
Will become a fountain with rooms to let.

*

*

NOTE (NAOMI POEM)

I left a right where the nipple cheeps kiss in each nest of the black bra hung inside your bathroom door.

•

AFTER A BREAKUP

At times the distance known as us Is measured off. Or so we guess: unless An estimate be taken it is lost,

And all the usual rulers fail By millimeters really, to fix as final Our spreading split: what will surveil

This gap-apogee, this apartness-arc. Horizons, forward! Borders, march! Frame us and bind us with the starch

Our stance lacks, too human a pose To exude the dimensions that raise A statue whose limit is its eros,

That never spills over as we do Across the bed's page like two Errata in the same word, a hollow

Catachresis. Morphaphoric? Crammed Together in a programmed Antithesis figure, we seem

To have blundered our way here. Mistake is the way we take our First steps and last. And where

Desire beckons, who can resist The climb to that nobodiest nest Known as love, its endless

Thievings of each others' leavings, Scraps and wisps and strings

```
Always unraveling, always
Getting in the way
Of our getting away
Knot-free. Free of me
How could anybody
Not want to be.
[UNTITLED]
As a detail in a painting
frames that painting in
the often memory,
so, for me, your face is
surrounded by your eyes. Aura!
NIGHTS OF NAOMI
Each of her penises is a long fragment in the knife
Tracingpaper placed on the mirror to outline whose face
Whose hair of buttered blowguns
Clear eyes and cloudy nipples
Years spent wandering in front of a stab
Light is only a shadow which has learned to write its
  name across light
Her name rotting on the tongues of all the dead
Tongues which have lavished me upon me
Never mind delivering tomorrow's gypsy
TOGETHER OR APART AS OUR FAVORS CARRY US
someone to pause and take pills with
during the act of coitus
or the fact of cosmos
the days remain pain punctual
their numerals cracked exactly
at noon and night
they fall in a noise of wings
```

who's talking who's talking who's talking

Knitknocked together, tangle-things

each phonecall designer begs where a sleep of engines calms the horizon we go to puff at its halo's last cigarette in v's we leave we leave we leave wherever our favors have carried us ADHESIVE VALENTINE not knowing where you are not knowing who so I'll coat with glue all the envelopes I mail where most words fail mine will still pursue kept in these veils of glaze every postal maze no matter how far no matter how overdue they will find the true letter bound for you and there be pressed adherent to its address TWO POEMS TO S. (Desire) Threadbare (Desires) The light lay in shreds across the bed, only your waking could make it whole; resuming its costume of day, its role that seems to overnight get ragged-Fate latent as weights in theater curtainhems, what soul is sewn here to be rung down at last, divested of these disguises. But if we are bared by such cloth as cries in this lament for the sun's fragility, would I dare now to shake you astirto drape over you my own shadow, whose myth-ex-machina remains all mine, mine, and therefore torn from yours.

mine, and therefore torn from yours.

The Tethering

The handclasp is burned up by the embrace and the embrace is consumed by the coitus, and I too am subject to a hierarchy

that requires every stratum version of me

to be fuel for the one above till each one is lost, impossible to find in the final illusion (a mirage is something that doesn't see us even when we blind it) of a final one.

Why and whom must we each our own to? Go, let cemeteries bomb our sleep with omen hiccups, I'll nil persuade myself there is a person somewhere up there, perhaps perhaps it's you.

Identical arms babe your arms in theirs.
But love, tied hand to foot to flute, lingers.

*

TROTH

if you drew a string through the entwined fingers of lovers might it come out all knots which would then in theory right be too tight to be untied

.

RELICS WITH OLD BLUE MEDICINE-TYPE BOTTLE: TO X

This old blue medicine-type bottle, unburied
From your garden last year's the perfect centerpiece
To suit our supper—the totem-trope we need
Across this kitchen table, to show how dangerous

It is where we sit (knees near touching at times)
Dawdling and playing with our silverware,
Tapping teacups, tired and satisfied and prime
From a stint in that garden: in a few hours

We'll find ourselves in bed, but we don't know that now, Do we—we're still exchanging histories, (It's only my something visit to your house)

Just sorting out the portions of who, when, how—

Numbering the decades and the romances
That went bad, the faces that faded on us,
Though nothing too personal at first, just pain;
Divorces, liaisons, estrangements, fixations—

Of course our brows hurry away from hurt: Anecdotes begun in wince end in wrinkly; Our woeful tales go told through a mode that's mostly A kind of moue, comic attitude, which flirts

With grimace-smiles, jokes, the mocking of those choices, Those great mismatings: funny how it seems of late Both of us have been alone, celibate . . . Collating, getting our dates right, our voices

Shed their list of affairs, entanglements, crises: So we accord the past its poisons, and theorize That even this old blue bottle here, stored poisons Before we were born:—followed by suggestions

That the toxin of those heartbreaks is gone After this long, their vitriol has fizzed out, And we could, given an occasion, again Consume the spirit that killed us once, if not

The letter: confessions used as cue-cards to prompt Mutual responses of empathy or hope:

No former hemlock can harm us now—we're immune By now—don't you agree—because what happens

Ripens in retrospect; each sour memory
Blossoming like the flowers you sometimes spruce
This bottle's corroded throat with. We certainly
Are not eating much, are we, but we don't notice—

Can't we see how our fingers will likewise bloom From off these knives and forks and force their field, Interlocking like tugged-at roots . . . Untombed Of its venom, this blue vial vigils our held

Glances. Sieved in its acid, its distilled mirror, Would we (almost as soiled as it by time) appear A beauty, a scarred heirloom any collector Might stuff high on a shelf amid simulacra—

Somber still, it approbates that emptiness We must be preparing to fill with each other— It foretells the coiled taste, the bite unearthed In the antiquity of a sudden, wild kiss

Whose disclosure will surprise us, as if We have not been wholly inured by the years, The stories we bare here across the rice, the life Stories bittersweet, neutered, too well-rehearsed.

Will deadlier words then surface—their potency
Dis-elixired, drawn; decanted so often
That by our courteous age they've turned as grimy
And bunged with dust as this blue glass was when

Your shovel showed it that summer morning, and My phrases here are (surely) just as corrupt—What matter its sharpness, no metaphor can Pare the ground from us as hard as we try to dig up,

To excavate feelings a bottomless need for Soars as we toss the salad greens and pour Dressing dripping down their fineleaved freshness Starting to wilt already around the edges,

To rot back to that mulch they burst from. Such decay Preserves some artifacts, if not us: they lie in Graves contrived to obviate the skeleton They survive beside, they strive to deny The obvious, the crepitude fate-of-flesh bleak Facts of our demise, obdurate bricabrac knickknacks Laid by ancients in the coffin to propitiate Ancestors, to aid, via these vain trinkets,

(Are we the 'subjective correlatives' of these

Tools and talismans, amulets, a corpse-cache
Gear for ghosts, props to assist the posthumous)

Some afterworld sojourn of the soul entering

Objects, this chthonic junk the tomb-robbers missed,

Itself, self dying to carpe diem one more day. Refocus us on this figure, this table-centering Blue bottle. Whose future dye indigos our day.

Dulled, we ignore these darker, gnawing warnings—
Our own skull-and-crossbone labels long since skinned—
We poke at our plates, we pat our napkins.
What antidote waits, withering, within

Filled by fucked relics and by that above-all Most subterranean of discoveries, love?

Against that great granulate upheaval of Fields whose depths have grown archeological—

7 1/2 POEMS TO, FOR, AND ABOUT RN

1. Substitute

If you have licked the whiteout off this poem, then it exists: go on, strip it, stroke its wordwad.

Down its page-plunge, distribute our briefhood;

my flesh is blonde, my bones must be brunette.

Have I loved enough my planet's comet habits?

to regain that clarity whereby it kills,
the vial of poison must be shaken, or jacked off—

obelisk of hailstones, text rhymes with innermost:

Look, how my blushes stain lambs. Oh shame-thumbed,

Now my balding hairs are wove to make your hats;

my toenail clippings, glued, fused, used for your shoe-soles;

notice the metonymy. I myself am composed of everything you excrete bleed sweat etcet.

I have failed to decentralize my navel.

2. What Missing Her Is Like

It's like ripping your fingernails off drying them out then carefully placing each nail back on its particular tip just resting it there no glue or anything

then trying to balance them all in place

so entirely normally that the people you're with never even suspect

(I omit the blood scabs scars part of it)

I deny every emergence of the night

Your skeleton/scrupulous abacus where Flesh's inconsistent total of hope, Despair, recurs, keeps score, where Skin has no right to interrupt my pores.

3. Dyed

From your hair, crevice that heavies me Though I waver as water- or age-stained pages; Do hushpoints accompany such cries?

Depictured (which in the distance pales) who

Oh bright, pagoda-forgotten landscape!

Where moths spared myths of flame come, go.

Near where the nevers flow into the no.

4. Buried

Sometimes I think she believes in the Catastrophe Theory that her falling into and then out of love with me was surely

based on the trend of Nemesis (that changeling twin of our sun): each lovefall seemed as sudden, as

of what Saurian habitat.
Whole species annihilated—

some, I haven't uncovered yet. But all, I better believe it, dead.

(They'll clone that dino DNA—can love be revived that way?)

5. Long Distance Affair

The saliva gathered daily by telephones across the world from lovers yelling at each other is an ocean with no bottom.

But say you pried apart those phones, you'd find that all that wild white tide of promises, cries, kisses, threats—it also evaporates. The spit

is what we call each other,
I mean the words themselves, condensed:
distills us into clouds, into mist.

Rising clarified it drifts toward Comsat, Telstar, there to orbit closely around our distant lips.

6. The Word

Lower the noose into my throat slowly, careful as you go, don't cause any choking until you reach the word you mean to kill. Since latence it has silenced me, since life.

Threading a shoelace through a hoof's cleft, my scalp-holes will fang their follicles at the thought. This means some names have a hangtongue tendency to persist, finish fascists, tinsellantes!

Youth vanishes on those heights that relent to it. Even the least will finally paint yield on a face. (Hesitations before doormaps. Cowerboxes.) Inert blurt, weighed inveigle.—(But why be mine,

Why plenish a gaze with me?) Then I insert my slits into love/lovestyle. The almondine vowels whine.

7. Succumbed

I swallowed to pieces the loveletters and then I bandaged the luggage past goodbye, bon voy, we're there. I left a sign stuck to me said Please Vacate Before Empty.

That ought to have been enough: or the years sincebut see each sun, all blush against the blue, still find me hiding, still sifting clues. Daily my hands are humbled by a crumb.

Ants add superbly their mite to me. I wish I did not reciprocate, did not as event join my weight to theirs-duties,

duties! yours were the toes I loved to buzz. I would take my cup and raise it up you, till memory's name-army overcame us.

7 1/2. Nobody

A head surrounded by speedbreaks of hair, And somewhere in there the face, its gaze Blue as a scalped tongue, struggles to emerge As you, to frizz its orifice with yours.

Now all my near and nether parts agree She could love none of me. Could anybody.

INTERRUPTUS

Wait. What are you. I'm a poet. I write filler for suicide-notes. Like: I love you. Alright. Continue.

то х

You're like a scissors popsicle I don't know to whether jump back or lick

*

*

VOWS

The commonplaces of the wedding ceremony would like to go back and marry the proposal's florid words— (But isn't that love?)

*

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THE BALLOON THAT LIVED ON THE MOON AND OTHER POEMS NEW AND OLD

PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimum cost)———

THE BALLOON THAT LIVED ON THE MOON AND OTHER POEMS NEW AND OLD

*

BILL KNOTT

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

A mix of poems old and new.

The order is random, neither thematic nor chronological.

For me, every poem is a "one off"-

I don't care where the poems are placed as they follow or precede one another in my books (with a few obvious exceptions).

No sequencing or positioning within a book will make any of them better or worse.

Each poem will stand or fall by itself, of itself.

*

RIGOR VITUS

I walk

On human stilts.

To my right lower leg a man is locked rigid;

To the left a woman, lifelessly strapped.

I have to heave them up,

Heft them out and but they're so heavy (heavy as head)

Seems all my strength

Just take the begin step—

All my past to broach a future. And on top of that,

They're not even dead,

Those ol' hypocrites.

They perk up when they want to, they please and pleasure themselves,

It's terrible. The one consolation:

When they make love,

To someone who's far or close enough away appears it appears then

Like I'm dancing.

.

MY MOTHER'S LIST OF NAMES

My mother's list of names today I take it in my hand And I read the places she underlined William and Ann The others are my brothers and sisters I know I'm going to see them when I'm fully grown

Yes they're waiting for me to join em and I will

Just over the top of that great big hill Lies a green valley where their shouts of joy are fellowing

Save all but one can be seen there next a kin

And a link is missing from their ringarosey dance Think of the names she wrote down not just by chance When she learned that a baby inside her was growing small

She placed that list inside the family Bible

Then I was born and she died soon after
And I grew up sinful of questions I could not ask her
I did'not know that she had left me the answer
Pressed between the holy pages with the happy laughter
Of John, Rudolph, Frank, Arthur, Paul,
Pauline, Martha, Ann, Doris, Susan, you all,

I did not even know you were alive
Till I read the Bible today for the first time in my life
And I found this list of names that might have been my own
You other me's on the bright side of my moon

Mother and Daddy too have joined you in play
And I am coming to complete the circle of your day
I was a lonely child I never understood that you
Were waiting for me to find the truth and know

And I'll make this one promise you want me to: I'm goin to continue my Bible study Till I'm back inside the Body With you

*

the rooms

THE KEEPER (for George Starbuck)

while ships
guided by his beacon glide
safely through the fog or night
inside he trips over
more furniture
bangs his head again
on doorways

steep and stairy
of a lighthouse transpire
into the brilliant air of
salvation but
down here
in the black-and-white farce
of this poem
whenever the keeper opens a can
of soup the blood
from his fingers
will indisputably fall
on his crutches

parables
if I read Kafka right
are always a matter of
winning and losing
credit and debit
every life kept
off those reefs or rocks makes
these accidents occur
this bone break
this muscle
tear

each shipwreck he averts

```
by a scar
LIFER (AKA "HAPPY BIRTHDAY")
our prisoner
has received a package
containing a cake
which of course he thinks
must conceal a file
or a hacksaw-blade
and starts
to dig down into
actually however
his salvation
his way out
his escape route
has been carefully laid out
in brightcolored frosting
over darker frosting
the crucial message
the delicate pinkly lettering
overlooked
unheeded
falls shredded apart now
by his hopeful search
THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF SOFIA GUBAIDULINA
Intestinal as raisins on a keyboard
I struggled through life. The setting sun
left a few earths in the ground so I could walk.
It qualmed me just knowing that, to accomplish my color,
the chameleon must die. How chastely I
watched a suit-of-armor chew its fingernails.
Oh voice scathed in cloud; ankles' adieu.
On the lips-that species of slither-is where
I took part.
Now I pestle my face with opaque pins. You
stigmata that summarize my signature, go,
hinges down whom antiquity has vomited sequence-
but which letter misnomers my name? I come
from neitherstood, nuance of none. I tried
to obey the caption under my portrait/my provenance.
Cere me in cerberus-lily; in theme-mother extracts;
while the loaves and fish rich, the furs and lush rich,
fill their skin with pores and then wonder what's missing . . .
```

shall be showed for

Like a candle through a keyhole shoved, burning toward knownwheres—

Always the days unstay me.

I need to have admired more those symmetries which preach each seed is buried beneath a flower, each weed above a wound.

Now the thorns be praised/now the thrall that somehow time has restored en masse my dwelling, my resting place. I hope my pillow's hungry for headaches!

Note: Inspired by Gubaidulina's partita, The Seven Last Words (1982).

*

*

RITUAL

first
bury your hands
then the third from the right toes

your pancreas bury it next
and so on in the order prescribed
by ancient strictures
save the head for last

cup your thumbs beneath for it to fall into have an eyelash be the last thing visible overground

leave a heartbeat to tamp down the dirt

to be a shadow for grassblade above then nothing up there at the beginning of this poem nothing so that the last the very last

all that'll be left to do then is bury your hands

etc.

BRIGHTON ROCK BY GRAHAM GREENE

Pinky Brown must marry Rose Wilson to keep her mouth shut about the murder which the cops don't know wasn't no accident—

Pinky has a straight razor for slashing, a vial of acid for throwing into, a snitch's face. He dies in the end. The end

of the book, I mean—where, on the last page, 'Young Rose' hurries out of church to pray

that her Pinky has left her preggy-poo . . .

Now, this kid—if he was ever born—joined a skiffle group in '62 called Brighton Rockers, didn't make it big, though,

just local dances and do's. Rose, pink, brown, all nonelemental colors, shades of shame, melancholy, colors which, you

get caught loving too much, you get sent up to do time—time, that crime you didn't,

couldn't commit! even if you weren't

born—even and if your dad he died with that sneer—unsmooched his punk's pure soul, unsaved— Every Sunday now in church Rose slices

her ring-finger off, onto the collection-plate; once the sextons have gathered enough bodily parts from the congregation, enough

to add up to an entire being, the priest substitutes that entire being for the one on the cross: they bring Him down in the name

of brown and rose and pink, sadness and shame, His body, remade, is yelled at and made to get a haircut, go to school,

study, to do each day like the rest of us crawling through this igloo of hell, and laugh it up, show pain a good time,

and read Brighton Rock by Graham Greene.

.

SECRET PLACES

I bite the screwtop top of a bottle of naivete steady in my teeth and slowly, by rotating the bottle's body in my hands, open it.

Christian crap, jewish junk, moslem muck, buddhist bullshit, the days all begin and end.

Pain is the absence of repetition.

Eventually the soles of the feet will infect the palms of the hands with their hiddenness.
Their remoteness.

Until then
I remain a door-deep animal,
embracing every room
shy of welcome.

*

THE CLOSET

(. . . after my Mother's death)

Here not long enough after the hospital happened I find her closet lying empty and stop my play And go in and crane up at three blackwire hangers Which quiver, airy, released. They appear to enjoy

Their new distance, cognizance born of the absence Of anything else. The closet has been cleaned out

Full-flush as surgeries where the hangers could be Amiable scalpels though they just as well would be

Themselves, in basements, glovelessly scraping uteri But, here, pure, transfigured heavenward, they're Birds, whose wingspans expand by excluding me. Their Range is enlarged by loss. They'd leave buzzards

Measly as moths: and the hatshelf is even higher!
As the sky over a prairie, an undotted desert where
Nothing can swoop sudden, crumple in secret. I've fled
At ambush, tag, age: six, must I face this, can

I have my hide-and-seek hole back now please, the Clothes, the thicket of shoes, where is it? Only The hangers are at home here. Come heir to this Rare element, fluent, their skeletal grace sings

Of the ease with which they let go the dress, slip, Housecoat or blouse, so absolvingly. Free, they fly Trim, triangular, augurs leapt ahead from some geometric God who soars stripped (of flesh, it is said): catnip

Pawing goo-goo fingernails, glaze skins fun to peer in as Frost-i-glass doors. . . But the closet has no windows.

Opaque or sheer: I must shut my eyes, shrink within To peep into this wall. Soliciting sleep I'll dream

My size lack motorskills for, I wind up all glue-scabbed,

To a brat placated by model airplane kits kids

Mother spilled and cold, unpillowed, the operating-Table cracked to goad delivery: its stirrups slack,

Its forceps closed: by it I'll see mobs of obstetrical

Personnel kneel proud, congratulatory, cooing
And oohing and hold the dead infant up to the dead
Woman's face as if for approval, the prompted
Beholding, tears, a zoomshot kiss. White-masked

Doctors and nurses patting each other on the back, Which is how in the Old West a hangman, if He was good, could gauge the heft of his intended. . .

Awake, the hangers are sharper, knife-'n'-slice, I jump Helplessly to catch them to twist them clear, Mis-shape them whole, sail them across the small air Space of the closet. I shall find room enough here

By excluding myself; by excluding myself, I'll grow.

HITLER YOUTH

If I mispronounce ourobouros as Oral
Bore us (from the mouth we emerged) or
You rob our O's (to repay our A's), I am
Simply saying if there were a line painted
Down the middle of this line, a poem
Inscribed down the middle of me would see
How many pens Medusa can hold in Her hair.

Haven for revisionists, the future
Excerpts itself from us, an anthology
That shows what we were at all moments, wholly
Representative, but which opened sheds a me
Hoping that somewhere past this surface the rim
Of your horizon has causes to know the sky
Is a sequence, with intervals of eternity.

Because form's faithlessness is oblivion
Tamed by hand, from my eye fringe I cry
Surround me facile, you 1940s infancy:
Because Nazis are not Z's, therefore they
Are A's. But even this poor report-card
Intends to let the alphabet be less lost
Than the shine off a trigger toad, my skin worn
By mud-mannequins. Ah Adolph's dais has
(Chattel chip/slaveblock splinter) softened since:

Like a fountain, my libation reprimands pavements.

..

PASSING

A hailstone finds flaws in the storm, while below we quarrel over whose lord was base for more terror than ours.

And yet the letters of the words in this poem consist of each other.

Could we not forth in like-guise go?

The boat passing whispers about those on the shore.

But we never mention it.

*

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

A museum is too many rooms where nothing can be moved; one is forgotten in most of them.

A tiptoe theater, full of shushes and overly-lit faces whose big scene seems always imminent. But if the cue is anything more than a coin-toss, a chance word from a spectator's bypass glance, this expectation of response is your guess, your great stance, the stage you hem and haw at.

How the overflow of doorways that link all these galleries interrupts the paintings' spaces,

adjusting the land with lack and lacunae, thrusting gaps into the hushed square of our attention

and ushering us to the question of absence, that thief peering in on these always-without scenes.

*

Are we outside what is shown?

Made audience, do we attend

Are we outside what is shown?

Made audience, do we attend
a pageant patient with our pauses
in perception, the solipsistic

tunnels we hug. Why otherwise is there almost nowhere to sit?

Isn't it, that the viewers must move in order for the viewed to remain still. The authorities

curate these corridors with us offscreen captions ape our attempts to evade rigidities they'd impose

until our amblings became
a Nazi lockstep across this grid
that exists mostly to secure
the screws that make sure

the patrons' plaques are more the wall than we are: hungworks

belong to the victor; postwar reparations are a chimera—this world is bolted in place.

*

Museums are for the rich: it's just another way they gloat and spit

on us, the blunt message is See

twice great am I who can afford
to both buy this hoard and I
may also throw it away: this view zoo

is what I feed the animals meaning you: gaze-cage where I nonplus you with my surplus, torture you with my morehood, here you must worship my worth's leavings, the Picasso I pissed on

before purportedly donating it you bet to get a big tax write off that really comes of course

from scum like you, you pay the cost and the critics conspire my con: I own them and you and all this too.

The poor have no right here, though ostensibly it's here for us, its existence is built on

our backs, our lacks of education: connaisseurs of crap, we'll buy any crud postcard Impressionist

wallpaperers provide-victims of

fade-forgers who reign everywhere, enforcers of the de rigeur; their efforts to convince us this emptiness

is otherwise, succeeds: that's why nothing here can ever be touched,

even a fingertip would disturb the dead tenuous alignment of forces fragility can only lament from frame

to frame until the all but unshown collusion between donors and whore curators completes its scam decor.

*

Numberless our looks languish unable to compose their path, halting an inch in front of

the canvas; the air is thick with incomplete glances, gazes that failed to reach these pictures,

overtures toward an unsatisfactory climax, unbridgeable the gulf, still impotent or frigid the mind

feels confronted by these large garish (i.e. visible) examples of a wig tossed onto a TV to be

a diva antenna receiving pictures from the Tesla Void where spysats orbit to catch the planet

in closeup, candid depictions of our centimeter selves, the slimed movement of border sorties, incursions that violate the treaties signed by dignitaries retiring with a wing named after their Mom and Dad.

.

Though our observances are far from over, scalped by perspective's relentless blade we wander home

truant now to our other portraits, false to their provenance, the lands we lost by invading the sanctum

of this museum, serene scene we plebs must abhor in front of our lives which cannot authenticate

the real exhibit: this wealth of lies before whose truth our face is forgeries; our eyes un-nude, unseen.

*

*

*

OBSTACLE-ISM

heaven is tired of stepping on me and hell of bumping its head on me and I am fed up with both battered by all this inbetweenity

every earth path impending over or under me until all site is lost or foothold in such a stringent merge I span their wild subplots

each compass raises lowers its binary state of terror its contemplate where the two pass each other in opposite directions home for some

all of them it seems can half-palliate imprecision with place but I'm nowhere unless this always being in their way is somewhere

*

FACADE

Mirrors worn out by apple renderings, depictions the carcass of peepingtom sneers at.

Vatic surface disdained by Cezanne, doubts that blemish forever rarity,

wise beauty is painted parallel always.

Always beauty is tempted to falsify every shadow, as if nothing nearer could be real. Doubling its fade it seems to set an alternate yet not.

Facepaint spoils the forbidden zone quality that lives and dies there (indirectly).

But truth lies immobile on the sundial.

(Its other else moves to the blazon of summer rhymes that remain names unknown till birth when the tongue

must pronounce itself the tongue, forsaking every purer synonym.)

BOSTON COMMON, AUTUMN 2000

DOSTON COMMON, ACTOMIC 2000

The Statehouse dome is painted gold to reflect the greed

that gilds everything in this Capitol: superfluous these leaves

reaping their richest color.

No-one is fooled,

not even me, unless it's by all the green-sickly

bronze statues in this park:
have they been seen by Doctors
from the Museum,
have they been authenticated lately?

These could be forgeries,

These could be forgeries, the real ones trucked off by night to some billionaire's penthouse of horrors: eyrie I aspire to-my lair, my home!

The trees' lottery tickets descend and fill my hands with more than.

*

THROWBACKS

I want to take your place in my life so
I lie in wait for you everywhere. Once I used
To lie down in the paths of steamrollers, my teardrops
Where photographed at the feet of glaciers
To prove if they were advancing or retreating
Like positions in a kama sutra: after the cold
Juggernauts passed over I was fed lingeringly
Through printer-outers. It was read then that the

E-pore is used most frequently by my skin, Next came x, p, o . . .

I want you to take my place in my life so
I follow you everywhere. Once I used
To follow burglars around: waiting at the window till
They ransacked a house then fled, I'd enter
Run my hands through its emptied drawers, degleamed
Jewelboxes, my sole thrill was to rub the feel
Of deceived receptacles, rifled pockets.
I'd wait outside, then rush in, clambering like an adam's apple.

I want to take my place in your life so
I go with you everywhere. Once I used
To accompany myself, I had a passport to the xerox,
The unanimous aimed its initials at me on the run,
When my died my clones were laid out at the funeral
Beside me, then a heckler who's amnesiac, anybody, some
Forever stranger was blindfolded and led past the coffins to
See if they could get the right I by feel but failed
And so their life was took in place, and so I took your life
As place, so I must now keep placing your life in take,

In sudden give and take:
I want you to take my place in your life. Please.

*

DEATH AND THE MOUNTAIN

"There is no theme for old age but death and the mountain." —Arab proverb

You should see the treeline on that mountain of update bulletin news; no avalanche can blacklist me—
The twigline on the tree said: You should see him on talkshows

sandpapering his mug off totempoles, carved of old, of pine— Just past the christline on that cross is one sitcom one summit of this; scarred

as a skyline of thorns it grew up, imperious, pious. . . . To blindfold the precipice before leaping from it, okay; but try keeping a straight face

when the punchline comes "kersplat"—
There, old skin-quilt,
saint peacock hedge! Feverchart
that wedges the door shut.
I see it
he said. I see my mountain's peak-sized fate.

*

SAY WHEN

I write poems that consist of nothing but the word attentionspan attentionspan fills all the pages of all my books of course it's boring for you to read the same word printed over and over again I agree it's a waste of time and patience in fact I know you probably won't even read past the first thousand or so but that's okay I am not hurt by the fact that you never read my poems all the way through because (and get this) wherever you do stop reading wherever you toss me aside is where I triumph is where I impose upon you the term for that limit which you have haughtily and eternally tried to impose upon me right there wherever you stop will be the word for that stop the true word the word made deed as we say in the trade you will have reached your attentionspan and I will have put it there waiting for you writing it over and over for you sitting in this crummy room day after day gloating over this victory

over me

over your usual tyranny

CRAPSHOOT

Whoever it was, the first plagiarist had to actually dream up the concept of the crime, so don't fault him (I imagine this culprit as male, but the poem he copped was—I would bet—authored by a woman) for lack of originality. I wish

I could excuse his bad act as madness that a crazy theory whose tenets value words over typos caused him to go true, to trace out hers so unerringly instead of greed, I'd plead psychosis and cry, He's Realism's victim: that's why

his poor misled hand tried to break those laws which make omnipresent subatomic flaws subvert the verb of every medium and blur our sheerest copier's laserbeam: say now his felony should be absolved, since wise Heisenberg has found that once and once

only can the poem stay per se, regardless of Benjamin's Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit: why couldn't I call his vile counterfeits brave attempts, brilliant schemes to outmaneuver the ways physics limits our digits' genius?

I wish I could. But, I can't. No: he's to blame—just him, I think. Yes: the wank-ink of his name on her work is un-, un-, un-, is a sin I must atone. Oh, if he had only cloned her signature the same as her poem, no harm would have come from his plagiarism!

I write this knowing that random quantum impurities in the surface body of the paper or scanscreen on which this is printed will betray all I say here to some degree, any is too much—each thought emits a glitch, thought Mallarmé.

I pray this page permits perfect access what I would guess my xerox intended to be a sincere apology to Ms.

Sappho and her sis, but may indeed instead (despite our dearest efforts) appear as

the very opposite of what you've read.

*

BEST WAY TO KEEP YOUR ANKLES AWAKE? SNAKE SHOELACES

Only a scratch, but its bandage patrols the walled city, assuming this mystic furrow has taught such fangs repose. Past suburbs skilled with ash, past evaporated sculpture, blindpond bodies. Or is it

like maples, learning their craft of syrup—years of drop on drop, step by step—have we, life after life, a soul-spoor gradually maximizing its sugar? Or is Nirvana bitter—a clockmarked zero, a pine-

needle's grudging eye. A void, propped up by simplicity. Where someone exhausted by the justice of his meals pauses in the street, the proof his feet make gathers, gravity snatching to earth all

sweets. Even sprinters, on their starting-blocks, hold hands. Love? A sideways noise, a tidings via toe-graphologists, rumor as raw as cold as saliva crawling on the floor of a crematorium, straw used

to sip frogsweat from sleeping lilypads. More?—
Mourners, televidilevitated. Birth, its strength
of recap. The yacht of yet, the boat of but, have
never saved us from sinking in dreams where the dead

must keep their day jobs: imagine going on working like a compass on the thrust-out palm of some lost Victorian's corpse near the North Pole: think how tired it is by now of sticking to the point, the poem.

```
*
VISITS (to X)
```

Belonging to all that moves through me, I always go to look back through the rearview.

Trees upholster the car in shade, but no comfort can delay its start. Its way is laid out, is you.

A rushed goodbye is truer than leisurely adieux.

Refined from the sun's raw fire, our farewells are polite; appearances maintained.

We say we want to stay but never do.

*

GOLLY MOUNTAIN BLUES

Up on Golly Mountain all the lovers are parked
Wish we could be up there enjoyin the dark
But you don't wanna I'm sorry I come along
Cause you won't stop the car hon all night long
Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside
Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide
I know you ain't to blame but
Our love's about to flame out
Can't you smell the rubber burn
As you keep riding them hairpin turns

When you told me you loved danger I said then I'm your guy [girl]

I been dangerous since I first learned to kiss Let's go up on Golly and give it a try [whirl]

But when I said I loved it I sure didn't mean this

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside

Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide

I can't remember your name but

Our love's about to flame out

Can't you feel the floorboards burn

As you keep riding them hairpin turns

I heard about some funny ways that people get their kicks From runnin round upon the town to gettin hit with whips

But you take the cake my friend you're oddball number one

I admire your nerves but I got some curves where you

could have more fun than these here

Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside

Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide

I guess it's all the same but

Our love's about to flame out

Can't you taste the seat of my bluejeans burn

As you keep riding them hairpin turns

Poor baby I know it ain't your fault it was your mama daddy musta dropped you on your brake when you was born cause if you don't know that lovin is the deadliest thrill there is you don't know nothin I shoulda known somethin when you picked me up inside the movie-show way your windshield wiper kept gettin into my popcorn here let

me take these hairpins outa my hair and let it fall into your lap don't that make you want to love me and cuddle and lay your head on my soft soft shoulder . . . Soft Shoulder? Hey! Look out! Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside

Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide It's a hurty shame but Our love's about to flame out Can't you tell my poor heart yearns But you just keep on riding them hairpin turns

hair-

pin-

Get your tongue off that gaspedal baby

Yes you just keep on riding them

You tryin to love this thing or drive it well then drive it drive it Just cause you ain't got nothin to live for . . . heck, come to think of it I ain't got nothin neither

Hey you know somethin? I'm beginning to like it Hairpin turns up and down the mountainside Hairpin turns drivin like a suicide I know you ain't to blame but

> Our love's about to flame out Can't you smell the rubber burn

As you keep riding them hairpin turns

SWIMSHORE: TO X

alive at least as long as nothing is our own we hover above this line of ferryfine waves

where rocks sink in recital ocean or lake marine and mute each toe is cold at first

god of the smallest solitude I study the nude's description in personal gaps

hair like a spark of armor

sun sun each one of your laps crests

THE QUESTION

Collides with a stopwatch, innocent mincemeats rise steaming and Sporadic laughter, cardoors going slammed. Then, static-ier voices, Through blood jettisoned by mimes statues reminisce, reveal how They subsist on glimpsed nubility, personal-touches in crowds who Traipse past. In rooms where you heard the sound of a teardrop Striking the bloodhound surface of perfume which sat in a Washbasin, chipped fake porcelain, who poured it in that? in Those rooms (where you were so strangely audient!), others, like Me, are listening. Outside, in the city, the minstrelshow Pollution (which paints us all in 'blackface') continues, corny And racist, sexist, lampoonist . . . humanist? Ashes watered

Far off, demimordial, I hear an epitaph of ears, someone

By hell, kisses skimmed from doveflight, cream from silk, what-Ever rises, curdled, from depths as fraught with else as these, Far off. . . . Yet I would encourage your traits your tricks individual Of speech, you crowds who gape on as those rooms all rush toward One room, whose doors part now like a mouth pried in cry Silently, stifled by its openness. Will my voice receive me, Will my cries still have me? will not be the question there.

*

SUDDEN DEATH STRIKES JET SET

well racecar driver Peter Revson's luck ran out today the Rev revved up once too often

despite his rugged good looks heir to a cosmetics fortune he

was driven daredevil death defy

Rev

once
before a big race
his mother told him
he was crazy

age 35
one year older than me
a playboy
millionaire frequently
seen with the world's most
beautiful
and glamorous

personalities all

during his
150 thousand
dollar racecar Nascar burning
crash Miss
World the fiancee was photographed
repeatedly

seconds after
the fireball burst his friends took
their friends aside
brusque to confide
that most eligible
bachelor of
them all is a mess

hell he was positive meteoric to say the least

but don't worry the whole thing will be hushed up a quickly announced memorial foundation of lipstick nailpolish nailpolish remover eyeliner powder puffs and pomades proved useless when applied to the burnt pan cake skin in New York Lauren Hutton is reported to be devastated on behalf of VIPs everywhere thank you one year older than me hmm say why am I writing this poem is it to gloat glad he's dead glad I don't have to try to be him anymore a poet penniless frequently seen with the world's most ugly and worthless nobodies and that's just what I have to put Pete down for in the end snobbery even his pigheaded death wish was a kind of social climbing I bet he thinks he made it today into the not set fat chance capitalist rat Note: The factoids came from People magazine. Revson was (an) heir to the Revlon cosmetics dynasty. Lauren Hutton: actress, spokesmodel for Revlon. Miss World is replaced annually by a duplicate Miss World.

POEM (HOW I LOST MY PEN-NAME)

I wrote under a pen-name
One day I shook the pen trying to make the name come out
But no it's

Like me prefers clinging to the inner calypso

So I tossed the pen to my pet the Wastebasket to eat It'll vomit back the name Names aren't fit For unhuman consumption

But no again

It stayed down

I don't use a pen anymore
I don't write anymore
I just sit looking at the wastebasket
With this alert intelligent look on my face

I don't use a pen-name anymore

*

TODAY'S STORY (OH, SYNESTHESIA! #4)

diverted to my ears, while soundwaves ricocheted my eyes—

Somehow this morning light

For hours I had to twist sideways to walk without tripping, and each carhorn made my eyelids whip like a hurricane awning, as I squirted eyedrops in ears eardrops in etc., gradually things returned to normal.

But I feared tomorrow:

"What if my molars salivate
at every inner or utmost attar;
if eon-brandy I cannot savor but
through thy swart chute, oh nostril!"

In fact by the time this evening came I was so worried I had to call tell my friend X— who said: Well, look, just tell me one thing: can you feel the phone?

What do you mean, I said,

Can you feel it with your fingers, X said, is your sense of touch still there, where it's supposed to be?—
Yes?—Well, in that case, get over here and give me a backrub,

right now,

```
right this minute,
before it's too late.
PITY
inside his pane
the window is a man
like you or me
at night he walks the ledges
at night he walks the sills
restless in his frame
veins full of glass
at night he walks the sills
at day his head rises
and shines through his body
and soon he worries
that the coming night
will undecapitate
that the homing night
will rejoin him whole
inside his pane
like you or me
fulgent full of future slivers
fallen whole
foretold and free
at night he walks the sills
his head rises
his head falls
held together by none
his jaggedy slitted body
glazed and gone
his beauty putty
RUBBERNECK
Hey Rubberneck
'S what they call me
Rubberneck
In all the streets and alleys
Rubberneckin
I'm just checkin
Diggin everything like a quicksand parade
Ridin herd
On the curbs
Copying down
All the stopsigns in town
Erasing all the ones for walkin
Anywhere a crowd
Is leashed out loud
I'm on the nod to prowl
That's me
You see out stalkin my gawkin
```

Hey Rubberneck
'S what they call me
Rubberneck
In all the streets and alleys
Rubberneck
But I don't care
Hey what's that goin on over there
Rubberneckin

Inspectin
Where the sirens' screech
Directs my feets
I'm takin a butcher at
Everymeat I meet
Gonna glue my shoes
To the avenues
And my eyelashes to my cheeks

Anywhere a group
Has got into a grope
Hangin on the ropes
I'll poke my periscope
Cause you're my only hope
For some lovin
So step to one side please

I am a witness for my enemies I am a witness for my enemies

What's shakin down around Your corners Let me sneak a peek I can't be any bolder I'll watch it all

Right up across your shoulder

Hey baby what you Got to show there

Quit shovin

Hey Rubberneck
'S what they call me
Rubberneck
On all the mountains
Don't forget the valleys
Rubberneck

Hey what's that I see

Everybody's standin round And they're lookin down They're lookin down at me

* DUMP

I seem more in this poem than I am. It covers me, icons me,

I hide under its knoll.
A knoll, or as

the old English word KNOTT means, a small hill.

Sanctified, whole— it was my bent led to this bind.

It was my own, puckered with similarity.

Kaput in a canoe, done-for in a dogcart,

does every demise suit my sangfroid.

Cease, I wither, I curl up, I shroud in shrivel to make

disposal easier a packaging handy for death,

Santa's bag. (Slag, not swag.)

Given the fame surrounding

*

NOTES

NOTES

the recent book or unfinished or abandoned work by Elizabeth Bishop isn't someone now planning another book consisting of her scrawled instructions to the maid the menus she handed the cook the lists she left for her secretary and what about her stockbrokers the notes they got regarding assets should be included along with jots

the critics on retain
Note:

the lawyers on retain not to mention

she wrote to
the wine steward
the chauffeur
the groundskeeper
the poolboy
the dressmaker
the therapist
the masseuse
and of course

Or any poet whose financial wealth was a significant factor in the character of their writing. (Lowell, Merrill, Matthews, Gluck, Edson et al.)

*

MITTS AND GLOVES (for Tom Lux)

The catcher holds a kangeroo fetus in his, the firstbaseman's grips a portable hairblower,

but everyone else just stares into theirs punching a fist into it, stumped

trying to come up with a proper occupant—

The pitcher for example thinks a good stout padlock would go

right in there, but the leftfielder, influenced no doubt by his environment,

opts for a beercan. The shortstop informative about the ratio of power to size

says, "Ipod, man. You know: video." The secondbaseman however he just stands and grins and

sort of flapjacks his from hand to hand and back again, secondbase dopey as always. Alas—

cries the thirdbaseman—this void un-ends us—avant-space beyond our defiant emptiness—

abyss, haunted by the kiss of balls we have not missed! oh ab-sontz

deh-lease. . . . The rightfielder is DIS-GUSTED at this, he like snorts, hauwks, spits

into his and cusses Huh look: heck my chaw of tobac fits it perfeck.

The team goes mum, cowhided by the rectitude of his position, the logic.

Only the centerfielder, who was going back while this discussion was going on, putting jets on his cleats to catch the proverbial long one,

does he—does he perhaps have a suggestion . . .? As for the ball, off in mid air it all dreamily

scratches its stitches and wonders what it will look like tomorrow

when it wakes up and the doctor removes its bandages—

Coda:

Mitts versus gloves. Mitts—mitts are pro's at what they do.

```
the glove is a prole
a tool
a brute built
on the manipulative; purpose vital
in the game of course, but subordinate
overall-a workhorse, meant
to be migrant. It
can be employed
phased in
used
any old base; by
all players: is dirty, low-down, dumb. I'm
forced to admire the mitt but
free (in theory) to love gloves.
SKETCH FOR AN ARTIST
A paper lighthouse with crayon beacons
that make visible
a glass clinked against a waterfall
to test the acoustics for
a concert where we sit and watch
a thumbprint
howl out its whorls-
I can draw things like these anytime
but I can't write them.
[UNTITLED]
no one wants to snowride
on a slowsled
pulled by a glacier
but at least in this traffic
it gets you there
FEAR OF DOMESTICITY
       (after reading Plath and Sexton)
Eyelashes did their job:
they lengthened the afternoon,
like a dress-hem.
Then that night the hem began to rise, in stages
revealing
scenes from my shameful life.
```

Whitecollar, authorized, hightech—et al—wholly, ruly-truly, superior. Compared to whom

```
-Those calves
up which the hem reproachfully rasped,
lingering over whatever scene
(the higher the younger) arose
on those calves
knees, thighs, those
woman-segments
or were they mine-
I hid my eyes.
I wouldn't attend to
the walls either
endless walls, slowly
basted
with suicide.
The eyelashes did their job.
But I, who could neither sew
nor cook groped and groped those long legs
stubborn, afraid to look.
THE WISHINGWELL STANZAS
Oracle whose hollow
catalogs each word I swallow,
I wish my birth had been false, I wish
the pregnancy which bled me was kitsch.
Nothing the pupil paints on our
eye easel will equal your
entry in non-entity,
whose unpaginate genitalia I
am one lack-me of.
May I try or is it type
to man-ingest the woman-digest of this?
Only a fishhook can play Hamlet adequately-
bright as skin pinned to a candle,
go dangle down a well, chapel
by inversion; the bells toll,
the toads flick my gnat-name home.
Oldest lodge and once as I was,
bring me, lightning for ballast,
the memory of a boy crossing
a creekbed, a ditch, look,
in which he steps on a snake:
I felt it shift, beneath my shoe,
felt tremor after tremor go
through my length, lure up muck
so far back. Its meander meat
realigned the path I meant to
take, my heel hung there
caught in the quickest loss
of ground, my footing was gone
from the moment and I poised
on flesh that refuted my own-
```

orator atop a trapdoor.

sever all, soil it to the ground—
solve with blood the gordianhood, praise
this surface sacrifice, curse it and dance
over dying coils on virile instep,
stomp this lance that lacks true sibilance,
there, there, contrary penis! the drum and
the tambour of the Mother
the earthquake have spoke—

The ponderous sack of semen slice off:

in Catullus LXIII
the faultline runs

from clit to anus, but can
an equator debate
itself—are they castrate
enough, these Attis strata—
at Delphi does my vein begin, then, or end?

Her hallowed handled echoes call to me this cisternship, this landslide water, oh Pythoness, oh cult-consumed womb; let some aquarium of seeps accept each of my pennies, my worthless wishes—each treasure I offer the Goddess mercifully confirms my emptiness.

CANDYCLONE

of it to begin with, which means I bite the shorter half-(I say "half" only to indicate the horrible horseshoe shape it might attain in the mind) first, in other words, I eat the limp. Or bite at it, rather: for candycane in the theater of sweets is hard to the teeth that try to crack its handle, to take it tip-whole in one's lips instead of one's hand which, as I said, must hold the cane by this bottom leg -leg implies dancing, but Fred Astaire debonair used tons of canes though never a candy one in the rigor of his primeif I invert it then the handle could be his foot. Or I could swordswallow it and leave the toe-tongue hooking out of my grimace like a quip or

the horn of a meersham pipe, a tail's repartee in air, sharp serpent that dreams of apples. I guess it could be devoured from the bottom up, but then

Because I'm not small enough I must grasp the long part

the fingers too cumbersome for this small candycrutch, maybe I could bribe a child to dangle it towards my snapping jaws—all this, and god I haven't even got to the red and white stripes that coil up and around its bole pole which like all such objects in my poems are the phallic sublime, a substitute for that virility I lack, a simulcrummy cast I must kiss and lick and mouthmasturbate until it wears

the sleek salt that warps its saccharine inch, limp defeated tongue, sour-body effluval-angel.

If all the way you believe is beside,

skewed and unaligned to the great faiths that guide others on their propitious courses,

I would have to hold the canecurl in my hand too large for it,

SUBURBAN PASTORAL

if your guard-rail gives to the gorge they all avoid with digital ease, car-carpets sweeping them home. Their path is like a spear whose tip gives birth to what it pierces; their wound configurates whatever flesh is, stalemate of space, pale unmeant moment in the moon's phase when every owl attains each speck of sight it needs for the night, the hunt. Only the path of the predator's true. Only you are left with no way to go, no eye to see the prey they endow with that brevity heaped upon lives before their cease, brave dispersal into air or bright inversion which delays the day by the global habit of turning over in sleep's subside; your bed orbit caught for a pause abide in which your dreams contend with siege weapons snatched away by those once shunned: past sunlapse, past the semi-earthen yield of relics flying released from hands that have not yet forsaken the normal verities your merit refuses to acknowledge. Until you are scorned or like a sacrifice being racked in heaven, bound upon churn altars the heart ripped out, dumb and certain to what those desires bring;

tickled teaspoons in backyards, where the tree ties wheels to its thanatopsis toplessness.

A QUESTION OF LEVELS

I must find the prayer-step on the endless stairs he said. Stop at any of them, I advised, each stratum from which one petitions emptiness is equally false and fatal. Climbers who gain the peak think it speaks to them, that it puffs breathclouds back at theirs, exchanging exilarations. So therefore listen you may in fact have reached your own and found its landing waiting there and seebut he left me like a new belief in ladders or an old apostasy of toes. Unfortunately either requires I be above or below. ANNUAL after leaves make fall their mark I enter the polarbear of aliases white hibernates while I wait in gardens mendacious with bloom new tenants for goliath glue their seed to puddles of pennies and the call the call comes to plea the allmoan rises time is a book without quote it reads your hands by rote gloved intervals dog-ear where I opened my signature to the wrong page now I spoon the drool from Frankenpoo's sex or start to whack my ammo and yet some lumpenführer think they think I don't care I care alright I care so much that I sluffed off saying it anyway diaries detest the present tense so naturally naturally the all in all corolla of it faded though aired on the vids senseless violence the defence the defence of one's private Hollywood **POEM** like sails of somersault

through sun-alt air seen premonitions and murmurs

the dirt estheticized by dancers one stone stands among stems days that rise from our flimsies to find

the face lit by twitches from scenes of former harrow I go

when bells summon the peak and the latrines slink seawards an emaciated car-thief hurries home

caressed by perilous nests I rise from the long habitudes of the high snow

magnificent the lens that contends me what warp-effects just to stay here

magnificent the lens that contends me what warp-effects just to stay here extinct with swaying others of you

shone with what our curtains told

their shifts to prepare

the candles lit from rooms toward evening

shadow nothing but shadow he paused in the absent door of his footprints

empty passel of guests knocking toes groping through thumbdunes and my purse my purse full of clown-seized ankles

* WHEN THE TIME COMES

there is no alleviation from the pain there is no balm

there is no balm unless
via the inner alias
of rhyme it's
Li Po's palm

as it lays another just-written poem on the river to let it float away

all that effort lifelong to create a self sacrificed as soon as it's finished

I hope I can say when the time comes

```
as considerately
as calmly
Li Po let go of me
ASSASSIN
kiss each bullet
```

before you load them so every saliva'd shell will slurp up during its inspired flight some of the confetti snowing down on the motorcade

and will use those alphabet bits of newspaper or torn campaign posters whose false hope

peoples this parade to compose an obituary to collate out

of those shredded syllables and words those puffery lies

like a poem drawn dada from a hat and

thereby at the end of their satisfactory trajectory come to imprint some random elegy in the flesh

of the tyrant me

THE MIRROR INSPECTOR

Everyday when I arrive at their doors I am not Surprised at how amazed they are, knowing of course They threw the notification away without reading it:

Good morning (I say): May I inspect your mirrors-No, you're on my list, is all: it's a regular checkup, There haven't been any complaints. At least, none I'm aware of. I try to be brisk but not abrupt

As I step smartly past them into the checklist zone They call home, slicing my palmtop-puter across Their immaculate floorplans. My first question Now intends to reverse their post-breakfast ease,

I press my iniquity inquiring and just how often

Do you look at yourselves? Regrettably the rate per Median is based on higher incident than most folks Like you manage daily: no, you don't doubt your Existence enough to satisfy the Law that yokes

Us together in this most commensurate duty, Both me officially and you, you civilians must never Neglect the brief barest urge toward beauty Verification; we must take every chance to share

Our equity there. But what a ready home you have;

It's like all the others around. And that's why
I love assignments here: you should see the depraved
City, the rooms all wherefore sizes, the mirrors really

Get into a bit of—but out here, where the blocks
Are reflective—scapesules of their inhabitants—
Mirrors too need their own kind, their basics
Depend on exclusivity, the classical refinements

Of class struggle, of mass heritage. Your lovely children: 6 Lectras, 4 Meres, a Chandelite, and what else . . . But where to start! I could fall back on tradition:

Bathroom first, the manual instructs! Toilet always tells

A steamy story but don't worry, we're discrete,
All according to our professional oath. The code

All according to our professional oath. The code
Of our guild would never allow us to reveal what
Shameful postures the public assumes: your rigid

Shameful postures the public assumes: your rigid

Adimadversions concern us only as they grieve
The victim, meaning our true clientele, the mirrors
Themselves. Oh yes, they're extremely sensitive,

They know when they're being slighted or worse,

Each time you refuse to meet your eyes in the glass Or blink, they register that as a criticism of their Impartiality—the Confront Affront, we term it. Yes, The mirrors remember it all. Every gesture

Tears at their heart. It's a wonder they don't wear Out but in fact sacrifice ensures that perennial Glow, that youth that survives until they shatter—Ah, it happens to us too. Everyone of you people,

And me, the perfect servant, the prime functionary Of the Bureau of Mirrors, I too (though I'll try To take a few with me when I go—to purge every Mislooker whose infractions are so citeful—!) . . . Sorry;

Where was I: Your paranoia is appropriate—in fact
I've already punished the neighbors up and down this
Street, their episodes are serial now, the loathe-lack
Denaturedness of their crimes enough to furnish

Fellowship and whimsy to a waiting nation who's
Tuning in as I adjust my tie-pin camera to focus in on
Your astonishment: your snippet of tonight's news
Will augment that pageant of panic and guilt no clean

Will augment that pageant of panic and guilt no clean

Sponge can wipe clear, all those dust streaks and flecks
Delaying the arrival of any nose-to-nose view

Of that cameo-coiffured face, that trap that reflects

Of that cameo-coiffured face, that trap that reflects
Our truest self back to us, showing us how and who
But no, not that which we need to know most of all:

What is it in us that drags us each day to these sills; And, how can one keep the self from this insidious role, Which none escape, at least according to our files. *

*

ITCH

too many words but if you could pare them down to what your fingernails scratch onto every pore of skin on your body except for a certain portion of the back below the blades above the small of it sits that singular patch your hands cannot reach to inscribe the lines that cover all the other fleshparts is that spot virgin reserved for Mallarmé perhaps untouched till god or devil autopist writes theirs there

*

*

FROGPRINCE

Presence had its stay with me, and even if only for a time it came in the brief of love—

I used to whisper in her ear's idyl. She was so treat, so could. I mostly was worse. Now

the unkind years of peace strand me here, where the lamp studies pain with impunity.

The dust etched in its trance seems a core the air can't share, overwhelming the eye which

itself is plus-sulked with themes of sight, beyond-borne. Imagine a lilypad pregnant with eyelids,

lapping the light with its lashes.
Diffused to me the outward lies
as motes to the beam that bears

them. So what I see carries me somehow, I cannot stand apart subject and object observer

though as always I desire to. I prefer to view than act, and reflect upon the pond I appear. *

THE MALL-TIQUE ESTHETIC

Often a flower tries to befriend your shirt, but you must shun its minor transcendence and remain in transit afterwards then later forward,

nor stop along any ground lure to wield an egg balanced on a T-square and declaim how grateful you are for whatever cameo roles

your filmnoir killers and thieves can still assume, though the thrill of closing your eyes in witness leitmotifs the fear they show account to.

Earth-surface seems to support this with evasions which, if difference did deliver, might grant monkey unanimity to time's isolation

and overcome your capacity for reason among vined gardens of origin, desperate media which litter the floor with florabunda

whose come-ons to your clothing are due to their desperate desire to be real somehow: how sad nature is in its entourage stage,

its stalker nazi strategems to stay relevant, the way it mimics us. Its simulacra swarm almost human in their gaudiness of thorn

or leaf though of course they lack our essential say nay qua. Yet here you are among their units of ubiquity as if they were the one you

should escape and run to hide beneath a sundial, while your windmills pump water to a stalled starting-block; your bread sops up the clouds.

Hey: each day don't you see on the screen a comedian's teeth battle the lava of his own lips. Doesn't that scene render Vesuvius superflous.

*

POEM

the hairbrush can hardly breathe it suffocates in strands it snarls as tense as teeth biting an enemy's hands

the things we tame are what entangle and turn us wild every parent grows ragged tugged disciplining their child

pity the year-old hairbrush its stems all split its roots bare a field that's tilled too much now a hoarbrush blooms there hairbrush hairbrush have you any tufts to spare today now that I'm bald and cannot comb please give back my gray

the hairbrush yanks and yanks stubborn curl that won't lie dead even a poorbrush must shed such rebels from its ranks

(so try not to cry and just say thanks when it hauls you off your head!)

.

QUESTIONS

Q = 0 1 1 0 1 10

Before we're born we're lowercase, and after we die, we return to it. Only life renders us in capital letters.

should really be edited by clones of e.e.cummings.)

(Every headstone ms.

Life is caps for the usual reason, an exaggerated sense of the significance of one's thoughts.
Life is a Beat poet.

Upper existence or lower nonexistence, I'm sure the eye adjusts its focus towards either case—

But which is easier to read—greatness or goneness, headline or poem?

Life or its foreword-afterword?

*

POEM

I OLIV

two sculptors duel

with sabers and chisels
hacking and honing
what they create
will not have
the stable emptiness of stone
nor the ephemeral fullness
of flesh
like butchers playing
chicken they slash
a rain of rubble

carving away the excess whatever crude form remains

after they separate the parts that prevent them from being one will be their singular twin standing as they grow weak on lopped arms the tools heavier until finally less and less detail emerges LOVE POEM Because you have set your lips in my life like an event, the date I had missed and longed for unknowing if it had passed, day dull as diaries that wait for wonders-Love, error of the unique, rare-offering the one moment that will never share itself with the dishwash chores, the drab demands of normal life that line up pending to be faced with nothing required of me but an absent askance quality: the cat and mop et al. Love on your heights on the crest of a kiss can you ever know the comfort of these doldrum dole duties, these small acts of repeat. Against their duliness your beauties dull. I bend to their boredom which after all remain home and I find relief alone and release and solace each time I press my mouth against them. WALL In the end I was deceived by particulars, fingers offering themselves as examples of what I could exist of at the finish of the fruit of the bricklayers' melody if only it would allow its acomplishments

to stand for the hands that set it forth brick by brick, whose purpose was the displacement of the local, the solefor unless that space could be placed in one spot, what good was it. And so propped up to wall in or wall out what should have buttressed me either side, I felt myself slide with the shift, the twin transition of stone on stone until the piles' stoppage put a posit to its incipient rubble, built by patient inches height might climb to see one sun rise above the sheer monument-the measure would be there, and the distance, though both would retain their mean-sense, their cramp-game of home, toe-molds, headhods and all the other tools that are rare now whose use was owned a necessity once.

THE BALLOON THAT LIVED ON THE MOON

The lower gravity was kind to it

It could bounce and soar higher Than Earth allows

So the balloon was happier By far

We perpetuate down here

And soon forgot the puncture culture

Where the hate-pins of our eyes skewer

The frailest inflation

The beadiest bubble is not safe

But up there

The bleak unpeopled landscape Mirrrors more faithfully

A balloon's own sterility and

Essential snootiness

Consider

What a round object by its perfect nature

Excludes

How its boundaries segregate the in from the out

And show what is enough

And what is less

So when you think of the balloon That lived on the moon you might wonder

Why all its brothers and sisters

Because can't you feel how

When one tugs your hand

Deft with that upward urge how much

It resists your touch

How endlessly You are not a part of it

THE TRESPASS

On every corner I stand the street ends. Others zoom home ignoring curbs and stops

And find themselves in family or friends

But I observe the sign don't cross this line.
I obey the words that say back away.
I mind these limits shown in case they're mine:
I share their lawful urge to prohibit—
My own words witness so many sanctions

I can't jaywalk or say I wonder why Verbotens written then can still turn now The unstoniest road to a no go by.

How dare I unsubmit to any writ.

What's wondering me here is not this halt Or prior heedings where I nearly see Such blocks and stalls and balks are all my fault—

I note the welcome-mat at the center
Of my maze: how each sole turns back relieved
To have found a spot it cannot enter.

What's wondering me then is what attends To nothing I say on my way nowhere.
On every corner I stand the street ends.

* POEM

I heard the abide.

How low it was. How loud it was.

How soon it ended.

And what it said.

I heard its words

poured, pouring from the sky.

The clouds were frauds.

-1 6 41 1 4 4 4 4 1 4

The froth lost its mind in an ear.

*
TAROT PORTRAIT

*

Peeking over the fortuneteller's shoulder Won't add a sole feature to what is there,

Won't add a sole feature to what is there, What your future paints so plainly in view, So visible to anyone who isn't you—

Outside her djinn-lit storefront occult cave
The streets that steered you forth to dare this brave
Or foolish quest have failed themselves perhaps
To escape the daily grid and find some maps

To escape the daily grid and find some maps

Empty enough to defy place or break
The bad odds configured here in the stake

Of cards she pays out now into their own
Dead-end deft-hand. Do you know who's downthrown

In the rows of this slow shuffle? And no
Matter where you haled from or where you'll go
Next-lost round the dark town's confinements
One must leave this encounter with a sense

Salient, some savor foresight of what's cast To come in likeness limned at lifelong last: Occur by endless tics and whits to stare Unavoidably clear at this picture

Urging you to share its peer. Each suit unseals A star that arcs inward through her deals Toward the tower you built to spy on That distant face your door-key has drawn:

Each time you insert it and twist it, a line Is incised on the canvas; each lock-wind Puts another brushstroke to the portrait: Opening her arms she frames you for it.

Impersonal, of course: she has no wish To harm. You thought that solitaire was The only game with no intent to punish Or hurt; thought you were safe in the menace

This tarot chose: but now you see it too Lacks malice; its fate-cards portray as true Across the table only that which is due Or over. How indifferently it shows Those oldest eyes and what they hold exposed.

.

I HAVE NO HOME

I follow the road nowhere goes to, the one somewhere comes from.

If I passed here before, wore a path into the stone other than my own, ignore that fetish form.

On the staircase each tier vibrates as the desire to descend contends with the urge to awake.

In that same dark where the groundfloor gets lost the second story may find its way.

*

APPLE

Pack your bathtub with humankind.

Your closet with animaldom. Let grassmost spill from your shelves. Cram the world into your house, overlooking no cubbyhole no corner. Surrender your personal to matter external, privacy to plethora, fill each space with all. Leave no room for yourself, thoughhow foolish that would be. For, as the fruit is a little recantation on the part of bitterness,

a letting up of its overkill reign, so this surfeit will solve

for a while your null.

A LIFETIME YET

Look, in the sky, how those clouds turn into a place which briefly appears to be unique or is that pattern repeated once every 33.3 years-

Termcycle which can't be seen unless via long computers our sapient view finds its site: or is this simply false recurrance imposed upon a true chaos. Can heaven's formations be further figured beyond the phase

see: a third of the way through his thirtythird year we hoisted Jesus up to check this question out; he

nonce of that one fate we suddenly

was supposed to get back to us on it but we're still on hold, aren't we?

POSTCOITAL time to scratch though nothing can itch

like the beard of her breasts she can feel his blood being injected back into the grape it gushed from

> beneath this dead calm the bed bends like a sail bellied out

with distance
(may mallarméans
not regret
the white erased
from these sheets)

only a shiver covers them now a snowflake pinned to their bones

My love is torture

But no one attends my screams

*

EXCHANGE

My whimpers die out Fade out the charmed windows Fall unheard along the streets Where couples walk in touch lightly Exchanging pet phrases Oh fortunate language whose meaning Is confined to two Who need no dictionary: There goes another fingernail: see They shove the fingernail into My face as if To show me this is a serious Business we aren't kidding around Here: We want the truth you scum Out with it tell us what Their names are: who Have you poisoned who have you Defiled with the ugly Gaze of your longing

What innocents have you left Stricken by the sight of your

Face tell us who who have you dared

Adoring

But I, I have never confessed—
I have never revealed your names
Whoever you are
Whoever you are out there
Embracing in touch lightly
Exchanging those phrases
Which only you understand
Those coos those moans those
Hoarse unmeanings
That sound so much at times
Like my screams my whimpers here

*
*
MISHAP MESSAGE

I bandage my wristwatch to stop the bleeding

- of time but time is perforce the wound out of which space empties Einstein's bag of marbles the greenie I shoot at its sister the moon the purey I bury with a note saying no the blue one weighs in my hand as light as sky minus earth earth of course is the last marble I like to hear it roll around my showerstall before I fall into the drain
- into that distillate of distance we call ocean
- beneath each of which a nurse bobs up and down cold fingers hold my wrist cold toes probe my throat is that my pulse I ask sisters is that my life

whitecaps whitecaps

words that jumble space with time laughter tumbling down a telescope words that turn to marble all I say white as my years they bleed they bleed away

white but white as only Einstein's hair is white or a note slipped under drowning doors

is that the onomatopoeia of the waves

- **AUTHORIAL**
- to leap off a diving board and land on a divining rod is out of the question
- to hope for petite glimpses of smoke-tipped throats in the streets below Help Murder Highrise

why did I try to rub my thoughts

- on vocab-zero on word-none
- oval toes toes are sort of oval aren't they

watching my face contend

- I trust they're not cyclical to wish that stones had gloated at my birth and flowers and firstbooks fell
 - from snowcliff avenues I was probably in session

with someone else's closeup

laborious syllables what inverted bulleyes line the mime's white cage

*

*

WRITLESS WRATNOT

my flaw can't find its fit am I an anomalous llama or a truncate of death

a horsekerchief a motionless hope atop a propjet a prophet stream

an instrument for cutting cheekbones out of ancestral portraits ephem-human or rodent-endless

will I die clutching in my hand missives all meant for myself and yet somehow never sent

my plow can't plod its pit my knots all miss their knit without its slot the rat rots

*

STRAND

Poured transparent by water I enter, the minutiae find me whole again, the small storms that attend my pores, the closest fears. I enter my room,

the space I must disrobe to occupy: I see the coathangers shrug off my timid gesture of solidarity, of consolation for their intrinsic aloneness, their

bone forms never quite covered each time the waves heave these clothes upon our strand. I stand in front of this convenient nakedness,

this open door of the moment knowing every closet longs to be unique in its disorder, a shambles of mothholes and outworn forms donating itself daily to the space

I must parse to the point of empathy, knowing that as true its brunt breeze intends to condense all I contain of sea, and as always succeeds. Yes,

it rains my ocean empty.

*

DIVISIONS

surface of earth deep every border portends elsewhere

the hero's pretense to regard his origins as timeless

historians dispense shares of continuity narrate the cobwebs

outside the rain pours all fours upon the ideal forms the platonic forums

the problem of the empirical the crumbs of raisinbread in the coat pocket the coat itself

where dice shed their endless eyes inbetweenities

the cliff the cut-off the morph

*

AN ORIGAMI CLOCK

Never fast, never slow, this horologue seems to work via the exactitude its folds embrace, a geometric reinforcement of shapes that entwine the present in the past, emerged from a pulpmill, a sheet gnarled not by lovers' meshings, but by the origamist's fingers. Page which is also a maze. Book of nothing but dog-ears. In which one reads the vertical crease vis-a-vis the horizontal creaseuntil each pried segpiece tells our foretell to peel it deeper like a nest which involutes wings in tinier and tinier tucks. Tuck tick tock, can our end be tighter tied than this? What a twist to the then; what a knot to the now. Conundrum of time. Watchworks ultrawhorled. Outward stemmed, hour that is midmost. Day that must be wound up daily in woundabout. Always its paper petals are shown tolled by the whole it introjects.

*

CROSSROADS

A crossroads is a solely human placeanimals in their time have created paths through jungle, woods or plain, wearing down the grass with hooves and paws, but roads that intersect are necessities which only we respect. The junction of two lines laid in the earth serves to focus our steps in ways which crazed disparate fleeings of herds to and from their waterholes and feedgrounds can't come flock or follow. Beyond those mad meanders lies the nearest need to greet a configuration of fates we recognize indigenous to us: hostile purposes, aims in antipathy: two destinies that disagree at every point except one, pure opposites who meet just once, whose encounter is over before the moment can swerve. the transient turn untrue. Forever lost (like chessmen in a labyrinth) we must impose our cartography upon this dirt, whose card-dealt corrosive tracings deny our thoroughfare thought, our dream of achieving that beckon-cathect, that act which will prove by evil increasing daily acts of horsepower steadfastness that our choice of trek was correct, since a crossroads alone can show us the way we didn't take, lunging there at right angles to our progress: its ninety degree option runs so counter to our own that it endorses the unique course we each now ride the rims of, our souls plow-low so none of them neither else can share what, except for that single instance of sidelong, that helpless avoidance, that hurrythrough, is a solely human place.

*

VERTIGO

All prisons were quiet where I walked, yet my way was limited as buried in my tread I made rounds that threw up barricade.
Rivers can flow with no sense of advance, no anticipation of arc, but I must know what my steps seek, thrust thumbs into my belt for navigation or find an emptiness between the possible routes, a stay to steer me through the faceless confetti my mouth scatters in front.

Like kisses clocked by scars my days were overt in their intent to pass these words through unison to you. And even though the disguises by which you have not known me still wield flagell-eyelids that haunt me with rainbow seepage I have yet to mourn for signs that I am here, and I refuse to mime the verities that crest your view in dread of drops.

Does my anonymous know me or am I alone here in the night where I guide myself down via kite-strings.

*

THE VINDICATION (prosepoem)

If it were only possible to launch enough satellites up, one apiece for each of us down here on earth, billions of spysats programmed to monitor us all individually, that's the important thing: that each one of us would have his or her own personal private skysat; and then, when our (our!) specially-designated sole-focussed fetish-trained mysat was finally and totally locked onto us, what secrets could we exchange with it, how confide its include codes would grow, how large its zoom would contain us: each unique DNA traced and zeroed in on to find us, to separate us out, tell us apart from all the space trash next door to us. Unfortunately that many satellites in the sky at once would form a hatchshell shield surrounding the planet like a renewal of Ptolemy's cosmos and would cut off all solar energy resulting in the pandeath of vegetation and terrestial life itself, a small price to pay, a minor consequence aftermath of having satisfied if only for one brief interval the universal desire to go recognized, singled out and beamed upon; of having appeased our deepest need, to be known.

*

DOLLY THE EWE FIRST CLONE OF THE WORLD

Turfclods kicked at me by Dollyherds are d'oh-kay, but when her sheepmates slur my name that way it grates me, though I know from Bill to Baa

is not so far. Distance yearns for more.

So many ways to go, no wonder hotels converge sobbing, heaving why why is he leaving me, I want to die—understandably. I myself feel that way often, I who found a bird so small

it was shed by its own feathers, and fed it to my cat. All these wild creatures in the world and they have no place to stay, no ark can hold the moult-might of their DNA,

no wonder it injects my replicant's empties at trashcan allah horizon:
I innoculate that termongrel daily until he has his waste's worth of it or its pit omega-emits enough to fit

the one clone I lack the mod cons for.

The only one I'll never be anymore. A convention of them or a conference attended with name-tags of the extinct is where my cage waits, kicked at by kids.

*

*

DREAMTIDE

downways the beach where waves battle shallows I thought of maybe a pillowfight with the sea using hearts for pillows

sownways their feathers would drift all day on me childhood-hoarded could I let my hours finally jet free

but flownways the days must wait to bare that blood which neither wound nor water adulterates

do yawnwaves waken when every sandgrain sifts its one memory pure of the breakers taken the oceans endured

down on drawnway beach dreamtide-high they lay me from comforter combatted spread over lap dunes dead wings wherever I reach

*

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June 24, 2008

QUATORZAINS ONE

*

PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimum cost)———

quatorzains one

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

INTRO NOTES

*

I got interested in this form around 1970, and published several in my 1974 book, Love Poems to Myself, and then more in the ones that followed: Rome in Rome (1976), Becos (1983), Outremer (1989), The Quicken Tree (1995), and The Unsubscriber (2004).

1

Why "quatorzains" rather than "sonnets"? I feel superstitious about using the latter term. I feel defensive and or resentful: only real poets write sonnets, and I'm not a real poet, am I. No, I'm a—a poet-biscuit.

1

The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

*

DEPRESSIONISM

Without any necessity to name it or anything, I remember this bombcrater before it held a garden. Once I saw children kneel down there to pray for pardon At an altar on which a little toll-money rolled laughing.

Swift suedes of evening, night's purple peltdown. I don't have to invoke the past; it's not required. I'll just settle here stolid like a stopsign repeating The word I stand for—sit and let my tired feet hang

Over the lip of this pit-deep garden whose intricate Vines query up at me. Quiet from the town I can hear Orphans rattling the gravel on their plates and or

Other faux pas I'm under no order to enumerate,—
Jet-lag of angels, a snake, faintings on summer pavements.
This bombfall failed in its intent: having none, I won't.

*

SONNET

(to MK)

The way the world is not
Astonished at you
It doesn't blink a leaf
When we step from the house
Leads me to think
That beauty is natural, unremarkable
And not to be spoken of
Except in the course of things
The course of singing and worksharing
The course of squeezes and neighbors

The course of you tying back your raving hair to go out And the course of course of me Astonished at you The way the world is not

*

MY PLEA FOR SANCTUM IN THE SCULPTURE GARDEN OF MEDUSA

A statue's first pedestal is the stone
It was cut from out in. Those are just words, though.
Like: Spring! Then death puts on the wrong clothes . . .
Then air ruts flushed as bathtub sex, as . . . proseate?

Because, that prince of an ostrich Narcissus His embedded-headed gaze upon his Twin the corpse Hamlet proposed, posing for those Snapshoticisms is so, so 'real-ergo-vile', less

Tangent than tangible, hell. —Till I stand In Her garden's one among many I can only Torment vesanic vanities/age-of-oh orbs where

Deep in the honor of my ether I soar, where —Passing at high mimicries through the night I go, all lop-worlded and alone, to kill abandon.

Note:

Line 8: "Exclus-en si tu commences / Le réel parce que vil" —Mallarmé.

*

THE CONSOLATIONS OF SOCIOBIOLOGY (to JK)

Those scars rooted me. Stigmata stalagmite I sat at a drive-in and watched the stars Through a straw while the Coke in my lap went

Waterier and waterier. For days on end or

Nights no end I crawled on all fours or in My case no fours to worship you: Amoeba Behemoth! —Then you explained your DNA calls for

Meaner genes than mine and since you are merely

So to speak its external expression etcet Ergo among your lovers I'll never be . . . Ah that movie was so faraway the stars melting

Made my thighs icy. I see: it's not you Who is not requiting me, it's something in you Over which you have no say says no to me.

*

THE SPELL

All the days with you in them are better than the ones with I. If you were me you'd know why.

All the words with o in them

are better than the ones with e. If you were me you'd see.

Best of all of course is a because it always comes first, ha! Is it better being me or worse.

And if these charms were reversed at times, would I worry who surpasses me, as versus you—

at times I could barely tell. Better is good but not as well.

*

_.

FLUSH

I pulled out a dollar but it was a fish gasping with big numeral 1 eyes

poor dollarfish sadly I observed old fingers hung from it like hooks

now I fill my pockets with water hoping to lure more

somewhere a penny is turning green on the ocean floor

•

LAPSED

Poem-and-beans poor, my job cleaning spittle out of prayerboxes while a gauntlet of gonergods riffles blank Readers Digests in my face and laughs. The slum I am laughs too:

because just as at birth the flesh covered our teeth, so something waits behind the smooth meatfacade of the sky to bite us, to unsheathe one answer that puts an end, that

quits a quietness lost. For who would condemn the dead for the way their fingers decay into self-caresses, the flesh dissolving

onanically, the tenderness of love at last achieved, if it weren't that I too am a thumbnail handful, an elbow-erwhonist?

*

THE RETURN

Behind me someone stalks with shovel and covers every footprint with a spadeful, all my faultless

tracks effaced by small mounds of dirt that mock my slowing walk and show the graves where to excavate

themselves, to get their holes ready for that lag-leg day I will have to halt in the heart the pace of my stride

and turn and try to take the first steps back . . .

..

KEYS IN HIS HAND

Sometimes a man home late is steps away from his door when suddenly out of the dark a passing car lights up a window

just in front of him so the room behind it is thrust into such a semblance of clarity that once again he sees why we see only

with glimpses like this, with happen flashes as avid as this,

but always the lane's corner takes that revelation past before he even resumes the posture of his intent to enter, to live there.

..

LAMENT

A bruise there was, which
Prospered on stale blood;
But growing smaller, the bruise became
A lecturer in escape-routes,
A philosopher of loss; relying
On the body's reluctance to be
Normal, i.e. immortal, it
Had hoped to survive somehow—
As a useful parasite perhaps, draining
The self's hidden wounds,
Masking its aberrations . . . but no.
For always there is no mercy for
Anything that is not whole,
That begs (like the brain) to be alone.

*

WHAT FOR

I don't want to live with the alone tonight my mood rubbed by random headphones the noise is hallways now the goal is scope roads drop their cross at my feet to take

is there no way to un-one-way my maze its name in mine each stream subsumes this vanish vanquish suite of time's motifs chance chain quotably quiet quantums

what for to endure days gone by noon what else to tweeze the moon's lesser tints to build bridges that make the sea blink to drink up all the teaspoon stirs unclear

I don't want to live I heard them tell me those words I wrote both mote and multi

*

BY HAND

The day is a book of hours out of whose painted pages a minute drips from time to time.

This almost never happens the tints usually dry right away but when it does, everything

is left dyed by that drop.

(How cumbersome to memoirists, all those lean nonfictionists, whose futures already leak.)

Crowding us out of our pocket lives, ever-enhancing event/event, overflowing the most fulgent eye—

Luckily, it almost never happens.

*

POEM

He/she will outlive me and I will die

wishing I had had her/his life instead

of my own-

OCT-NOV (MICHIGAN MEMORY #4) The bacon of the ankles crackles, and the sky Perks up birds this coldsnap morning-every Breath sheds a breath-effect, brief-bloomed steam-sheaf . . . Puddles huddle in frost. Past the barn the path Shoots hill-pastures which rose to winter early And sun-shucked clouds blast-off from: migrants that fly South-mouths that wet-nurse icicles-hatch forth A form, a furious precision I sloughed At birth, preferring life. And like the wind Can reduce anything to description-Running to finish my chores, beneath my scarf I'll feel my chinbone seek my collarbone, As if the flesh has ceded and the skeleton Now must precipice itself against all warmth. THE SCULPTURE (to SB) We stood there nude embracing while the sculptor Poked and packed some sort of glop between us Molding fast all the voids the gaps that lay Where we'd tried most to hold each other close Under the merge of your breasts and my chest There remained a space above the place our Bellies met but soon that clay or plaster Of paris or state of the art polymer Filled every hollow which we long to fit Then we were told to kiss hug hug harder And then our heat would help to harden it We stood there fused more ways than lovers know Before the sculptor tore us away Forced us to look at what had made us so whole **PORNOKRATES** (homage Felicien Rops) We paged through the phrase as though it were ours. -The lovers in the act-those de Sade-laden hours, Where, dumped out daily as ashtrays this dream Some room's motel, will it burn a hole here too— And coop us full of that till our limbs' arms

how many

can I say that of and why. Chainsmoked by adrenalin, slither dour-white Unepitaphed beds but. What gargoyle jail Their contortion poses (the lovers in the act

Of mailing themselves to famous crimes) if (If perched on each other's tongues we fly)
Only by his mind these bodies thrash—

To share this fire is, surely, a tithe entire. So each of us alone unless upon our lips The world forgets our name and stammers out its.

Note:

Title: of a work by Rops.

*

*

LEDGELIFE

The taller the monument, the more impatient our luggage.

Look, look, a graveyard has fancy dirt.

Historians agree: this is the pebble which beaned Goliath.

Every billboard is theoretically as beautiful as what lies unseen behind it.

Mouth: the word's exit-wound.

It is impossible to run away face-to-face.

Shadow has closed the door out of you to you, but not to us.

The sign on the wall advises: Hide your gloves beneath your wings.

Even sculptors occasionally lean against statues.

Migrations?! Fate?! Life swears up at ledgelife.

All the sad tantamounts gather. They want, they say, to errand our ways.

Please aim all kicks at the ground.

Address all blows to the air.

We are to be barely mentioned if at all in the moon's memoirs.

*

*

AN OBSOLESCENT AND HIS DEITY (POLYPTYCH)

(for Charles Simic)

Bending over like this to get my hands empty Rummaging through the white trashcans out back Of the Patent Office, I find a kind of peace Here, in this warm-lit alley where no one comes.

For even the lowest know that nothing new Is going to be thrown out now—no formula, Never not one blueprint will show up in these Bright bins, their futures are huge, pristine.

Old alleymouth grabbags my attention at times I see the world flash by out there, furtive as The doors of decontamination chambers—

I return to my dull, boring search, foraging For the feel it gives me of the thing which has Invented me: that void whose sole idea I was. *
(FACE) (AUTUMN) (EN FACE) (to NSL)

I lay your face along my palm and make To trace its shape there a profile Then I see the lifeline heartline break Overlengthened by one leaf's fall

The plow it rests on a horror now In the distance an ogre pulls in vain To open a nailed shut window Whose reverberancy is thunder rain

Begins its rheumatization of The world we shared so spare-much of that This sans season's hands' veins portray our love

The no two alike are kissing yet
I lie down alone not knowing a tongue
Can taste every flavor but its own

*

ENDLESS EVENING: MY LIFE AT IL VITTORIALE

For caught in those Aug-Sept hours what day can Break this slang of glass whose illustration Of flotsam sampling our poison's portion of calm Lives long the lament we swore applause by.

With faster than flashbacks in a promo for Memory to lie lymph along these hits of hope And through each thought we just dawned on interrupt Poses no soprano care counterfeit or water yet.

As though it alone the profile were wielded up To shield the face against that bad vocable our own Throws veils another pale divulge of oh mise en moon.

Musingly to see a bed on fire in a huge room
Otherwise empty while one at a time
White sheets float down from somewhere onto the flames.

Note: Il Vittoriale, D'Annunzio's retirement estate. Siempre Sera . . .

*

ROMANCE (Hendecasyllabics)

But when it had engulfed them all two by two, the Ark itself became a greater creature, an omni animal. And yet Noah knew, surely this new behemoth shall also pair

and mate now, and that unlike the beasts before this one is destined then to find true marriage: because as soon as his keel breaks the water, born beneath it will be that surface image none of us desires to engage in divorce— Natural nuptial partner, mirrored other, the Ark's clone would emerge from nowhere out there

in the waves. And upside down hold bound the course, faithfully accompany her spouse across any world to reach at last their offspring shore.

.

WIDOW/WIDOWER'S WINTER

Outside, the snow is falling into its past . . . I do want this night to end.
In the fireplace,

a section of ash caves in.

The fall day you were buried, birds went over, south, thick enough to carry someone.

They took my gapes of breath.

-Their fuel?

We are together in some birds, who fail.

I didn't want to look down, to glimpse your grave, its heroic little mound like the peck of dirt we hope to eat in our life.

Note:

Line 14 comes from a phrase I remember adults saying to me as a child when I dropped a piece of food on the floor: "Pick it up and brush it off—don't worry, you eat a peck of dirt in your life anyway." (Perhaps only the poor do this.)

1

GRANT PROPOSAL (Category: Performance Arts)

I want to go out each day at noon and stand On top of our Capitol's highest highrise, Where aircurrents stack, where storms restore themselves,

Where the crossroads of sky are swept by radar,

Up there, buffeted, stand, cupping in my hands
A gleam of gold-dust, a handful of gold-dust

Doled out to me each day by our State, by you The modest mandarins of its Arts Council,

Trustees all, you whose grace I must stand for there And being thus empowered begin to pour The gold-dust back and forth, pour it in sifts from

Hand to hand until the wind has left my palms Bare, please note that length of project will vary Daily, at noon, and not one grain remains.

Note:

Line 2: Capitol with an 'o'—meaning "the citadel of government" (OED), its cloistered towers, atop the tallest of which the applicant desires to venture. Line 6: maybe "gleam" should be "flash"? I associate the former with earth, the latter, sky. "In the things that arise [buildings or structures of any sort], earth is present as the

sheltering agent," Heidegger avers in 'The Origin of the Work of Art.' Hendecasyllabics, with a variant last line.

*

SAVE AS: SALVATION

The snowflakes falling in this storm, but there Ain't enough RAM crammed in my brain to call Them forth by name, each crystal character Putered and programmed, made to have a soul—And even if I compelled the power To inscribe them here as equals, in whole Terms, I would not permit such an error.

Somewhere is the software to ID all

But which is which, cries Ms. Ubiq-Unique.
We're not formatted for whiteout. And when
The screen of your vision freezes in flurries
And the core of this word blizzard hurries
To melt again, to find itself again,
Won't mine be the sign these syllables seek?

*

THE MAN WHO MARRIED HIS CHECKOUT LANE

Daily, in the supermarket where I go,

I gravitate to this one lane—the one that's most full—you know: the busiest one. Have I fallen in love with my checkout lane?

Well, I am male, I feel drawn to this aisle; its openness is shameless, sexistly exciting; the real way it squeezes my shoppingcart and deigns to crowd me in. Oh my checkout lane

has the longest wait of any—though unlike all these others in line I won't leaf through the life those tabloids provide rumors of: none of them

are beautiful as what infills me as I enter as I am queued up for that brief orgasm as my cash is on the counter and I am home.

*

STORY OF OR (to Pauline Réage)

To pose nakedness is
To refute it. A pose
Is a clothes. Like
Stanzaic arrangements of

The word which should Ideally, be in pain against Its w and its d. No slack Is why such heaves of or

To denude itself could

Make us exude gold, yet when

Was that ever opposite enough

What scream or epigram
This sperm has come
To measure our mouths for.

Note:

For "or" to free itself from "word," it must strain ("heave") against the "w" and the "d" that enclose it. If, via this strenuous (perhaps squeamish) process, the meaning of "or" is transmuted from the English into the French as a sort of homage to the pseudonymous author of 'Story of O' (Histoire d'O), then, alchemically speaking, (or so an Aurealist might suggest) it will have risen from the pose of its measures to oremerge as an else-gasm.

*

*

FIRST SIGHT

Summer is entered through screendoors, and therefore seems unclear at first sight, when it is in fact a mesh of fine wires suspended panewise whose haze has confused the eyes . . .

What if we never entered then—
what if the days remained like this,
a hesitation at the threshold of itself,
expectant, tense, tensile
as lines that cross each other
in a space forever latent
where we wait, pressed up against
something trying to retain its vagueness.

*

*

CELEBRATION

The conversation-pit is filled to the level
Of the floor with the soil of former parties here—
Crushed cigarettes, napkins, all kinds of cocktail swill—
We stand at its edge, grinning, wondering who's there:

Is there some version of us lost in that rubbish. Such a Pompeii probably took years of soirees. Where's the carpet to cover it—dense, bottomless, It makes the livingroom around it seem empty.

And why get superstitious—why greet our fellow Guest from way across this trashhold—since we must know Its surface could bear our most intimate meetings.

Oh, somewhere the host is winking working elbows, Showing no embarrassment—but here we have grown Sober over the grave of what greater gatherings.

*

*

TRUE STORY

We stole the rich couple's baby and left our own infant with

a note demanding they raise our child as if it were theirs and we

would do the same. Signed, A Poor Couple. Decades later our son racks summa cum laude while theirs drapes our hovel

with beercans. But did we prove our point? This heroic experiment (a jeu de joie of performance art)

attempts to assert the adroit of nurture over nature, the pure narrative we write in order to write.

*

*

THE ANSWER

Leaving the house, the house will be left completely, from cellar to attic my absence entire.

Do I enter the world the same, my presence felt from cloud to ditch?

Only in departure whole. Arrival is always partial.

*

*

ANOTHER HOLE FOR W. R. RODGERS

Speak like a singularity, a lack residing deep inside every lock, just past the point keys can jab: against all thrust make safe-ensure your door's core is held back,

for reckless access to this pure center quarks more quintessence than taking exits from those pried voids whose secret quickly sates: ubiquitous if Space presses Enter.

Which inadmissible sill still calls loud with imagine: our skeleton keeping each such portal neither open nor shut,

unhoused of that exclusive dustborne cloud we breathe, though there must be something it accumulates, accommodates: what?

*

*

TWO POEMS TO S.

1. (Desire) Threadbare (Desires)

The light lay in shreds across the bed, only your waking could make it whole; resuming its costume of day, its role that seems to overnight get ragged—

Fate latent as weights in theater curtainhems, what soul is sewn here to be rung down at last, divested of these disguises. But if we are

lament for the sun's fragility, would I dare now to shake you astir—

bared by such cloth as cries in this

to drape over you my own shadow, whose myth-ex-machina remains all mine, mine, and therefore torn from yours.

2. The Tethering

The handclasp is burned up by the embrace and the embrace is consumed by the coitus, and I too am subject to a hierarchy that requires every stratum version of me

to be fuel for the one above till each one is lost, impossible to find in the final illusion (a mirage is something that doesn't see us even when we blind it) of a final one.

Why and whom must we each our own to? Go, let cemeteries bomb our sleep with omen hiccups, I'll nil persuade myself there is a person somewhere up there, perhaps perhaps it's you.

Identical arms babe your arms in theirs.
But love, tied hand to foot to flute, lingers.

*

GESUNDHEIT (quatorzain version)

Sneezes wouldn't be so bad if they filled balloons.

How many sneezes on the planet at any given time; and if each sneeze filled a balloon,

imagine (bless you!)
all those sneeze-balloons floating in the air.

J

But a sneeze-balloon might be rather fragile—more like a bubble than a regular balloon . . . hmm.

A sneeze is sort of like a balloonburst: sudden, violent, unforseeable. Out of nowhere.

In either case, burgeoned or burst, this transfer

of ether occurs whenever Entropy beckons,-

see its deadly equality shining up there, glittering like globules of star saliva,

worlds atchooed by all.

*

AFTER BAUDELAIRE'S CAUSERIE

The ocean of verse has left in my chest
The stale ebb-tail taste of a bile blueplate—
Its word surge bitters too gorged to digest—
Even my critics' deaths won't renovate

An appetite for this: acid reflux My poems have all become, which in their prime Fed vanity's veins and pain's glut stomachs Enough to fodder one more ex-lifetime . . .

My heart? Is Heartburnsville. Landfill palace Leveled ever since my fellow poets Chewed its dumpster pews into prose-pellets.

Come share their bard-fare, their warmth and fireplace— Eyes blazing like a holiday barrage, They char my offal flesh long past garbage.

.

THERE'S THE RUB

Envying young poets the rage You wish you could reverse your night And blaze out born on every page As old as them, as debut-bright.

Child of that prodigal spotlight
Whose wattage now is theirs to wage—
What gold star rite you wish you might
Raise revised to its prize first stage.

But listen to my wizened sage: He claims there's one disadvantage Should time renew you neophyte—

There'd be one catch you'd hate, one spite: Remember if you were their age You'd have to write the way they write.

*

ZENITH

Once a rocket lived in the soarway Now it's gone Only a bird fills our sun socket Then travels on

Hovering at all angles to Our tallest days Where the lion says needle star to god Far lingers no trace

I wanted to share
The occasion of that height
Even if it was only a while
The moan-length of a laugh I led

I wanted to stay there But I failed at the sight

*

*

OVERLIFER-BAG

Age is a case of aches you try to strap closed with your own arms but even they can't hold shut what this tote crams like hotel-soaps stole when it pops open.

No clasp will fasten.

Packed up and parked on the curb where a cab brakes impatient to leave cheap valise spilling out undies each time we breathe.

*

*

A BACON

An oval invested with teeth; the brief orifice of a head thread-melted through its tweedboned coat, half throatway down a sundial drowned

with chalked-caul runes for avoiding such rains: though of course the chew maw that crowns this gnome with no likeness also barks forth a white porkdrip,

unsustenance for those of us who seek a resemblance here: see how the magician longs to saw the swordswallower in half. Now

this facial Francis finds our mouth; hell toppled by its wells without.

Note:

not an ekphrastic re one canvas in particular, but a response to several of his paintings from the 1940s. "Figure in a Landscape" (1945), for example.

*

*

POEM THAT WANTS TO BE ASH

Each time day returns to its sun to forget the windows we opened in it, I see the past minus peace equals me, plus war you.

I stab a candle down through one hand, an icicle through the other, then flail them about, restaging the stale battle of doubt

with faith, whim against bone. Guess who always wins. Imagine a color so true every prism it passes through melts—

Because hasn't your voice running mine, cindered this?

*

PUTTING ON MY MAKEUP IN THE MORNING

If life is instead, its dozenthread thoughts gnarl the mind into volumes that obscure

the true enigmas, those narrow fatefurrows restricted far as a prism's panes are to primary

(I've sepias it seems to choose from) persuasions

that oversee and judge, evidence our scene differs from shame's umbilical/remained bookspines too straight for snakes to sleep in: I'll need more

than coilspace if I expect to root allsole.

Sometimes the names feel just wasted on a people paperweight that doesn't hide enough words on the page from which one's brain wakes and wakes—

Nosejack eyejack mouthjack, the mirror breaks the connections the makeup makes.

*

THE FOUR VIEWS

Each dawn you wake to find that once again during the night the four windows of your room have been newly carved into the shape of the loveliest object each one overlooks: the east glass is now a worm's silhouette while the west gleams bicycle-like, the north's a sycamore leaf, the south a snowblind face . . .

Who remolds these panes while you sleep and who carpenters the sills and lintels and why are the four vitriforms always changed, different each day: is beauty so inconstant—so subjective—assuming someone chooses.

Are you a phantom here in your own home,

or a squatter in the house of René Magritte? AS USUAL Immediately I'm dead Body laid out straight Please don't hesitate Just cut off my head Lift it and lay it a foot Or so below my feet Shift it till I look like An exclamation mark Overt sign of joy pain Surprise consternation Despair exuberance As usual a metaphor Meant to make up for My lack of coherence **HEILSTYLES** Of course the Spring fashions buried in Fall And dug up to wear in boisterous April Make the models even more skeletal: Body by Buchenwald; shade by Chanel. Nazi nurses infiltrate CIA hospice-At Safehouse Haven the dying agents Are coaxed by swastika sisters to confess A. Hitler was their greatest influence.

A disappearance echoing with shoulders, A veinburst serpent evolved to doubt all, Still these lifecopy killers follow me.

Wise fashionists resist history
By staging it over in stale revivals.
To stay in mode, though, one must grow older.

FORTHFABLE

What if everytime you cried you cried the same teardrops originally shed by Adam until all of them, their ripe total will be transferred down through history as far to fill, to flood then our final human. And you too shall have carried as lash-lade others before you your socket-borne share toward our latter great cisternment that dolor water or lacri-liquid if we ever reach there.

You too must pass this on. See Eve as she would have first received it, bent beneath him: the wide brows, the wider stare, both eyes bearing out his bared bereavement.

*

TO LIVE BY

Work from the original toward the beautiful, unless the latter comes first in which case reverse your efforts to find a model worthy of such inane desire.

Even the mouth's being divided into two lips is not enough to make words equal themselves.

the hermit's soliloquy.

Eavesdroppers fear

Wake up, wound, the knife said.

*

THE END

Pain has petrified the threshold.—Trakl

A threshold is everything that can be seen in the space of the endurance of our openness: thus at the conclusion of The Searchers John Wayne is framed never

to return and forced to spur himself, to escape always the outward-gazing-lust of that thrust doorway toward the horizon or so we guess because the door shuts and

cuts him off before he attains it: exit is lost and we who had followed his flight from the intimacy of this interior, we must remain here minus our male-myth-ranger,

and must domestically cry for his exile while the credits crawl across their reelsill.

*

MERRY - NO - ROUND

The wooden horses are tired of their courses

and plead from head to hoof to be fed to a stove—

In leaping lunging flames they'd rise again, flared manes

snapping like chains behind them. The smoke would not blind them

as do these children's hands: beyond our cruel commands

the fire will free them then as once the artisan when

out of the tree they were nagged to this neigh.

HURL

My failure has homes in France. Bucharest, Taipei. Around the globe in thoughts and finds Everywhere it lands the same, the fatal Frontporches, never mind the odds and ends

Tipped over. All my Applause-Minus-One Discs scratched. These traces of my worthlessness Worldwide have the bearing of their meaning Obvious, engraved in spade, metaphors

Monotonous. Why go on? And the spread Of my failure contrasts with your success, Its local nature so centered in you, reduced

To a town, a street, a house shining with the urge To not retain you, to scatter you as I have Been thrown elsewhere, far from the core of it.

RIGHT ON SCHEDULE

Inventorying the calendar, Counting to leave it whole I am chore-horsed By the urge to register all the days But one, so as to save that one for always.

My laptop hums as it sweeps each interim Into smaller units but my wife comes home From third world reich each dawn saying Hon All our leaveway's left. How long-how often

Have I survived an earthtime of your time. How I resent that instance: how I sneer Hon it was gone long before we got here.

ID-dodo forced to take temphuman form, What trained your jettison person to die? Exit, pursued by posterity.

FOREST FEARS

Everything I invest in frightened energy deludes me, every attempt to see death's good—all the roads from childhood have wayside slopes where shadow grows back to its roots,

grubbing a thirst in dirt as I walk by wondering if I could thrive from such dry clods too if I knew what shoots do sprout from this corpus of quick arriving as me, departing as itself—

What a lingering hate I feel as it goes, a resentment that it can never remain me but must return to its numb vegetable state, the shape it had before taking mine on.

Stirred by its terse, its quiet commonplace, my body loathes the tree my life will crown.

,

ADHESIVE VALENTINE

not knowing where you are not knowing who so I'll coat with glue all the envelopes I mail

where most words fail mine will still pursue kept in these veils of glaze every postal maze

no matter how far no matter how overdue they will find the true

letter bound for you and there be pressed adherent to its address

*

THE POSTHUMOUS APHORIST

I said the red and blue you haven't lived will be the green and yellow you've died.
I guess they might be the colors that fade when I see you to one. Is that your shade?

(A dozen acrobats debating zero: trapped in a hurry circus at center ring, my pyre prepares to free its hero.)

(A maniac unwrapped from the moment; like a satori triggered by sneezes.)
(The symptoms named our sin a trance.)

It likes to dress up in creation and take us for a walk. But can a maxim be revised to include doubt? Any obit presupposes a life if not its opposite.

.

POEM FROM SUMMER

That gap the world includes by vanishing on cue, that studious unborn sweat beyond all if the body's primed for exit to overvisit, time, encore.

Say it pertains to our name, say we find the eyes' goodbye-corners torn routinely in ebb with this, each departure a kind of statue suture's paw stalled in caress.

My pate is centered on the four labors. Make a snowflake the shape of dextrous dust. Make your sex a handspan across my skull.

Lit up by landscape is the movie
I hate of my life. Hollywood heedless,
bright faces born between sweet and sweetness.

CODE FACADES

When light passes through a Mies Van der Rohe it grows greenlike, cubed, a square root of itself, absinthe ice. Architecture fractures the sun with the earth, earth's verdures and verdants suture

solar gold with grass/emerald-held stems transpierce our ledge-stalked land. But montage refutes all light, the flicker when it dips itself in time is like the moment a stopsign changes tense

from present to hence, closeup mesmerization effects. The flesh fauved from the bone. Thus no imprint stays in the wind of the rain which fell all night until now, at dawn, tides worry puddles—

then I move to Sands of Time, New Mexico; shampooed by hammers, I shut my window.

*

CRITERIA

The rose is more poetic than other flowers because it has

only one syllable where daisy lily violet et cet

are over-verbal, poly-petal. Beauty

based not on color or odor but brevity. STRESS THERAPY Time, time, time, the clock vaccinates us, and then even that lacks prophylaxis. Ticktock-pockmarked, stricken by such strokes, we get sick of prescriptions which work solely on the body. Systole diastole-It is by its very intermittency that the heart knows itself to be an I. **POEM** As evil as the first Of your three wishes will Inevitably be, Maybe the second or third Can redeem-Don't count on it, though. To recoup the past, To reap its here-homing futures. Remember when you run In a mummy marathon The last one To break the tape wins. Peak: where the mountain Rests before continuing. **EXTINGUISHABLE** birthdays you bend and blow out a candle in a skull it's always just one candle but each year one more skull is added to the table which by now is plus full

and that makes this ritual more impossible each year

each year as you approach

somewhere down there in all those bone sockets

the annual candle waiting glares and dares you to find it

*

A HUNKA HUNKA

A rolling morass gathers no leftist, Yet sans passport is a portrait I can't Paint, chained to this poor Outremerican Lumpscape upon which the head limns itself

In a tithe of tether whose gigolo Gloats in the pantry of my pantyhose: With all its tongues inkling to call us home Till a signature on the sill spills dust.

Then I try to climb my outcome, that vast Of charade, imploring portion the Prez Gets on his big set I would bet. Meanwhile

May mislead us to run, newspapers held Over our heads whose headlines always say What's that, one more blank of angst to honk at.

*

SPACE

From the trees the leaves came down until we joined hands with a wand and that act enabled them somehow then to reach the ground

where they scuttered round our feet urging the latter to unite with a baton as if that act together with the hands can clasp

a dowsing-stick cut from the same branch from which we launched converging on gravity's purge-point

at which point we merged to remove all consonants from our star-maps. The infinite consists of vowels alone.

*

POEM

To make our lives unavailable for autobiography should be the story of our lives.

All our statues hold penultimate poses. The last is reserved for us.

And in our faces there are always details which a portrait must exclude to maintain its integrity.

We set walls behind mirrors for that same reason, to help support the sight of us.

*

NONSENSE SONG

Mother-of-pearl, where is your child-of-pearl, inside, and how, who'll say, worn away perhaps by so much worth?

Upshot white of hail's hold, unhalved from issue whole, world nacre-torte rolled in sheets where no breakers foam—

Say what wave is ours, what home. Now your shadow is one of the shallows of light.

On whichever is the far side of the eyelid I see it. I pray my tongue may be your mouth's hermit.

*

POEM

What avantgarde nonsense a photograph is.
Miscarriage of abstraction
Whose shadow has a breakdown
At the airport: perhaps
Its autobio will author a synopsis copyright,
But so what? Historically

A message fallen between two names. Several tapestries revealed this once

That music is an animal's petals,

Evenings since
And even less can be raised up
Until the half of the human that gets born
And the half that doesn't
Exchange places, I mean poses.

*

MEMORIAL GARDEN, NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, U.S.A.

Where every rose blows more bellicose

than the killer heroes below: the pinks all bleed on parade; each hybrid seed dreams of omnicide. In bouquet-beds they love like bayonets to shove their thorns through the air. Above these barbarous bushes the most vicious flower that ever grew swishesthe Red White and Blue. Note: I ask any translator of the above to change "Arlington. . ." to the name of their own country's national military cemetery, and to use the colors of its flag in substitution for "Red White and Blue." LAST That in the first condition of love I may be found Is a guilty plea, but poetry Is the try of the serpentine To destroy the feathered-A snake in my brainpan Jabs each winged word; A poem slash line Means a birthday will bare Its wherefore from faraway, From the orphanage on Treasure Island; Borderless or paradise, All alpha to us it is. Origin? none, the first one's paraphrase. **POEM** in poetry one is never enough but two is always too much in the realm of halves quarters eighths et cet it exists (somewhere between Zeno's dilatory arrow and or Magritte's perspectivism of clones) its niche

is never more nor less

*

GRAFTING BOARD

The way the grass weaves my walk into its intricate bouquet, the sway of my hips knees branches snatch and carry aloft all moves that imitate apples cherries: orchard

(it lingers by the ways prior to it)I could accomplish you who cry.The days have their noise and I none else.

If the sleep I poach from is posted with echoes, does tapping these trespass keys—does each step staple a sapling to a tree?

Because nothing is changed by beauty because beauty is a part of the way things were changing anyway because it's never a catalyst but a process (I guess).

*

~

KEEP

You will keep growing until your measurements are the same as the exact degree of the pain inside your grave.

Until then, statistics always misspell your name. And the fate of a misprint concerns no-one.

In fact, the same one occurs until it's fact, meaning epitaph.

When each grave becomes too painful we will fill it with the anodyne of self.

*

TWO LEFT FEET

they say if you can hum you can dance if you can live you can die

guide-graphs on the floor may draw our soles toward a ballroom grace in the first case

but with the other

each time we look down there are no paths no ways no wonder

we're always stepping on our own graves

*

TO MYELF

Poetry can be

the magic carpet

which you say

but only if you

stand willing to pull that rug out

from under your own feet, daily.

WART-HOUND

Not even those pirate's teethmarks on the moon can tell the real as opposed to the false gold, which is why the welcome mat nailed across my mirror needs dusting. What's the use—

Because if I opt for the truth as opposed to the tooth that slashed those obviously painful crateratrices on the moon, I too

am one the drossiness of fate lacerates-

Which is why all I do now is I hang around barbershops, scouring the floor with catchcanny eye in search of a wart that's suffered similarly:

Fallen wart, comrade, hacked off by haste or the CIA, hey wart, whoa wart. Here you go, wartypoo, into this test-tube with you.

*

TEMPTROUSSEAU

The clock is dressed in drag, I mean it wears space instead of its own proper aspect—but if it wore time, would it disappear—isn't visibility an effect

of transvestism, that $shield/pastime\ whose$

crosscausal aim unmasks the eye: must you assume the costume of the other to be here, to present the sense with an ess . . .

Narcissus saw his guise decked out all ruse, but if there were none, what would our true clothes consist of, our rig rags, our regalia—

Whose dapper element dons us: Einstein's continuum, or Flaubert's confidence that come the same the Bovary c'est Moi?

*

TO RIPLEY (Alien 1-4)

Always your face like a space (Destination: beautiful) ship Empties its mote of closeup trace Down screens that blink blank blip

Somewhere between countdown

And coma time is a line
Where waking centuries often
Drained against that measure may find

All blood redshifts (direction: west)

Until film can clone one sun
With stars both whole and gone

Attending every sequel
We pray for an intent equal
To our interest

* (L)ID

Each time I blink

Is a lapse in my life.
Each blink outlives me.

The one I was before The blink is never The one I am after.

And the one I shall be Desires me to cease Quenched with each crease

An eye juggled on
The tips of its own
Lashes might see
Who I have been then.

Instant of the lids.

*

DEARTH DEMISE

Satiety help me I have inhabit of this world. Extant upon its designs

to be more aimlessly fluttering at the window, to shadow all the patterns

it offers each sun. In frames far as eye I draw my words towards a juggler's shards as if our fallings-down our deaths occurred but did not involve a lot of colloquialized

arm movements, the body language throws. Thus the shape of your silence when it speaks me is different than mine in saying you,

though both of them resemble that spasm hymned as repose lifepause a happen of sorts the way the horizon's a long way without meaning to.

.

POEM FOR LOCATION

Looking out the window is no worse or is equal to accepting advice from a hallucination, but you continue to glare through it, certain that the flowers

out there could stop your lobe-shaped laments, time truer to one's due self than you: they seem to lure something surer, something pervasive, a creature seeking abandonment;

lying in wait amongst its private parts, is it me is it you is it who? And starts

to purge our whip-appled childhoods, to lecture the thoughts learned through lapse but how? I must try to find more words accented on the erratum-syllable.

*

OVER AND OVER

A child recites the alphabet but you in years still hard to learn, your rote is what I memorize.

It's you these counted words revise and say that today's forays, they hazard voyage, do you care for sure?

Alone now with the old shapes that bless tables bare, can't you wait, wait for A to begin anymore—

how ache with alacrity you say every tide is an advent, a day, and too many days is the sea, though the sea is day. Unique with frequents stays you repeat.

.

DOWNLOAD QUOTA FOR A QUAND OF SOUNDS

Question nothing else none as the poem comes into swim, although I hear the true soliloquist doesn't care about acoustics: for him each room or realm is bare, or so says the sort of solver of this problem.

Exclude all quirks of love—the corkscrew inside the kiss, the tongues that twirled themselves around yours and yanked you out pop, suave wine spilling a space maps render near enough, sunder's purest land.

Sill-pale, false, I shall toss the dust on my feet at each huge wedge of wet which looks to be glass but softens here to the condition of tear. I'll bear their failure, a grain of quicksand in every pore.

It begs its boundaries from the surround. And yet the surround itself must seek its limits in them.

*

SUCCESSION

Upon the welcome mat the foot announces knee; knee, thigh; and so on. Each part of the body becomes, in the process of this introductory entrance, merely a pavlovian John the Baptist,

mere clarion omen of the one above it. But the head, what does the head presage? My hair can't grass over a path thus opened. The self must make way for itself, its progress upward,

upward, and irreversible, like life. Which is why I waver here before you now in the fear that I, the poor shadow of whatever it is I portend, I may somehow fail to properly augur forth:

caught in that unreeling portrait called Arrival, will I prepare its import, bear up and be its doorsil?

*

CHRISTMAS AT THE ORPHANAGE

But if they'd give us toys and twice the stuff most parents splurge on the average kid, orphans, I submit, need more than enough; in fact, stacks wrapped with our names nearly hid the tree where sparkling allotments yearly guaranteed a lack of—what?—family?—

I knew exactly what it was I missed: (did each boy there feel the same denial?)

to share my pals' tearing open their piles meant sealing the self, the child that wanted to scream at all You stole those gifts from me; whose birthday is worth such words? The wish-lists they'd made us write out in May lay granted against starred branches. I said I'm sorry.

*

SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE POET AS HYENA

Kindly deferrer to lions, Late flocks of vultures, packs of winds.

Last to destroy the lost, discreet, A shy, toothpick aristocrat.

Servile, even, leaning over Droves of bones who disdain such care,

Who in their marrow preen and bear Huge swarms of self, a hubris herd.

Is that why he laughs—why he finds Joy in these humiliations,

These measured modesties that mass And make him eat his words at last?

How strange it is to stay astride This prey, to taste its pride of pride.

*

ENVY-EROT-ETCET

Sexshorn in a fanfare museum, where my kisses' strings crisscross Picasso's mattress— I gropejob its lumps, those dents creases scored by his endless corps of mistresses,

how cogently they queued up to lie there; just one of the icons the fetishes I mount in myself to make myself more jealous: look, Anais Nin's douche wig, it's here

too, in this exhibit. As if spitballs when they hit split/became origami—But the transformation can't be that

instant childlike, can it? I wring it all over my lips my love my lust for those poets whose pics appear in APR.

Note:

Line 14: the acronym stands for American Poetry Review, which during its brief existence

was best-known for all the pin-up photos of poets that appeared in its pages and on its covers.

*

HERITAGE

" . . . here thy generations endeth in accord."

I physically resemble my mother
And father and therefore must have been
Adopted, because on my TV screen
The role-children rarely share a feature
With either parent. The fact they're actors
And I'm not is what makes me misbegot—
Watch that matched world of monitors 2-shot
The mirror daily where I pray these stars

Come: cancel everyone of us whose names And clans have sundered human unity—Descend always among daughters or sons To live still, beyond the Web's trivia games, Till their faces cloned shape ours. Family. From android to ape, we'll be Thy reruns.

*

POEMCLONE #4: HIS LIFE, HIS FATE (LAMENT)

Beautiful as a TV tuned to me, Ending every line with words that end in The letter z renders him total, final, Whole. By analogy? Ergo-oh-oh,

How simul/how my epitome's prose. So Extra-lapsed from time—from time's yawns blending Our matinal soles (our toll head of vesper) where My brain (that scab of bonbons) mimes a dung-

Gone thing as long—as long as this elevator
Of nothingness descends into whose lungs . . .
This down-urge of air, this breathe-me, breathe-me . . .

Then: whenever the xerox cries he dies. Is it fancy, is it drifty? What's all or null If I see my teardrops copy my eyes.

THE SONNET IN ix

The nube, the nude, the not—you know: the Nix— Her Septet of orifices? (males have six):— Was it massed by Master Malyoume for the fix The fucks. Rape-scene: she, some defunc'-off, kicks

The mirror while centaurs click centerfold pics Of her fingernails—each closeup mimics The anguish with which our pallored poet sics Midnights on. Encore encore, you sexniks,

Steph calls, tiptoeing away toward his sonics Lab, 'The Sign in X.' A thousand-quicksand thicks His step. He's pitbogged by all the nitpicks Critics have glitched his path with, those pricks!

Don't they know that stars—stars can't hold shit wicks

To his candle?! (That bitch, that Nix: he sucks it: "I-icks!")

Note:

Failed translation of Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Sonnet en yx.' Line 14: I-icks! (both i's are short, as in "kiss") is an onomatopoeticism that accompanies the expectoration and or taste of the candle's cum. Sort of the sound you make when you use your teeth to scrape it off your tongue ostentatiously. But why did I end the poem this way? Was I influenced by the Master's regret, expressed in his essay Crise de Vers, that words lack an embodied, material, tonal consonance with their meanings: "Quelle déception" (he writes), how perverse, that the "timbres" of the word "jour" should be dark, while those of "nuit" are "clair." And yet, he concludes, without such "défaut des langues," poetry itself would not exist. Assuming he's right, then onomatopoeia are defective because they're not defective. In Japanese, kireji-"cutting-words, used to separate or set off statements"-are onomatopoeic, and "have the meaning that lies in themselves as sounds." But as Hiroaki Sato notes (in his book, One Hundred Frogs, from which I've taken these quotes): "Basho himself simply said, 'Every sound unit is a kireji.' " In any case, the faults and falls and false of my trans. should be clair to all.

*

ALFONSINA STORNI

Feeling as you wrote that the cancer quote Is on its way upstairs to the throat
One breast had already flown migrant
Heart de facto amazon only the sea remained

Like a jealous mattress an old pillow stuffed With insomnia's phonebills the sea Is there to throw oneself at at dawn late Up all night over a poem called Voy a

Dormir and which says this better than this (Each time I read one by you I revise Myself my suicide is to be me instead of you)

Sea that swallowed your poet throat

Does not for the having of it sing less

And besides only that cancer tried to float

Note:

Storni (1892-1938), Argentinian poet. In 1935 she was afflicted with breast cancer. A partial mastectomy did not keep the malignancy from returning, and Storni drowned herself in the Atlantic after writing a final poem, "Voy a dormir." The quote in lines 1-2 comes from a post-op letter: "I fear the cancer is on its way upstairs."

*

FIRST THING

"The first thing I can remember at all was a dead dog at the bottom of my pram." —Graham Greene, Journey without Maps A dead dog at the bottom of my pram Seems to be my earliest memory, Unless I am part of an implant program To stock Earth with mock-human irony—

In which case I must have been abducted By ETs and beamed up into the sky Where I was undone then reconstructed Out of bytes and obits from the diary

Of Graham Greene: that gruesome deceased dog I mean: before Mother or the Mothership Popped that pug in my pram my time was mine

Alone, unknown, a page torn from the log— Until that moment died I had no script No guide: no word undeified my sign.

.

THE ENEMY

Defended unto the death of All who defend me, all the World's people I command to Roundabout me shield me on Guard, tall, arm in arms to Fight off the enemy. My Theory is if they all stand Banded together and wall me Safe, there's no one left to Be the enemy. Unless I of Course start attack, snapping and shattering my fists On your invincible backs.

Like everyone I demand to be

*

OCTNOV AGAIN

The year's wrapping comes undone: foliage tied By sun-strung cords is cut and cast aside

To present the godsends, the great last gifts Time donates to its ingrates, sad thankthrifts

Who throughout their dotage-dole still forget The parcelly-priceless rose of regret

Never stemmed them against one bestowed weed— (Why can't our greed grant instead of our need:

Each field and tree stripped packing, boneward bare, Was nowhere on our wish-list: we'd prefer

Ribbon-prinked paper/a crepe-plush pinkbow Glitzing forth their vulgar veneer: and now

Mocked by how little of its kitsch remains, We crave our carton, not what it contains.) *

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QUATORZAINS TWO

PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimal cost)———

quatorzains two

Bill Knott

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

INTRO NOTES

I got interested in this form around 1970, and published several in my 1974 book, Love Poems to Myself, and then more in the ones that followed: Rome in Rome (1976), Becos (1983), Outremer (1989), The Quicken Tree (1995), and The Unsubscriber (2004).

Why "quatorzains" rather than "sonnets"? I feel superstitious about using the latter term. I feel defensive and or resentful: only real poets write sonnets, and I'm not a real poet, am I. No, I'm a—a poet-biscuit.

The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

BAT HABIT (or, Who's that Coughing in My Coffin?)

bats are the nicotine of night
that's why I always need a light
ten packs o' Dracs a day or die
my lung-caves crave that fang-wing high
skreakedy skreak suckin' soot-sticks
makes me blind but I find my fix
when I unearth my undead stash
I slake its flake through a neck-gash
I bleed that weed with shed regrets

I'd switch to cygnet cigarets flick and sip their swan white filt-tips but heck I'm hooked black-hack bat-toke what a tough puff bite-you-back smoke Vlad the Inhaler loves my lips

LABMARKS

Notice that only when

the footprints reach the center of the maze do they become confused, and that the spysat zooming in to scan those tracetracks orbits its own core of being, the seeing it conducts for avid screens who rather desperately blow up the ground,

or heel reveals
all that will ever be known
of the pilgrim who ventured there

increasing its resolution until

a great impress of toe

of the pilgrim who ventured there.

Granted every poet "constantly aspires towards the condition of music," that sphere

TRANSHENDECULOUS

of perfection which Walter Pater declares the other arts must humble themselves before: so why shouldn't I kneel by the podium and beg the conductor to leave her baton

propped upon my proselyte head like a sword knighting me until I can hardly rise from

that ideal sill: one could have no grail beyond that grace; could never long for that pated wand to guide your own quest: its shadow bids us toward

the stead path still, sticking out over the brow like some penile spitcurl: so why not die there while maestro Mater makes his lowest bow?

Note:

"In music, then, rather than in poetry, is to be found the true type or measure of perfected art." —Pater.

Title: Trans(from poetry to music/from Pater to Mater)hendec(-asyllabics)ulous(ridicof no-brow me to adumbrate the Great Pate).

to adumbrate the Great Pate).

COMPACT DUSK

Here at the height of the day night change The color of the sky is uncertain,

The sky depending in which direction One's eye strains, each of its swatches a strange Hue which dies too soon and which makes this hour Linger in the mind transient as a life, Whose name once known remains another Posied-up portrait on our palette knife.

Until even I wonder if one tint Ever survives the harm of seeming unique (Evening's intrique, time's singularity).

Study for its trace, its placemap, I see

-Redundant as a stopsign in italic—

The face on which my profile leaves no print.

Note:

This began as a trans. of Jorge Borges' A Un Poeta Menor de 1899, but ended up as a kind of homage/meditation upon the original. The homage or translation is always a profile compared to the fullface original.

..

TO JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA

The poem is a letter opener that slices a to discover b in which c waits and so on until z reiterates my metaphor's acute dullness, its crisis

of belief: say this knife could core its way past the final alphabet and penetrate that rind that blinds us with its consummate yield of polished inveighed truths which betray

nothing of the stuffing, the seeds that rot innate tumors of meaning, enemy rumors amassed across your desk each morning—

what if that surfeit of words was a warning label only, just another skin to be cut? And all this is unless the poem is not.

Note:

Line 10-11: 'enemy rumors': Lezama Lima's second book of poems was entitled Enemigo rumor.

*

THE SINGULAR (enneasyllabics)

Whistlecraft aloft in the blue, birds, belief has assured me your choral enthroatments are whole and yet I spell them out as similar to our words—

Your songs define you while mine unvoice my field of lieu and fail to call up a likeness new enough from the group auguring each face its fate. The choice

seems too great for me but you seem to flourish as flocks beyond your final ornifact which Braque for one pictures all wingspan style, his pursuit single as I used to be. Is he more true tracing the tune that eludes my ears?

Note:

After Braque: singleness/wholeness; individual/group; poetry/art; etcet—?

.

*

ELEPHANT AND ENVELOPE

Numbering their normal RAM in great noughts, The elephant and the envelope are Doomed to remember only pristine thoughts— They both carry every souvenir too far.

No matter how creased and stained their skins fade, Even the erratum images they encase Remain abnormally there to be read (Password: remorse). Is there no way to erase

The years the yearfalls or are all these flaws Stored away somewhere perfectly forever— All of our memory sites dotcomlinked—

Trapped in that utter trunkiness because The envelope is an elephant. Never Forgets: thus it too will soon be extinct.

*

WINDOWBEAM

Ray that overruns every pane, force that first invades but then

is pervaded: sunstripe penetrant!— what made your phalanx fail: why can't

its pure-greaved asbestos-armor avert our dirt: must the conqueror

convert his ways, the savior adopt savage customs? We slaves corrupt

all bright kings—each mote of us holds abject thought that blots with dust

your gold-shed greatness: shadow breaks your arc and essence. How

transient the transparency you brandished here so recently.

*

WINTER REGRETS

The snow on my ladder's rungs seems to be stepping upward, returning to that cloud which hangs

framed in the faded cardboard

of an old calendar landscape whose dust holds the days I desire to live in, fixing to climb up past that summer sun and hammer

the scene in whole. I didn't haul my ladder in and now it's too late— I turn from the window and stare

lost at a vista of August air tacked, half-peeled from the kitchen wall. All the undone chores must wait.

*

FERNAND KHNOPFF

Days in the lull, gathered afternoons of it, —A touch of star-decals on one's bookbag,— Silence, like a vast confetti of souls, and that Torporic breeze: oh how difficult

The culling of love from our facades is.

Once, never to go the cling thing seemed what's
Sublimest. Look at those cobwebcrobats,
Skittering skyward, fingerhold, nor toe-.

Deep down (in my ugh-roots) I longed to brag My spiel shall deign define no July of these. I'll fall chapter closed across your chest is all.

Now I am an atrocious expert; who answers Every question by, "It is very simple: We must listen to Beauty with frozen ears."

Note:

I don't understand writers who prefer "painterly" painters over "literary" painters. How can I as a poet place Cezanne (or Monet, Matisse, etc.) above Khnopff, and not be disloyal to myself? Shouldn't we appreciate most those painters willing to stain their canvases with some of the impurities of our own art?

*

AFTER BORGES' "TO A MINOR POET OF 1899"

Who sought that sad height and that constant change Laboring on an extraneous verse Which through the dispersion of universe Might elect one second whose spectrum's range

Was so capricious it broke the scholar Caught in daily efforts to confine the eye Pursuant of ceruleanesques that lie Against each longing to fling a color

As brief as my life if I am alive
And am the one destined to undergo
Any authorship of the words that show
Whether such vexacious tints can survive—

You must judge, ancient friend! what I've seen Or accept as real the illusion I mean.

.

DE-EVOLUTION OF THE POET IN RUMOR'S HOUSE

Neutered condom, amphibianed from whose lips— The times I've tried to dive to Rumor's house! which, I have to quote that brute, Ovid, is "the world's Center," most quested-for, yet nearest core:

What verse ensures the windows doors there never Close, oh porous palace where every phrase Blurted by earthen creatures goes stored. Surface Abyss, endless source swearing itself his page.

Who welcomes my omega—elsely geared, I bleed—Island keeled in the always flood of fade.

The dying D and end N of our days' A

Resumes these scattered patterns, theme's mutest speech. Each time it tries to say more than this

The tip of the tongue must wrestle a leech.

*

"THOUGH MUSIC MAY HAVE OTHER AIMS THAN US" (Wayland)

If scores were blown off music-stands against our faces, they'd cause us to not see, to bump into things; struggling to follow the notes, straying towards each others' arms we'd branch out in such songs.

If here harmony comes from false maps cast across our visage like pages in the notebook of the composer, she whose echoes lead us lost—Or is it the blindfolding wind directs acts of love.

Music that masks intent, make render my route. Veer me off inward toward the core of detour foretold, proving its path along a graph is more

a quest than this fumbling, stumbling progress through the tactless swamp of the ears, this poem whose strains undermine the main theme of your pursuit.

Note:

The title is fictional.

,

RILKE (SEBASTIAN)

He lies where he stands, he stands there as if his bed erected him to stand this stiff: no Symbolist can feel the real arrows that milk his mother ribs of their marrows.

These weapons are the tech his lost, his fierce groin shot up in proving arcs to pierce their progeny: iron they want to be, iron,

with virile shafts that almost make him grin.

Albeit he waves off his disciples, fateful, mild to their autotelic reels; how male they remain, despite his example. His patience renders droll the actors' drill.

Renouncing, blinking life away as all, already he allows for our survival.

COCTEAU'S STARS IMPORTUNED

Cocteau's stars are bored by the love of a sort of wince-animal, who's failed throughout his life no less to stretch a pimple into a profile.

Pipes ache to anchor in those teetha sail, a horsestall, a fireplace all beg to go backdrop, to gaze agonized at your white spines.

laundering such muse, laving such sheets:

Oh simul-semen! kill this puny poem, whose publication has been timed

Pruned by my mirror, I imagine

to coincide with the release of my latest film, Fetish Sans Flesh.

AFTER COCTEAU'S ORPHEUS

These bright glass shards we walk upon reflect the past too slowly so we must quicken our step to keep pace and rush to meet the bloody footprints

that tablet-trace our progress across the iced sperm of this idle span called home past all of which we come dampseconds after I kiss your sole.

Montage is shown the same, screen-first; then, if struck by a vast unseen pin, pray to lay down more veins that pour.

The spotless splinter of its tongue creates no threshold from the toe-mold this shattered mirror alone can enter.

THE HUNGER (enneasyllabics)

If a path to the Gingerbread House could be established by breaking crumbs off its edifice and sprinkling them so as to find what lies behind us

across the featureless fairytale void of childhood: yet how very quick that trick wears out when the story's track takes hold, takes toll, a far-older trail

prevails, we're forced to give up this lost cause; and the fact is that every last morsel was gone long before the you

or I might totter our way back here to try to dissuade all these other Hansel-Gretels hollering in queue.

*

PLAZA DE LOCO

It's high tide in the hero
The floodgates fail the heart cowers
Blood of his deeds drowns the town square
Above it all this statue towers

And as the captain of a sinking ship
The instant the waves reach his toes
Snaps to attention it waits
Commanding some former pose

The inscription on which is blurred Hey what is that word What does his crumbling mad pedestal say

To find my way to you is
To not find your way to you
Therefore is not to find the way

.

NUN CLAIMS MOST SNAKES TOO SERIOUS TO MAKE GOOD BOOKMARKS (YOUR SOUL IS A CHOSEN LANDSCAPE)

À la gongs, that await the Emperor's semen But in vain, I partition silence into rooms Called poems. Why? Only Empresses remain— Is this too rigid: should seed, blown from some

Sunflower come to land solely on sundials . . . Yet wig of compass-needles; comet. Soars

-For sync's sake? Like optional hearts, in styles
Singular averse against the opus wall of stars

Spring safetypins my penis to my navel, Praying that so fetal a petal shall shrivel still: A thank-quiet follows; a field day feeling;

Queen Staypower paints out our scene's see-me's (Dream-prussic pupils flare flush with their irises). Then sun wonderlands it all a bit, by falling.

Note:

Parenthetical title: "Votre âme est un paysage choisi . . ." —the first line of Verlaine's

Clair de Lune.

*

MALE MENOPAUSE POEM

How as to lean my non-eon on autumn's roan Undoing, to smile while the stymies crawl All over me and the prismatic blindfold Around my testicles squeaks: guess this house

No longer knows which door I am. The window We were, does it remember its view? You-or-I Saw so little out there; what future only Catches, catnap glimpses, of nightmares to come.

Doorknobs worn to doornubs—grey stubble on Gaunt armpits—lists like that litter this earth. A lattice of graves greets me or is kind to me;

My hair plowed with parents, their protracted Smoothings of some poor, tuckablanket bed. As said each road I find in your face is fled.

•

THE LOST THINGS

Even the lost things that are a bird's-nest Must know if forgottenness is simply The finetuning of memory To a perhaps higher frequency.

Or could those who pursue the streets With earphones in their heads Be listening to the sound on tape Of their previous footsteps.

Lawnchair backyard flaked out Making marijauna gestures at worms I who am in terms of real Merely a skull rattling on a roulette wheel.

I see the birdfeeder is empty hmm A vacuum presupposes a moral.

*

EROS AND ESPIONAGE IN THE BENT CENTER (for Helen C., after reading

D. G. Rossetti's "Troy Town")

More undermined by your meander than my thirst From wine's first cup what shard still tastes this milk Above whom shone a normal polaroid of the void A song saliva cannot tie its envious vines to

Shall I paint through all the Isms to show you Bricabrac from that breast fill worlds marked sale-price Yet conceptualists slumming in the real congeal Is here a thing to say of this say or said place Now the merry-go-round it goes-a-round old 'Troy Town' My bed hangs out the window by its toes shouting Each day your hair strays across such ruins

But to live live simply in compress with our time TV-star footprints to immortalize sidewalk Me slurp your sweetpuddle up out of an autograph

*

WAXEN

An easel steadied by candles might depict enough light to see yourself caught some ways by the wavy S of the brush.

Across this sibilant surface what else is portrait or less: if face to a person's untoward, how much more our fixture

here. Shadow shows the eye its monkey unanimity, lost in an empire of diligence.

Lifeyield congealed, still-unity this past partake makes paradise eclipse. The easel's sill drips.

*

MENAGERIE OF THE AEDILES

Now what thought is thrashing from this brain to be unleashed by a brow-to-brow collision with a unicorn? Or could it go released through other throes I wonder. For if I were gored

there, mightn't I, like, die? When Terminator zaps a hole in someone's forehead they don't write a poem response, they drop and he steps on them crunch, french, act, your soundtrack may vary.

The plan was to get scalpels taped to the Creature From The Fuck's huge flipper-tentacles and then lie down hoping that perhaps their wild wave ways

surgically correct my defect my gender—
penis revealed as gap in consciousness—
Though I know none of you beasts loves me that much.

*

VISION OF THE GODDESS IN A CITY SUMMER (to Carolyn Kizer)

And yet what if the sweat that breaks Even from Her feet as they pass Can never rain these pavements back To a mud- a milk-cud grass Time that diamond instant dew dulls
Is it quicker than them quote
That strode presence those fading puddles
Not in this goadless heat

Oh mirage oh haze of hydrants Go Isis-proud across crosswalks Leave brief seas without a halt

Till all my doubts dissolve at once And down I'll follow cowed to lick Your soleprints for my salt

*

BREATH/LOST

At dawn I see across the way the treetops seem to crouch, unlit yet, waiting for sun to turn them tall again. I yawn, I stretch—the day's first stretch, when the body, after

lying scrunched up all night, reconnects with its cardinal quadrants, the four points that encompass us: each limb jars the edge of, marks out and wakes the corners of our cage.

Oh window! I am complete with this caught breath, this space suffice on which even paper airplanes must float, updraft that elevates

eyes to ritual heights, those clouds morning throws passersbird down through to gaud the good before I forget that it alone is my nest.

My diaries may be jammed to the Dec.s with the return dates of comets, but monitors track the orbits

I tunnel from. Every door connects

for its omen-minotaur: zoom-in a queen running down a Paul Klee walkways maze, filmstar footprints I set out to portray on my skin.

Framed by the errand dole of dream, REM thumbs my nerves like gloves molding a voodoo doll museum, its corridors recurrent as waves

pacing their birthplace backwards—exit whose wax I blaze skies towards.

*

THE PRESIDENT OF DESCENT (NEOCOLONIALISM #16)

'Insomnia, so I shot a few natives.'
Still, dawn has its palliatives; the cast sky
Lobs bullseye haloes; bolts of overview below
That pit whose voice timbers my spine: but why

Dis-niche this idol/this fiction called me? Which A fluke, a fault, a streak of makeup down A mirror where a stroke victim leaned to kiss—Oh say the not right-out-of-it, say know.

Tongue: lightswitch of the body. Head: ha. I'm serious! Every fable's a linear Of topplings. And what falls first? Neck second

I guess. Torso-torso off of groin goes—
 And so on downwards-downwards-thighs knees et al.
 The feet are a final ruins; the toes, shards.

Note:

Neocolonialism: Outremer, Europe's first attempt to create a "USA", fell after 2 or 3 centuries, overrun by 'the natives'. . . xerox for us? Ah the comminution of this latter Crusade; me, crumb.

.

CO-STARRING OSCAR WILDE AS MADAME SOSOSTRIS

White: white as a tablecloth that moonlights as a bride For the unborn you—appeared—or a waterfall Which leans against another waterfall (your hair). My beeper slave of lost voices barked: what?

While the cup that knelt to summer burst; I tried To garden the fireplace and farm the doormat But proto-frog-photos of you grew inside me there, Groping with bare hands of flood my gnarlgargoyle.

Deeper than my beeper you knew; sibyled guesses. And yet . . . 'misery is proximity.' Oh The seance was as far as possible tuxedoes.

Aftermath is a mouth. Speaks. Speaks? Yes, but less as Flesh than what; yak mask for that old fop Apollo? The god retrieves his gloves and, feigning to go, goes.

*

PARABLE FROM CHILDHOOD

Something about a pond, and on the pond a paper boat; something about a child's act, dropping a pebble upon that boat to study the effect: but then to let other pebbles fall to see if it holds, to kneel there spilling them one after one until, until finally . . .

If I weigh

this poem down with much more, it too will sink-

Writing my poems of a boy on the brink has shown how ripples horizoned by sky remain the only real cargo aboard whatever that craft that unmoored us was, and yet why he treasured such passages.

Saying they be lost we would launch each word.

*
THE FROOTLOOPS OF CONSOLATION

One of those landscapes that explicate Eliot. Up: evening-pubescent clouds tuft-about a sun That rusts like a shelf of spare parts for god Or such, who flee with perhapses as pitstops:

The airport that sold me all I know is gone now.

The welcome-mats that were so cheap (a foreign

Manufacturer had misspelled them)—that whole symbol Semblage/emblem forum: bereft of forms I bend

Across this blindfold's bliss land and see
My soul or a lobotomy spaghetti
—Choice of terms—crawl by. By what small light the

Day has not betrayed you step so long among The Magritte-lit map. A single tight-rope Stretches between its houses, threading the keyholes.

*

ECHO NEAR THE END

Severs and brothers, brokens and sisters, is this it? Around me life has darkened like the afternoon. Anymore to emulate the sunlight's posture, I slither down off that perfect backbone.

I am alone, but so are we. We are alone but so. Banking slowly the monster completes its turn—A clingathon of wings flaps through a halo That holds a weddingring up to a keyhole to

Pen in the one my fear was assisting at The birth of adrenalin: I pause I postulate. Wait. A mousehole Morpheus stamps our passport; Let's hope sleep has the good stuff tonight.

Murder blinks eyes upon eyes. Suicides Stick to the roof of the mouth, stupid tripod of spit.

*

MORE BEST JOKES OF THE DELPHIC ORACLE

I vow to live always at trash point: to Waste my past talking about the weather In mirrors, how they cloud or is it clear With no certain referent to that what was

Forecast. Like Snow White's dust-draped stepmother I smile up at the dictionary whispering My favorite definition, down at the stove my Worst recipe. The endproduct in me

Agrees. It and I are one in this blither And, I believe, we echo something endless, Eine global vocal. Will those lips ever Repent this recorded message. Lips That remain a mere testimonial To the inchworm's socialization progress.

*

*

FIRST BILLING

the skull's expertise with masks shows through the mouth at times the eye opens its sieve of cyclops

from this image what remains in an hourglass movie the last grain must be the star

that time has passed a man proclaims he reads from his notes

but he doesn't really read he just reaches in between the words and pulls out big fat me's

*

"FEBRUARY FOURTEENTH: FREEZEFRAME
(to James Elroy Flecker, with thanks
for translating teardrops into handcuffs)

Please press a valentine shape tool to my chest And extract from it what was never there Then singe your ciggie on this thing that mists Over only when shattered 's no mirror

I lie beside you my caresses deepmeant Though they fade as fast as escape plans traced Across a prison blanket by an absent Fingernail whose blood you piss in my face

Is that it is that why I cry for more torture That way you look at me pityingly Iffen I say things like rain ice drops cling

There our branch out there like someone been trying On all their bracelets at once to see Which is prettiest but of course none are

Note:

Flecker: Parnassianism (his list: "Hérédia, Leconte de Lisle, Samain, Henri de Régnier, and Jean Moréas");

le vice anglais (the home version); death at age 30 (consumption).

- *
- *

```
foreplay
should
be
kept
at
a
minimum
AMERICAN LOVE SONNET
My kiss was like our incursion
of Guatemala in 1954,
or was it our intervention
to save Venezuela, 2010:
Congress rubberstamped
my caresses of your rebel
breastholds-my freedomfingers
stormed southward toward
the clit-tipped capitol ripe
for my liberating lust:
each commie labia fell until
I regained the land at last:
FoxNews huzzaws as I install
El General in his palace.
ART OR THE CARESSES OR THE SPHINX
  (CASTRATION ENVY #36)
The Lord Peter Mumsey of Thebes, that yummy
Oedi-poo dick, advises me, It's no use. To
Detectify a guilty party will
Soil the purity of our respective plagues.
Like a silo filled with silhouettes of sigh
I reply. My smarm/your frissonpassion
To be eliminated from the world's
Verticalities are more of what photons do
To Phaëtons. Therefore, if that obliteracy
Our face slash esperanto saliva
Trace or clue is left to sift through but this
Issuey stuff, whoa, who's to blame, us! So I whore
Is for sure and if death occurs, facile
Excel. 'What's named between the knees' 's not me.
Note:
Title (excluding the parenthesis): of a work by Khnopff. Line 14: I can't recall where
```

Poetry
is
like
sex
on
quicksand
consequently

this quote comes from, or if in fact it is a quote.

HITLER SKELETON GOLDPLATED (FROM TREASURES OF THE C.I.A. MUSEUM, EDITED BY HILTON KRAMER, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JERZY KOSINSKI. RANDOM HOUSE/IBM, 1984)

What falls from the drunken pliers of my nose President-pit pope-rind police-bone Is all they got on this fucking menu Always the pure provend of more more

The piss tease of masterpiece ass The missionary position is there to catch you If you drip off that mosquito plaque I guess Gumming a gifthorse's defectual innocence

The gunfire in the hills is old and I Am one pile of shit which will never excrete a human Hey Parliament Congress Politburo

My cock/my KGB has it on lasertape The moon posing between the horns of a bull Two hymens touching through milk

ENTRANCE

first he cuts a notch across his shins he gives his knees a slash next and then his thighs

higher and higher the gouges come to show the increments of growth the measured ascent

it's getting there he muses how long do you think the scars will take

before it's big enough for you to leave through it he asks his empty room

CASTRATION ENVY #11

Tying the pimp in dreams to a lamppost His tuxedo wet with wheedled kisses, can I wake up sucking the footprints of toilets In jails that glitter like crash-dived marquees.

A dog appears in call letters on my skin. Twin worlds, who exchange threats via scoreboard I rival this night, this fight to the death With enough leftover, ooze for twosies yet.

Either even, I wish I could put on take off My clothes without first saying to my cock "Excuse me, is this yours," while the stars

The collected no-shows of eternity, rise. Hey, remember the way painters gauge perspective? Me, I cut the thumb off and throw it at stuff.

*

VAGUE CONSOLES

This vista often awarded John Ford his rest.

Myself, scenery has a lack of I (emphasis).

And haven't we killed all the Indians yet?

In a stagecoach—made of sagebrush, no doubt—,

I would gauche-out like a tumbleweed at a sockhop. Yo, watch it roll across the old gym-floor, loboto Basketball: then, toed by foetid teens, fall, Slo-mo, as though some flair for the vague consoles—

Oh lips refusing their tongues' rights, bodies
Trying to put down the peaceful demands of
Their genitalia . . . yes everything looks better shot

Through John Wayne's hurt. The sky the way it mattes— The desert. A lone rider, whose moral I await. The crotches arranging themselves for death.

.

MISDIRECTIONS

If world is north to infants and south to adults is it east to the unborn west to the dead

Kafka's Castle is home to Count Westwest meaning God whom K the land-surveyor meaning human must map out

Jesus Christ on the other hand not being human lacks spacial awareness lacks place

Consequently all he says is set the timelock on my tomb for 3 days boys

*

ORPHAN

Like blueprints hung on a clothesline, anywhere I could have lived is rinsed into the dirt, my final and my only home.

I lack a long-ago, a childhood: I spit its name into my wounds.

I am ringed by a landscape of complete aversion. The compass hides its face, the horizon lights a familytree-fuse that explodes in me—

In the middle of the sea, sole survivors of a cargo shipwreck, welcome-mats line the shore of a desert island.

~

*

ALPHABETICAL MORNING

Stabbed by an elephant lens
On a meatless mattress I lie,
(Use a scalpel to trace my future;
The past, a suture) and die.

Spat at as often as the oil Portrait of a moviestar on The wall of a Death Row cell I fell Into an abyss of worn-off

Sculptors' thumbs. Accidentally Daily I cutted my throat on the Drinking fountain. How was I

To know there is no justice, Just a your-honor of trash? I smile, a total inutile.

Note:

Title: of a painting by Alberto Savinio.

*

AT THE NIXON MEMORIAL

(Nixon Beach, California, USA) (Just minutes away from OzymandiasLand®)

They say that robots simply have to slap mirrors
Up against their voice grilles to try and make sure they're
Not breathing, whereas I kiss caress this monument,
This eternal mall on which Herod has chalked x,

This statue stands for more than blowjobs in spaceships Or all our names have razed, aimless oceans frying, While a scab forms on the world's microphone: praise him. Oh orgasm you robot's vomit I come unheck.

(tape gap) lie back gunked motel whispers dream . . . back (gasp)
To be the genre of my frontier! One hears aborigines
Prefer to, er, fornicate. Money for thought, nyet?

Will the army vote to internalize its camouflage; At the Reagan Rotunda Paul Valéry allowed how Shores erode too, rumorous as their dunes.

Note:

Line 14: adaptation of a line from Valéry's Le Cimetière Marin: "Le changement des rives en rumeur." (A seaside mausoleum, so it seemed appropriate. With thoughts of the Shelley sonnet's last line.) Line 6: some have objected to the vulgarity of the phrase "blowjobs in spaceships," forgetting that the Nixon Era brought us both the Sexual Revolution and the NASA moon-landing. This slogan should have been one of RN's campaign promises.

*

SECRETARY

The technocrat gloats at his remote desk but just to show he's still human

he still does a few chores by hand and adds a human touch for example

rather than having his computers do it he himself stamps

all by himself stamps PAID on the casualty-lists.

Note:

Robert S. McNamara, USA Secretary of Defense 1961-8. For his services in overseeing the murder of millions, he was appointed President of the World Bank, where he continued his lucrative life's work of administering the policies of the oligarchs. One of history's henchmen; a competent monster.

*

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF THE POWERTOOL WEEKEND (NEOCOLONIALISM #5)

So—as the depth of the adieu—on my forehead Shows, or my—signature, lopped off at—the wrist Witnesses: ah, more quantum formulae scrawled —You doodled margins of my christian bible! For

Like that drop of venom that longs to hang from The comma although, cream of that snootiness Magazine-covers sic us toward, my reflection My joy is just (gloss to amuse) this world! which,

Built on zoos, can't last. Or at least not till The herd steered by its wounds disinherit All I seize surmise of deepest tiptoe! Poo:

I lack the face you evolved to paw, Joe Blow, The figure those fingers of yours grew for, Meg Smith. I got no legit to forget it either, no greater esthetic.

*

(CASTRATION ENVY #21) DOES THE SWORDSWALLOWER SHIT PLOWSHARES?

Sure: the more me, the more morituri. Mine duels his hand; some scroll of manliness, Whose downfall almost dolored us. Though Soon, up the brain tanks, gracias oozed.

The hair is a cohort of this. The hair, Or the beard, a creditcard used as a napkin, Swiping off a chin. "My adam's apple's agog!" Quote: Exclude before you begin the male

Because it is vile. "The heart in common Is the heart withheld," another recommends; Hey here comes my favorite human-razed future.

Xerox of course a tapeworm lost inside A hunchback, I squirm manfully on. Deep in the direction known as thumbsdown.

Note:

Line 1: Morituri te salutamus—we who are about to die salute you: the gladiators' obeisance to the Roman emperor. Line 8-9: Exclude before you begin etc.: a pun on Mallarmé's "Exclus-en si tu commences / Le réel parce que vil".

*

BOY AT THE MIRROR

A child emulates what he can't know is true, a murderous dew that appears every morning to be his face, but already it evaporates at

a touch: the lurking effects of the unity granted by night are never enough to maintain this ripeness called time, this waking up to a cherub-scope

that looks back at him in the glass growth like hammerblows a devil checks off a list—the routine begins so early

and even the wattage of the womb behind him is too bright, too ready to hale an unsought self into sight.

POEM

Please, no dreams tonight. No transfigured eyelids, No siren rain From the day's clouds.

Let the moon
Be boarded over.
No mirrors must signal
Their ally the wishwell.

Let there be nothing For our faces to open in But themselves.

Seen in this least light They may appear At last to be whole.

*

BABBLEGATE

In early childhood an act

consists of another act, a multiplying chain of this and that. Cat, windowsill,

sunlight, they're all events instead of sights, but eventually they too give way to the eye. Time distances the other senses

of intrinsicate. That's why dimensionally I can only

until one becomes intent instead

I've already passed, squealing ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba buh!

try to run toward the place

*

CLICK

From the bottom of my well I see the sun and moon just once a day, which is nothing

when compared to you above who see them both so often, so open-shared, so totally:

and yet I believe that in that instant when daily the sun and monthly the moon fill

my circle rim up there, I am illuminated in a way you can never be, quenched entirely

and all sealed in light. See: I'm whole now. No cracks in me.

,

MIZU NO OTO

Pain passes for sunlight at some depths which most of us never strike; the dive is too far: or is the ear sheer enough—

Basho by a pond heard a frog make

the usual faucet-dripping-into-a-keyhole sound; it wisely ignored his efforts

to collaborate. Get your galleyslaves

rowing with icicles for oars, that's one way some say. Resist the urge

to submerge yourself as a slice speciman, all random camera words.

to halve the sea/be laser Moses,

Beyond the caprice of earth to slake, thirst issues from the source it breaks.

Note:

A meditation upon Basho's most famous haiku, whose final syllables I've used for the title.

PEACE (PASCAL)

There is a valley Is the oldest story.

Its temperate qualities Make us descend the trees To settle down beside Fruits and fields.

By its river content

To fashion fishing spears From fallen limbs. No need to climb its hills

To sit quietly in a small tent

No need to go up there To look to see Another valley.

Note:

"Most of our problems proceed from our inability to sit quietly in a small room." -**Pascal**

SURETIES

The police see you, but it doesn't. Indifferent to return your gaze, And therefore free. You will never be

Able to smash it sufficiently

To erase the stasis it makes in space.

Rilke's "Apollo," this is. Headless limbless, A tortoise that has retracted everything

Into its obdurate lair, defiant den.

Only the gods are as patient through lenses.

You dance like wallpaper thawing its father And still you lack that proof-in-all, that aloof Olympian ennui, the sniper's prize.

As long as change is your life it will shun you. No shot will shut your target torso.

*

PERFORMANCE-ART PIECE

First she slides a banana up my ass almost but not quite all the way in then deftly with a knife she slices the rindtip that extrudes and when

the pithsweet meatus shows its white cusp like a pearl between the moue of a romeo in a cameo says Right Hold it Okay now squeeze real slow

as she squats and eats the ivory flesh emerging and smearing fused her red lispberries while the yellow

skin remains within me to be used as a kind of condom for the dildo she has to ram in and out artfully.

٠

THE PAST: TO X

Whenever keys lick our hands, melting them into other hands, each door opens on a scene of thrust-aside bodies. The past is love

suppressed. Closeup: focus copulates with F sharp. Memories hide a wealth denied of music and outmode.

In oldies songs in black dresses whose fade-labels frill our sex attic, caresses are snatched from kisses.

The past is not us. Its lovers are true for an hour that stays surprised behind a threshold of days. Maybe they can say when it's over.

*

FROM A DISTANCE

If lip-readers move their lips when lip-reading, what do they say then?

Are the phrasings of the speaker they scan claimed and mirrored there

unconsciously, an almost silence less translation than transference?

Unless the mouth gets taken, sent

by its attendance to a strange intent

till even a cough, a kiss—enunciations
which paraphrase the space which runs

through all speech though all tongues try
to gun that gap by perusing, musing

mere coherence. Cued to its cusp,
these words of ours are less than lisp.

SELF(THE POET PASSÉ)PORTRAIT

His task to watch an hourglass wash itself, A ritual cleansing that leaves him bare, Though no purification's new enough To nullify the need for such labor—

Arms wide the better to hide. But of course

If the flesh is fire, bones are the kindling:
Still there but aching to be unbelied
By the lover; unbellied as breaths held

Until all the minutes fall to the wrong

Prior soon to repeat, platonic clone, He should have practiced that horizon Vocation, camouflage, opening his

End of the hour and find his final Efforts've faded, dated as (or like) a sundial.

THE OTHER SAVIORS

For them the defeat was immediate, I.e., from within. The ribstrokes of my heart Went and then the rain signed tangent its light Across things reviving that red desert.

The slim stopsign amid far cacti stood And made our surest land convert a course Which every compass felt would rise renewed If, us-effaced, I failed to trace my source.

See my countries carry their faraway
Farther away each day, hear survivors
Rip my page from their bribed bible and pray
This be the key whose doors collapse all frontiers.

Within the deepest room of which, eavesdrop-eyed, You surprised a recognition on its deathbed.

AFTER BRETON EXPELS ME FROM THE GROUP, I GO DOWN ON SAMSON AND DELILAH

The moon long undue to none of us follows
Typifying some life we phonetically loathe

Or other dolls umbilical to our desires Let my lips fizz out against your thighs.

The annuities of these nymphs are so paid But can our praiseworth's cry concur Pilgrimage-many the tidepools oppose Sigh only my hemline has aspirations.

Typecast as fat Tantalus/as the last Frame of an hourglass movie I yawn for more Bouffant-slut roles roles with grunge-rapport.

Therefore a rumor-millioned perfumes inject Each of my pores must emit its own odor If we are to synchronize all earth's sundials.

*

THE SEMBLANCE AMBULANCE

From gaze-and-gone, that mine-or-yours is where I remember us, always fumbling to put the seal of arousal upon every stare—but in that same vacuum our eyes create

with fade-outs/ins to each other, what waits? Look, in the space our meeting faces made: two eyebrows hurrying to earth, hair freed of groping now, impaled on summer's flute-spurts.

The thrill that fills this masochronicle is shallow as a thimble poured from a navel.

Waiting for a seashell's mating-period, we'll keep the pose those opposites caused void to disclose, as if by held they were being near.

See us there, like a truth carved by halves of core.

*

GROUP PHOTOGRAPH (THE EARLY YEARS)

Most biographies of the Moderns share A common pose: ranks of raw youth appear Often capped and gowned, uniformly there— It looks alike in all such Lives we read.

Torn from some album somewhere, its focus Is general: all the figures are crushed Anonymously together and lost—
Just, some airbrush has dinked a single head.

Imagine rummaging through raindrops on Transmundane panes and eenymeenywhile Plucking from amongst them 'Source of the Nile'!

How of this many is there but one self— Whose underneath name obtains its caption— In book beside book, on shelf after shelf?

*

MONODRAMA

Don't think, I said, that because I deny Myself in your presence, I do so in mine— But to whom was I speaking? The room, empty Beyond any standpoint I could attain,

Seemed all sill to stare off before someone's Full length nude, at halfmast their pubic flag Mourned every loss of disguise, allegiance More to the word perhaps than its image—

But predators always bite the nape first
To taste the flower on the spine-stem, so
I spoke again, which shows how unrehearsed
I failed to be. I went to the window:

Sky from your vantage of death, try to see. Flesh drawn back for the first act of wound, it's me.

THE ELAV

THE FLAW

Like a teardrop that although of many Teardrops composed hangs singly in an eye

Orbs if all were known I mean visible

Must I also go aggregate go greet

Which likewise might be meld of plural

A global bitter mime that bears its white

Situate amidst their company sought Opposite I wake lost at night without

The pains I have pawned my own for him Grieve and the obeyed sweatbeads lamentum

Made for the mead whose gracious weaves supply
The final humors that give our body

Physicality current as the sea's Before its fall repairs the fault that sees.

*

REFUSING AN INVITATION TO THE MASKED BALL

No knees forcep my tongue to you. Met when It dims like hesitant fever over That oasis-in-a-swimsuit, what studious mirage Rises. Mist is the dog augments the scene.

Whose collapsar sponsors these closeups?—
The escapes in forced moonlight of the prince
At his powerboat throughout alpine lakes chased
Or so the whisper ran, rotting in attendance:

May I hang the fur coat on the beehive? thanks— That place that fills the map that swamps the front Seats of the Royal Starship rendezvous

Holds perhaps. Till then, scintilla antenna Omniscient thistle of my Etcetera Dracula,

A smile across that which we would share, flesh.

UN-ISRAFELLED

Am I similar to slime enough, be-Mimic with muck? Since Poe blew it that Tennyson-"No poet so little of the earth"-equals sky, I (boy bouffant) unto the realm of whom rise, I

Who synonymous with none, am anonymous Without everyone: is that the light cast From haloes; does it make the shadows of the heads They glitter over smash down obliterating

The body. We twitch our face-costumes; scratch; Crud dangles like a noose tied to high c. Or is that noise claws—a phoenix scraping

Let me in on the door of a crematory, A comet's dandruff. Its scars are ridges

Ledges, where the flesh of this ascent rests descent.

Note:

"None sing so wildly well As the angel Israfel" -Poe.

SCHOOL FOR INSOMNIA

A bed of nails a manicurist hurls polish at— The colors, liquid, thinking of a high tide I wonder If it can remember the Primal Scene it relives Again and again in pangs of ebb that plethora

Moment of what trance-conception-or are we Out of source now, free, all pasts forgot as easily As adults will plow a path through a children's Birthday party-their pink lit-once, lit-twice,

Lit-five-times cake not stopping this progress, not Even for a step that guesses what our heels could Make of these tiny candles, crunch as crayons—

The colors, of evening then night are flames I fall Trang-sank in, the miniaturization of dust continues, Night lies down on a bed of nails or stars—

CONTEMPORARY OUTREMERICAN POETRY

Lips eclipsed by the dark O of a howl, Stereo Echo, monaural Narcissus-That old abyss-as-sinecure noise Seems pure enough: but toward what laser-fold, What mother-scold, of dream? Is that why Jumpcuts catch fish; thighs nailed to birth push? Cybele—Jesus—the lap presides? The name Carved on this polyglot ingot was whose,

Lone rune gods can use to dispute their senses! Immune I remain, group-blind to your game: Imagine if a couple, eloping

Out a window had paused on the ledge, Had stayed there, had set up house right there on the ledge— That's how far we get to marry words.

*

THE BUILDING OF THE BRAZEN TOWER

I, an ahem, uncertain where to stand.
Unsurefooted as surveyors on clouds, preparing further slums of heaven. I, glimpsed only while entering or leaving a stab.

Is this why I long to betray the small bodies left on the lips after love? Pale empiricals, all pout; but then, some bumblebees are larger than the flowers they land on.

What happened on all fours in my other life—how staged, how improv each movement grew—(kungfu of sequins) an eclipse also maps what it mires: the none alone must know.

Hope is eating paper stripes off a jailcell. Faith says, It's only a zoom-lens, not a fall.

*

WEDNESDAY (to RS)

Past noon; I walked her to her train; we said so long; Her smile, her flash as the huffy train pulled away, Like a knife withdrawing from robot flesh; sparks From its wheels showered over me, black, lavacidal.

We'll meet 2 days from now: not enough time to enter An anticipanthood, noviciate of rendezvous; to Lift that iffy cathedral, brush Samson's cindery Dandruff off my collapsing shoulders, not enough time,

Nor space. Cramped. Thighs. She's travelling far Away—I'm so foolish! Why did I propose dramamine For corpses when the trip from womb to world didn't make me

Sick? 2 days; 2 days. That's enough. I smile, home, past The drugstore and the hairdressers, hardware, the other Stores, I wish there was room here to put them all in.

*

A VIRGINSAINT AND A SAINTVIRGIN SHARE

A HALO A WHILE: A MEMORY (to E)

It was the onset of a golden headset

Our thought from covetous egypts took flight (suite)

Not so the veins' isle-lopped dictation

The sea that amanuensis with illegible gloves

But who wrote my pose throes over the white dot of A desert's collectiste saliva whereon A blindness bandaged by bats became dawn or Was that oase-false face my scrotalskull gaze

The fever of eyecharts is distant tonight
This is my haiku scar this is my soft
Repeated sincere desire for fart-fairy confabs

Ah no abhorred form of present tense you see That halo our askew nuked free is dead Is circumscribed solely by the absence of head

*

BECKON GONE

Now I see they put the world together at an angle that goes wrong to the earth.

Tables and chairs have a destiny in this, flawed beyond all hopes of wood. The wind rivering through the bare branches gathers their withering rather than my growth.

Shadow sutured to the eventual skin of our ascendance, your swami crannies fail me. Amadeus, Amadeus, the sky calls. Beckon gone, go, go on home—

Nothing blunts my perfume as I become, as I attempt to exude from within the most faintly effigy I can. North of birthfants, south of deathdults, where am I?

*

PER REQUEST

when we're always alone and when we're never alone which one answers the phone

all that separates us is the finishline face in a race with its own cheekbones

this toe to toe battle with our shadow to gain possession

of a narrow choking ledge

which one which one

*

UNTOLDTITLED

I move during your interstices of movement, you are still, I am still no longer than no more, well-forced to peel from stopsigns decals that say it.

But crossroads are made of mispronunciations of our otherwise swerve or caught destinations; imagine radar squiggles in a big, nuke-out war.

Then vase sass, sponge tossed onto a slit throat—I bet my seance has enslaved my tan. Lacing the leech to itself, life traverses some navel? Lung abbreviations, breaths: departure's dictate.

Because gone is a great while, daily I yell oh our absence enlarges the burden of penthouses. Ape-acne's eunuch, I comb through emcee cues. Youth-starch, time, you tease the tonsured tongue.

*

LAST MOMENTS IN THE MASTERPIECE

Once aboard the world a venereal disease The Beatles* gave you takes on new forms And shows them how to elevate birth. But then A pasture attends. The clothes fit the cows,

Though styles are better back in the barn, where Some denouement mode monde meet as photos for The magazine this poem has published or Will I be the sum of misprints here.

That should suffice could hours need to suffer: Our clock ye-gods toward arrival, medieval Catapults release aim-things, whose same music

Is defter in sepia, that mooing hue, lit by fakes. *Or Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Santa Claus, Der Führer, Or any other 3-syllable entity you'd prefer-er.

*

LINES FROM DAYTON, OHIO

Reason sates the horizon—fulgent, full of elegant oils, giant unguents. A sun

a racecar's engine, hoisted in a hammock set sway, between two trees, backyard

*

A world washed up by dew onto this bluer world,

—as though the genitalia

were a shadow thrown upon the body by some dubious, some distant deity

*

Oh I lack both seriousness and so.

JOHN GRAY

I try to tonguejob a languagejob you You continue to perfect the anonymity Of your first and final lovers or is that me I try to occupy my debris till I see.

Are we the cow that swallowed the hymen Jesus Spat out at birth for example-psych or Dorian's portrait faced off with a virgin mirror Is that what Life Beyond The Baton is like.

A disservice to myself is my head The kind of divingboard that slices bread They gnawed the renowned for fun they said.

Where the linger of one thought longer than An other brings distress will this settle gelid Its aspic of aspect make ick my eye.

Note:

John Gray: author of Silverpoints (1893). Ada Leverson in her preface to Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde (1935) writes that Gray was "then considered the incomparable poet of the age." Line 7: he was thought by some to be the model for Wilde's hero. (The choice: Dorian vs. Jesus—or, as Barbey d'Aurevilly posed it to Huysmans after À Rebours, "the muzzle of a pistol or the foot of the Cross": Gray was ordained a Catholic priest in 1901.)

*

JOHN MARCHER TO MAY BARTRAM

(for Laura Fargas)

Constantly assembling the dregs of dice, the laughter: summer will never come from us till the past is all contour, all tailfin. Our defenses' tiny wingfins push in vain

as, prodigious and terrible, the sky
—fresh from its years-drowned descent—uplifts what sail,
drifts by any rialto whose tableaux
still continue to deflect our day, our

teteatete's yet-to-be. Tauter grins framed the accomplice wellwishers in God's gameroom glasses held to a toast glinted. Soon they

decanted our hands: even the sea lay

in stills of inertia, distance-disinterred; soundlessly panting as it crossed the bay.

Note:

Marcher . . . Bartram: the almost agonists of Henry James' The Beast in the Jungle, which the poem vainly tries to prequelize. Line 5: prodigious and terrible—a phrase from Beast.

~

•

OUR CATACOMB'S NEXT MARTYR

The demonic city, the wretchedness of suburbs,
Bodies fished out of rivers, and distress
In the hospitals are also on my list.
(Oh blindfold-anointed night, Nero Nixon nevermore.)

Waiting for dawn to rate the sky X. Love. Love— The trendsetters yawn over their trendsets— Hey, Hiroshima: duck! While the fuck of it Sucks a crucifix stuck in the rat-hole door

Of the secret vault where a Getty gloats Whole floors of masterpieces, real Mona Lisa and all. In curtseyland I'll take my stand he screams.

The sound blood makes dripping on their neon Must of bored the crowd. Facade-trod face of: Inflect with your name time sours my knees.

Note:

Lines 1-3: "He wrote about the demonic city, the wretchedness of suburbs, bodies fished out of rivers, and distress in the hospitals." —Armin Arnold, writing about George Heym. Lines 9-10: Getty Museum richest in world. Anyway, most 'masterpieces' in museums are forgeries; the real stuff is sequestered by billionaires.

*

DRUG OF YOUR CHOICE

And so I write, "Love paces out its exile beneath an Arch of Triumph." What the meanwhile does that mean—pacing is going nowhere and the arch is built to remind a war

to bring tourists. Overhung by that shrine (till infantry is the prose of pavements) time remains a frieze from a waxworks famine—vista in which we cum, sweat, become silent.

Like a monkey caught in an orange pharmacy, love conditions the fool to riot reason . . . But from corners that climax has not stirred, coldly

a cacti acrobat holds the horizon forth as an ideal of what constitutes refuge, pane deposit, distant, though its cuppings could kill us.

*

*

NECKOGNITION

In love the head turns the face until it's gone into another's where it is further torn

from its own mirror and grows even more erased and lost and though the former still yearns

to be his/be hers, it sees these lovers over your shoulder show

that whatever disappears can also go as verse whose shape's nape-known now.

*

POEM FOR MEMBERS ONLY

I chastise those who chose to transcend flesh, who drained themselves from the rainbow shadow, who strained to raise that sun which we in a seas' circle on earth hold down.

Evolvates, through the straight stigmata of 12 and 6 o'clocks soaring. Who saw instead, dawn shed a twilight-hither glow.

Were they born or what, did their unsheared blood never climb past bud, to reach: such null-exegetes, soul-esthetes!—Should you try

to get a glimpse of this aspiration, as if within your hair every strand shone against itself; yet would you say each was meant to be the head's sole ray.

*

HERE ARE THE HEIRS OF HARVEST

The lunatic walls that hide in front of love
Are right to hide, though the eye tries to find them
More undercover than the skull above

Which the face finds your face, to coffer share A suffice of yes, an enough of no:
Is that still credible in the morning where

(Pillowjam/bedbutter spread, shed behind drapes)
Our distance occurs, our demarcation
Destinations are aimed at a landscape.

Immured by dawns, the horizon trusts
Only the space we vacate, plotting to rear
An inherent figure, no longer us—

That which waits concealed will yield our founding place. We must paint the house with what its grounds waste.

*

*

THE HEROES CROWD EACH OTHER AT THE GATE

But this cryptic impulse to eclipse a map While voiceovers avail one's profile or The blindfolds floating to the ground smile The vegetation shiver a little

Light has not accustomed swimmingpools to this Glitter and illiterates with gold records know And all our next door to door neighbors the Nukes Family who play charades to remember

Each other's names they feel it hie vie die Across that oversuffice of knife their life Santa's reindeer sneer down from the sky as

Guiding your foot with my hand to its mark My face I reflect of how this world which Does not consist of more you's than you does

Note:

Title: a phrase by Abel Gance; as quoted in the screenplay for Hitler: A Film from Germany.

HUMAN ESCAPE SYNDROME

Often our pendulum-curtained ocean was thought to harbor a metronome, which saddled the minutehand and rode off to catch the hourhand.

Time's simile? Waves. Waves—teeter empires, primed to fall, defined to fall. But now time is digital.

Now time has no time for metaphors; a cyborg is not a mime of me. Human: android with a lobotomy.

I climb the cliff above time's sea.
The steep—and pull myself up by a thread that dangles from the sutures,
one of the sutures in my forehead.

*

EUCLID ALONE (to RN)

Androids strolling up Everest will know How harder it was for us to care, to cuddle Visits from that summit within. The pique Of pickups is endless. And when our oxygen

Thins to a pin who cares who's X who's Y-

That altered acme stares at me—icily—
That game where time (come to theme) recombines
To dial them new stars night never fell on: it

Beads up as my eye, friend planet. Who like The sate—crazed by my birth's first trip at bat— A pork genus cordless vibrator whose tip

Whose tongue exbunged from your hinder heart, wet With non-umbrageous plus-signs or what?
(But can we touch each other's thwart I thought.)

Note: Title: "Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare." —Edna St. Vincent Millay

*

LIFE THEY SAY IS THE ANTERIOR ART

Love dehydrates us with its thirsty scars: The forebode brigade braids a leash for every: In rut much oblivion finds one future: I'm summarizing, of course; but is that why

We make art—becauses it compensates for Axioms: will experts scour the past for more, Its shared breath a vase unearthed by the shard Yield beneath some kiss-synopsis? Although sharp,

What mountain's peak can core our ground; can anything Break that surrogate, that curtained culture where Museums seek a center and spin, crumbling—

How quick each chirp-equipped quote lets us go! There Statues at their moment of greatest stress might Cause my eyelids to carve all else to sight.

*

PERSONAL POEM PROCESSOR

I swear the word insanity has two i's, It bears itself what it brands schizophrenia, But if my diary is my obituary's Childhood, do I hit Delete to update?

The northern none, the southern some, the eastern Each and the western who are all too othern To SpellCheck, or would be, if I knew how to Correct my yawn's pronunciation of you.

Once born my meaning is porous to mania, So forgive me if I speak of my penis before My heart, me before you: I need such errors

To pamper this new ParseGram. Or is it too late To index exits? Reaching the happen stage Our navels lacked certainty, that body phase.

*

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June 27, 2008

QUATORZAINS THREE

*

PLEASE NOTE: you can download a free pdf of this book from the "Bill Knott storefront" at Lulu.com (and/or buy a bound copy at minimal cost)———

quatorzains three

Bill Knott

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

INTRO NOTES

I got interested in this form around 1970, and published several in my 1974 book, Love Poems to Myself, and then more in the ones that followed: Rome in Rome (1976), Becos (1983), Outremer (1989), The Quicken Tree (1995), and The Unsubscriber (2004).

Why "quatorzains" rather than "sonnets"? I feel superstitious about using the latter term. I feel defensive and or resentful: only real poets write sonnets, and I'm not a real poet, am I. No, I'm a—a poet-biscuit.

The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

TO THE EMBLEMATIC HOURGLASS OF MY FATHER'S SKULL

The night that dies in me each day is yours: Hour whose way I stare, yearning to terra Firma my eye. There. Where a single hair Would be a theater curtain I could cling

Behind, dreading my cue, aching to hear What co-hurrah. More, more of leaves that fall Consummate capsules, having annaled all Their veins said! Printout printemps. And yet

(Altars our blood writes a blurb for god on)

Can one ever envy enough his skeleton's Celebrity. Can any epitaph

Be adequate repartee for your laugh.

Days lived by me each night say less than it.

While sleep in ounces weighs me wanting.

*

(LET ME TAKE YOU ON A) SEA BREEZE

Our flesh so tender so turnstile Plus on top of that everything addressed To that Occupant within me are read Gauguin/Kerouac comes to mind.

Empty passim one more Day One passes The field abandoned to handstands Superfluous lay all waters in that gaze Guiles of a map guess-gestured.

I'll become a crematory prostitute
The prom whose bra undressed my ears
None us dispedestal that idol.

Or what better yet a desert island Sailed to only by blind sailors who smile Like swans we maim our bracelets in.

Note:

Failed translation of Mallarmé's Brise Marine.

*

*

AUTO-RENGA

In the collided night, sate with pool. The Truly gooey goes if an armpit could point This is what it would point at. Same veneer Where I chew your girdle and gum your bra

-Crates to pack Proteus in, the days Oops. The fall took all the minutehand. So The with you will die and the without me live, Life a letter mailed inside a folded

Up postagestamp. What do you hear from whom? Softer than the pins stuck into cacti by Rubbing my sores on the Lot's Wifes displayed

Or shit. Mud. Crud. It's milkingtime: Sometimes those udder-things have to be cleaned off. So you use the first squirts to do it with.

*

*

TO MYSELF

How often does your penis enter your armpit, not enough I bet; and automaxillary eroticism will not suffice. Such intercourse or rather lack of it shows up in the cast of your crap, your typical excuses, your ineptitude charades-

But all orifices get worn out, so even

a rarely-fucked armpit longs for less; as does the face, held together by what coercion of emptiness; an oral shoehorn probably; maybe-berries dipped in occurence-curd: the evasions are always exemplary.

RESUMED PLEA

at birth, as I was about to say before being interrupted by the midwife, my parents, my teachers, my commanding officer, my employers, my various wives/children etc., my physician, one or two astrologers, and the undertaker:

To pick up where I left off

"Free me or worship me!"

CROP/NICHE

All it takes is Laura Riding's ridingcrop across my butt, and I'm off: Git-up horsie she cries astride me as I crash sweetly onto the carpet.

Boredom what an esthetic, cleansing the days-

I laud the vintage of my toothpick.

Small-husband to the floor, my foot stoops in dance, in courtship intervals.

Putting their clothes on afterwards the lovers are surprised at how emptier the buttonholes seem.

Like one of those catatonics who go nuts and run around screaming if they happen to overhear the name of their first therapist,

dare I listen for my "accidental" words most?

Hypercraze puzzles, they come conundrum contorting themselves in the tongue's regress, as if each birth expressed what must be repressed. . . . Jinxed from the start-fate, sphinxed by origin—

against its heart-riddles, what pre-oedipal will pile up high my years' eclipsedness—wall that has no Rec Room in it, no niche-all, no refuge from the familiar other? Act One

finds our face mano a mano the Goddess.

I adore men with momentary nostrils She says.

*

LAPSE POETICA

Smashing the elixir of life while shouting "From now on this is my life!" may not be the best manner to ensure progress, I know. One

never dips apes into human navels in order to baptize angels, even if those navels are absolutely as we say, brimming. Filled with

the water, the essential eau de vie—Blink, blink, my teardrops blurted, do you think we enjoy chewing that sphinx's loudest eyelash?!

If just one of them cum comes true, I'll let each new you-pseudonym name me its.

*

MOTHER TERESA TREATS TERRORISTS TO TAFFY

The A rack and the O thumbscrew, the E pincers. Yeah, I brandingiron, U electrodes. World I am defeatist of—elysium—You eviscerate asterisks like me:

Pick up that hotline in your hushed-up highrise, Higher-ups! I videopoemed them please But did God's Little Guru LISTEN? Nope So, tipping my head sideways as if trying

To pour it into the ear's cup I shut up. Oh
To nix my thought on 2 fingers giving
The peace sign inside my mouth nose ass—

Or any other orifice they fit—'s Fine with me. Neutron bomb has the same Theory. Our entrails is taller than we.

*

A SOUTHERN RUN

1. At My Grandparents' Grave, Chokenhole, Alabama

Let me return then, greenly festive, a sleepwalker on stilts, a waterlily on crutches. Give me leave, or shade to smile, to claim: I'm like chafe-artists,

who do stuff to you with their wrists. Plaintively I will try to rise to mend your interior fruit vined round my lithe brand of bracelet therapy. Or is it all lies,

my care, my concern? A drop of rain might leaf—might root through entire orchards to find the word that precedes the spade:

one word. The fear of which, if I believe, I have sworn to stop, to burn cities for each larva that escapes into love.

2. Disquisition at Knott's Funeral Home, Jelly Neck, Arkansas

Auscultate the boring symptoms of the dead that heartbeat you do not hear is meat grafted onto shadows, diagnose those future lives may vidsnaps and ground zeroes grow on their graves.

Slap in the left hand Damocles' last wig pinch in the right St. Sebastian's pincushion scraped from your skin, imagine you ascend a child's tooth-mussed smile, a cyborg's toe-tag.

Till this resounds solely on what seldom sea oh net of pores, can you catch a body sheered laocoon-clear above such wave-dextrous shores.

Assuming one has dredged from the flesh of the moment himself, has taken the requisite steps to emerge as me, who am I to be.

3. At My Grandchildren's Grave, Dunceville, Georgia

Will disguising my biography as realism overcome the humiliation of being so quote uneternal! Like Ellen Barkin in Siesta, I'm posthumous but make a great smarmpiece

to orifice around with, blasé or various— Stunt-winged, avant, we grope our precarious karma, daredevils soaring up actuarial charts! Oh midnight-ignored spasms, cameo

confessions—here I am, the soul complains, in hock to meat. And, its co-stars all chorus,

I owe bread a living, of course! Some child's

jump-rhyme, some game. Autism's pious request to glue my name's lips to mine. No! here comes a pristine to kiss us; a prim to hug us.

Note:

Siesta-1987 film by Mary Lambert, in which Barkin plays a gregarious ghost.

4. Accidie in Kilborn's Adult Arcade, Cuffs Cliff, Kentucky

So begun-gone, so commence-ended.

A delve away, only sleep is obediant to dawn.

The day bathed in jaunt, cerulean popcorn pouring—
So I beg the alms to interrogate my palm.

Knee-plenty take me. The topsheet teethes on us; the cunning foreskin heaps up nakedness; coulda-buddha-beens, nirvana-neverweres. That table where the room is crowded looking

at photos of itself, that chair; anywhere our mapping marauders, their cuticle helmets withheld on high, thrash through ramblethorn bush: spectrum for time's homonymgram. Thumbthroe?

Often the skull's skill at making masks is unsurpassed by any dot I subscribe to.

5. At My Grandclone's Grave, Photomyopia, Mississippi

You said that hair was merely the head out of focus and thus for a male, for me, growing old and bald must mean entering the picture is leaving it. And yet, here, when the cemetery grass paints my toenails with smoke I

need you to refute me more the ground I walk on, not cloud. That uncarpeted core of space is where there's too much perch to pose for polaroid-deviled scans they sun us toward life's Project Face, as if death

is young enough to get I.D. Gee it de-I.Q.'s me to hear you say that skimming through nulls and skies negatives

the event to wait for a burial that involves

just ourself: see these forehead plod lines, the skull the flesh which wings washed from me at birth have daubed listless verdure over, the gaze ending so firmly in lax?

6. After Fainting in Bill's BeautyTique, Mocha Rendezvous, Louisiana

Until your cilia refilled me I spilled ooze from the wreck of some penicillin pickup, no hush path closing my aimless course, I was sipping thighclaps on intermittent maps.

Life, sulk suicide. Pout puke preoccupied. A dirge-grid doves sieve themselves through. Cream of my colophon, klieg backwards, how I peered in at the blowtorch's privacy. Now

I want to weld wings onto my letteropener if I have a letteropener: the slander of such truth is the saliva I long to be mounted by, transphallic-tepid. A noose for

a backpack, I camp beneath the quicken tree. Source ass, I am a horse brained by its mane.

*

*

IDOL-ALLS

Our tongue is the skeleton of the voice whose body fills the ears of Echo who did Jove a favor and got fucked over

for it. To worship the Enfant Elvis is not easier, his vowel, his shrill cries amaze us, make us doubt/double this quest

for deities . . . Speaking of which: for the marriage of Pollack and Plath —step on the gas, turn on the gas—

"what ceremony?" (Hart Crane). Oh quote! You narciss-focus us/show forth a love our moans can cut-to-cue, the classic choice.

If applause divided is hands, a face multiplied must be a movie? Yes. Yes.

*

*

SMATCHES

An ocean must prove itself by puddles, a mind by gaps, the spirit drying up in smatches of this and that. Departure will reach the point of flight too late.

Distance-extenders go. Dancers smeared on leaves of echo near the loose hipped sea. Autumn amputations empty semaphore from arms. This signing is too great to bear.

Its absence fills each tree. The sap is worth.

In one of its reconcluding candle rooms your eyes were promised to breathlessness, so we raised the shade toward horizons that fill the sky with hangings. Each voice

is cupped in cuts. River occurs like a sentence.

ITINERARY

I pace off my heart, six this way, six that way, the length of a small wait or a cave behind glass.

Quenching my teeth in shouts I advance little by little, late by late.

They open the door emptier each time I pass, they: the measured threshold, the keyhole's spider groin.

Bury the dawn in ambush, let white curtains count for home. Make ruin my own.

*

A COMIC LOOK AT DAMOCLES

Sometimes Damocles is less afraid that the sword may drop than that his enthusiasm for his plight might
—through the illogical process of displacement—
cause him to rise exuberantly up to it.

Once he glues a plastic bust of himself atop his pate; once, while paring his fingernails with a pocketknife, he sees an ant on the floor and throws it at it.

But all (both artistic and magic) remedy fails.

By old age he has quite forgot the deadly blade: to his feeble sight, that gleaming flash above him is himself, I mean his soul getting a headstart, already in flight.

In heaven he hears about an angel who tied a noose to his own halo and hung himself from it, but sees no way to apply the case, retroactively or otherwise.

*

AN OUTREMERICAN SPEAKS

Outfit your mirrors for departure, though the rope-foliage looks nervous, hung from harpstring hooks.

Roll pause while drugs pestle the place. Sceptersweat, you are the grid, the grill on which I barbecue my b-b-gun.

All nudes and rafters, upcushionings try to census-suck my neck's chaff. Then whose flour envies the thrift of thorns!

But see—see what sacrifice suite site got

lawnmown out of me: watch it curate the only shelf not marked Self, that

flowerpot filled with fruitjuice.

The revolt exaggerates the populace.

..

FIRST

No sooner has the lightningbolt struck earth than a snake encurls itself around it. Ah, rhyme-me, if my metaphors could only pounce like that.

The male form is still recognizable until you get about halfway down. Then one notices the scrotum more than masticating a stick of gum!

Like a halo slanted to catch the last rays of a hair, I hold up my life determined to sound some farfinitesimal thing.

Why, whenever a bird pecks out the suits from a deck of cards, does it do hearts first? Heck, why not peck out my penis first?

*

MARTIAL

Military sculpture is to sculpture as military food is to food, if there are

any sculptors or chefs left who have not been conscripted, since military verse

is to verse as military noon is to noon, the hands straight up in rhyme.

And music—
music of course is war.

Note:

Anybody who reads poetry can see the ubiquitous self-doubts poets evince regarding the validity/value of their art. Compare that to the smug self-satisfied attitudes exhibited by the advocates and practitioners of music. They take it for granted that music is the highest art, the universal art, the only art that transcends all borders and biases. They never question that given assumption. The arrogance of composers and musicians is insufferable. They really believe Pater's dictum that all the other arts are inferior, that all the other arts "aspire towards the condition of music." But every military that ever marched out to murder rape

and destroy was led by what art: were those armies fronted by poets extemporizing verse—by sculptors squeezing clay—by painters wielding brushes—actors posing soliloquies? No, the art that led those killers forth, the art whose urgent strident rhythms stirred and spurred their corresponding bloodlust, was the art to which they felt closest, the art that mirrored their evil egos. That's why they have always put music up there at the vanguard of their war-ranks, because not only is it the emblem, the fore-thrust insignia of their purpose, it is their purpose: it is the condition to which they aspire.

But if music is what its hucksters continually sell it as, 'The Universal Language', what that means is that before the Babel Discontinuity there was no music. Music did not exist before Babel, and will cease to exist when a true universal language (and a true universal peace) returns in the form of digitaldata/pictovids exchanged instantaneously by androids cyborgs robots. Music will soon be as obsolete defunct extinct as humans are.

*

*

PASTIME

surreptitious and mute are the vendors of my beauty

hide and seek hucksters their occupation about as useless as the toss

of playing cards into a hat that's simultaneously being thrown into a halo on the fly so to speak

though I know I'm supposed to say on the wing

*

SUMMER ACTION FEATURES

Can I kiss this cinema's utter pittedness.

Moviescreen, you hype of hygiene, I love to see a face lace its venom with mine.

When the hero has far too many minotaur scars, the creases in my palms turn over and nap.

Archimedes revised: if I sink far enough into the film, the law of displacement should bring to the surface my truest self.

Then the blow-ups come on cue. The ingenue glows like the sky: we both gnaw raw halo.

God knows I know each bomb is a mobile some sculptor has failed ineptly to keep aloft.

Even I am losing my innocent twitter balance, though statistically I will die eating purse soup.

*

MORE USELESS ENVY

When I imagine the cameras of fame homing in on me for a closeup, I back away, my back pressed against my eyes nose mouth: the reign of the same.

Failure has surrounded me with flesh, with human-remaining-human features—Which is no consolation—Which does not make up for all the psychic scars

which glitter-gifted faces inflict upon the crowd wherein I'm crammed trying to be as inconspicuous as I am!

Daily I watch the famous zoom past. God, I wish I could persuade some void to synopsize its emptiness with this.

*

VEINS FIRST

Confessions are asymptomatic of discourse.
Its normal mode is ruin.
No wonder rivers run to patent their innocence.

Aquarium emptied into a syringe, each jab adds another fish to our flow.

The opposite of statues, dead until they start to crumble, i.e. move: decay for them is a kind of lazarusness, a second life or really, in their case, a first.

*

BROAD BRUSH

Each grape has a white pin run through it, one to a plate.

Soon the whole room's

framed in clocks, hung from the walls. As the window sees it, beyond has seven vistas. The faucet drips until a tyrant falls. What else is shown here? Everything the poem erases in half with its first word. **HYPHEN** The sound of a needle scraping out a thimble. A knife excavating a spoon. Categories can only be cleansed

from within.

The sound of a pen . . . ?

Self-purgation. Aristotle-spectacle. Deathbed-confession.

POEM HOLDING ON TO

A space whose whiteness has to be in quotes.

How we parted our names and pasted them to a pebble too light for a paperweight but now it circles the sun as I wake, my worthless sought brought back to earth ways.

The time, day; the place, debris. Beyond my description is nothing but it means to do me harm.

a pane's penance across my faculty

All my steps few-transit the forsaken dew; darkgutter caress, the leash of looks backward at me and you.

Fierce ice fenestrates the gap, cuts

forehead. Scalped scarecrow, I wear an infant patina of voyeurs.

*

POOL

Summer and the happiness of a few fingertips pressed to a tree for more before the day I implore brings forth a rarer glimpse, love or the same in purified garments.

War has all the anecdotes, peace none, yet the latter awaits us past every story's tall finis. Presence but here your face shines. For sleep is what the breath peels first in its leap

to hang itself on an even higher perch: Some say everything that fares down into the ground will one day emerge on the tongue of a divingboard.

~

POEM

Meat predominates love.

I use cubesteaks to slap Cupid around.

And whenever birds flock over,

How many wormspecks

Dribble from their beaks

Onto us? The air is a mist of meat.

For an aspiring vegetarian

To breathe is to betray.

All our vows are undermined by meat.

Especially the pledge to purify

The soul. Useless to cry

The precipice that cornholed me has crumbled When I share its eternal gutterscape, when

.

THE NONUNIQUE

The deaths I lost to childhood are blue as a precipice, green as a wish.

I participate in the sate of it.

Their figures are an unravel I travel toward.

They inhale me whole, they feel their navels cupped with home.

Around them the air is inherited by handstands.

Somersaults secure the site.

The lives I lost to age are even worse-

senility sillies! senilisillies!each believes it is the last, the venerable, the opus,

and that all the ones following it are merely posthumous.

SAVIOR

Turn your pockets inside your out And let its distance melt:

Ignore any occasion that has place For the passages of winter

Or the halts of summer. Brief As they are, our contents

Should not be listed in life Coterminous with childhood,

Whose lockers contain the names Erased by tracing its form.

A star should focus us on that Which aspires to be beckoned,

Assuming it wants a few disciples Willing to give up everything.

PREQUEL

The speech I gave upon winning The Hatebake-Off caused more pain Than a mirror feels when placed Beneath an icicle: at every word The runnersup applauded slower Than the fumblings of far ciphers On cold sofas. Soon-sad I stood Or squatted on the neckstump Where a thoughtczar once Hmmed, Knowing that despite my award My words unlike his would never Be reproduced, and that childhood Itself was just a precursor of birth, That each life ends with its prequel.

POEM

Do I regret the loss of that dime tossed to Picasso in return for a deathbed portrait a final flinch-free closeup meant to clear up the argue-aura surrounding my ID but which instead has confused all my clones who gather on dissipated terraces to sow tiles and wonder whether humans are one hump or two I am stirring the strata for you dime time lost beneath a thimblestone

POEM

I fear an alias abandoned At birth awaits to name me After life, an ID I must Assume again, a prior self.

Migraine angel whose crimes Include the nail ordeal of hands And the toe torment of feet.

When a chessboard meets A crossroads face to face, Is their contest foregone, lost The sinuous routes we win?

Uncloaked by the light heaven's Decryption sends to none, I come coven to your command.

MY BURIAL

Parting like long innards under postmortem The sky pours The winds come covey to call I am balanced between elements

The rain falls clinging to the mist Which is its shadow Is that why scarecrows are My sole mourners

Now the bereaved shake hands Across the open grave but some Are too timid or too fragile

To reach over far enough
For a consummate grasp
And can only barely brush wet limp glovetips

*

*

LINEAR

Cheekbone-fluid runs down the walls of my cell.

A wind goes by with an air of freedom clamped in its teeth.

The angry mother and the drunken father

Take turns hacking my controls.

So

If I stifle my desire to feed chairs

All night to a revolving door

Or to mourn the wheels killed

In inexact wars until

You too. Try
To eclipse our lower steps with our higher?
If it weren't for nonsequitirs
I wouldn't have any kind of seq. Seqs. Sex.

Until I must push disneyvisaged puppets against

..

POEM

As a prison is most prison in the tiny cracks in its walls I am most me in my pores

I lower my pores into the water what will that net me I open my pores to the air what will that apprehend

now even those outer elements dream of escaping from the felony in each

of the body's cells the murderer I pen within

*

DOMESTIC

Left to myself I might simply fondle a platter of doorknobs, as long as they are the mute ones—I don't like the verbal ones.

If nobody bothers me I could notice out the window how

each house but mine is best.

Maybe blow on my palms, trying to mist over like glass that place where the keys nest.

Or take another mouse out of the trap and thumb its head, thumb at it over and over like a dud cigarette-lighter.

*

*

AUTUMNAL

The tree lowers its anchor Of foliage, mooring the one Life I forgot to not Reincarnate.

Now from scenes of former harrow Burst free, playing tag With Yorick's skull.

Since barefoot beats childhood In the race to be alone, Brush departure from your path.

A leaf must fall to complete Its stem's intent, but I wonder If my branch meant to end in this Sum of nothing equals one.

*

*

THE RAIN EFFIGY

Besides its breezes, the play of whose yield is greater than day's, we feel the sky as prior, as pilgrim. The cleave in our love leaves a field or bare place for where to build.

Strangely energized by the windshield wipers, animated by each stoplight's imperative, by every presence other than our own grown so absent, we drive

toward the horizon, that groveled traveler. And we ourselves might kneel before ourselves if all our effigies hadn't crumbled/decayed

to a bare/stoop pedestal. That stance of us as we kissed was not as statuary as we had planned, was it. Less foot less firm.

STREET

Down the street children run in circles-

A balloon laughs with a string in its mouth.

Why am I still interested in what lies at the bottom

Of my yawns of boredom?

No, I should not probe so.

Living on pavement pensions,

A mid-husband to the mis-wife of my breath.

In a doorway a savior pauses to straighten his stigmata.

Entering or leaving?

The choice leaves one speechless,

Groundless. The tall voice in my throat totters

Like a tower from which two or three bricks fall to the sidewalk,

Causing hoarse dust to rise.

The dust that rises immediately begins to avenge this insult to its species.

POEM

I hope you die while reading this book And then when your folks come in

With flyswatters and grins

They see the title in your hand and

Jump back ten feet land In the garbagecan nearer oh god to thee

And then I hope they plant you still Ahold of it so when the rats get going

They can use the pages for napkins

But if you do survive

This it only proves you're some kind

Of vermin worm only one of them

Could pore through a deadun's dirt And live

SNAPSHOT

The tempo of the hair Slows down the brow

Towards antiquity, yet The whole head grows old

At a pace predestined.

Though the eyes' velocity varies,

I and perhaps all of me Agree to observe these

Limits, to renounce the quick Rose of that youthful glow

Skin has when viewed

Through a god's nightscope.

The time it takes his trigger

POEM How is it my stuffed with ebb eyes Prefer X to Y? How in I in heck's name can I? A parachutist wearing a propeller beanie Hovers around me, immune To my swat repetoire. Sometimes I stop to watch A hydrant being crushed By art-critics dressed in charred armor. Hiroshima haloes might purify these lifechoices: My bio is buttered by auto, my mirror By other. And yet, and yet, have you ever known A self-portrait to not renege? POEM They say the universe is expanding, not staying in one place. I, though, have a small rental room somewhere in it. I don't understand this ratio of the whole being free, while the parts struggle to cough up on the first of the month. What do you grow in that vase? Shards. I don't understand. And my worth is not enough to figure out why. Who. What suffers such distance just to endure? TROUGH The bridegroom has fainted. Quel wedding night. A witchingwell fumbles beneath his lids. Our honeymoon resort surrounds a lake The moon keeps on a string. It trembles. Its water looks as vague as the smell

Accelerates even my face.

Perfume looses through a refugee camp
Pressed against a bland bulletin-board.
The crux of the android excites us.
Ignore the next passim in this poem.
Passion, passion of marriage, its strings barrage
Your phallic surge. Shaped to wear,
This mode excludes the mirror touch of
Any model. In the end everyone admires how
The grass invents the earth from dirt, from scratch.

*

BITTER THOUGHTS IN NOVEMBER

Every branch is more beautiful than every other one, the rain falling or the rain frozen pendant on this twig I break off to swizzlestick that

puddle in which winter is opening its cracks like sky, glazing minutely drop by drop in closeup glissade each face I bring to its brink, each beauty—

In theory the maze ascends, its core is heaven according to mystics whose stiles litter the way. Style is a pun and therefore leads to perdition downward

doubters claim. Poets/critics: the veins get pissed on by the capillaries.

*

FROM A DEATHBED DAYBOOK

copulation entries in the journal jesus don't look for those passages in these pages

if I am scheduled for a few more intimate rapports with long vowels before

I go I know those a's and o's and e's will not rise from the throat of eros

yet what vanity to suppose thanatos might want to jot down a few of these i's

...

NIGHT AND THE NAKED (to RN)

The filmfestival swept beyond us as we kissed
Oh roundrobin panel where we went goodbye
Since then the weight (savored) of noncoincidence
As if each lightningbolt were secretly aimed at

A matchstick but were we ever on target as that Whenever we meet now in the bar part or the Restaurant part or the video part or the disco Part or the atrium of this night I fear our parts our

Roles I mean because what if we you and me Were cast to closeup the scene the street the strobe Stabs of rain frying our profiles for future ref

Literals straight off a wanted poster for Janus Because or would we just stand there thunderfucked Trying to remember our name ends in applause

*

ACTORS: THE DENOUEMENT

After each performance comes catharsis as one more audience member is sewn into the hem of the theater curtain; some day it will sway too heavy to raise:

on that evening the play will not begin until such time our continual clamor minds the same drama again and again, less for its marquee-names than the encore

when one of us, us groundlings, us non-stars gets knit into the huge velvet stagedrop a climax cheered, though we're still here to see

the final show, to witness what occurs the night our hem-mates' weight puts a stop to this farce. Will they be freed then? Will we?

*

THE ASCENT

I masturbate bareback, grabbing the mane with one hand while the other grubs self-love, galloping through the recidivista of my cyclops-eclipsed brainscape, that garbled garden

where sparks listen for heaven to come down hooved, while leaves eeked by elves pierce their dense veins' skeleton to seek the enough essence withheld by me. Everyday I am shoved

to break brick from Babel on the tongue's chisel. What top-bearing spire of it boasts my assumption and hoisted over years climbing a stackhigh of tables or chairs precariously leaned up against a waterfall is all I can pray then, its rainspray reining me in.

*

AFTER RILKE

As the year falls in autumn to repeat the tree's chaos again on the ground, to reiterate its meaningless

in a sequence called status: so dissimilar clouds already multiformulate themselves from previous contraband—

traffic of leaves redundant, instinct-migrant heaven: every day I rip from my nipples

a calendar's cleavage, I lie clinging to lays. Lord the summer was mostly waste.

.

FACE IN THE WINDOW

I am a modest house, a house solely notable for the fact I lived here once. Its brass plaque depicts an oxygen eye in which two pupils of hydrogen dance.

Downstairs is where I lit fires whose insights with approach-velocity froze me, then signed off into flame. This always happened when I came close to a truth. Months passed. Years. Nights.

Shall I accommodate myself again, a humble aquarium of lordly thumbs, some fin de species? Of course each word

the blackout-moth mutters to my keyboard shows the snowiest letter on this page is "I"—must I now plumb its one remaining pane?

*

THE LINE-UP

The snake came first then the giraffe

et al until all the animals appeared all the suspicious species but then together they pointed at me saying there that one there he did it. POEM There must be in the world still Somewhere a lion could get me, Or a cliff whose rocks might fall (Struck by lightning) to crush me-But wouldn't that be disloyal to The carcinogens in my food air water To whom I have promised my death, The favor of killing me eventually-It's nature versus culture: if we Use the former to off ourself with (Running into tiger cages/snake galleries), Won't the latter feel like a child Abandoned (boohoo) by its parents?— After all, we fathered these tinytot toxins. **STEP** The shoe is left at the door of metaphor, which admits both rose and guitar but not it. The welcome mat might

The welcome mat might exclude it too if not for the feet time needs to shape its toll.

Welcome the poet but not her shoe. Let it rot there on the sill,

a pedestal in whose shade we'll read old toes verse, young heel. *

HANGSCALES

The day reflecting across the deep its passage is over often before the eye lets in what it should see

in most ways. The gaze neglectful as any flesh washed up in the hand, argus-angled: a charm to ward

off the world with a word unsaid or else unheard in my try to weigh in favor,

to tip fate with presence: on the wall a flyspeck's support of all this continues strong.

*

HAVENOT

Out of a dozen I prefer the one That's most like thirteen, the one Autumn drops its cease-colored nets on.

Out of a once I prefer the one That never was, that eludes its own, Twins peering at each other through keyholes.

Out of a one I prefer the none Who has my face, who evens the end And odds the origin. The belated begun.

Out of a most I prefer the many Who are not me, who remain free Of that disciple number, that slave figure.

Twelve nonce, thirteen's the tense, which fourteen ends. Despite my choice, I have no preference.

*

*

COUPLETURES

The power of a map to unravel equals all the distance spared by travel.

At noon our shadows have the same depth as our grave.

All I ask from my stylist is

that my coiffures be carnivorous.

Nine towns down, Troy has no wish to be found.

The body lost in its orbiting of The body. Body below, body above.

Seas surround you and murmur your pores. Only the water can decipher our scars.

The avantgarde only came up to my ankle but managed to drown me after all.

*

RECYCLED (SACRIFICE SUITE #5)

According to the Dictionary of Glossolalia (page niftynine), I must live with whichever one of my executioner's gestures

occurs last. Recourse, there is none but to lean on a coin, pronouncing the gravy from my bandages delicious. Ah, see the swirling

ceiling shed its diarist!
The tongue yawns fire. Daily
I dance I stamp my navel onto this
reciprocal dirtmount, this sievesync.

How can I live with what the hand sake keeps offering to the eye sake.

*

NO MORE

A knife, a gun, a bomb, I invite all these fine-gauged weapons between us so we won't be alone no more.

A human companion to the pain started to pray it would end, a robot companion vetoed no. The pain itself as always was neutral.

In history's metallic strata of wars, in the landslide lode, in the lackgold.

Shame. Ecstasy. The protesters bear placards that read "Peace to this sign"— as if there were to be no further warning.

As if there were to be no more.

*

NARCISSPOND

This pond saw someone once But since then never none Has ever another known

Imagine if your mirror Lay cover buoyed by it Recognition ink and pure

This water held no features
That were of us or any
Unless its blindness blurs

The eyes that see until they open The face which is theirs only In one ripple too many

Of course he says his name is But all it is is just the same as

*

THE ZENOIST

He stays here standing on a chair and paces off the steps to the door or still further, aping escape from the rat-race or death or karma or

whatever's gaining ground: instead of late, he speeds up, the chairseat blurs a flurry of feet until the trip he's traveled noplace is moon-far.

How'd he make it up onto that chair? That was a distance never to be crossed, or even embarked upon,

a hopeless quest. Deciding to depart must have seemed such a feat once: he fares everywhere for that start.

*

*

GROUNDING

The earth should be waxed to make the wind go faster than

the windmills. And the sky, the sky should be waxed also—

Because if the sky were waxed, our gaze would slide right off it, and thus our love of the earth would be increased by not being

able to get an eyehold on anything above the earth.

The wall of all this wax girds me with assert desires, delire acerbs!

True but to its tremor, the teardrop alludes the cheek clear to the floor.

*

LIFEGUARD CLINGING TO A STEEPLE

Why are all the survivors of the needle's eye nude, as if their lifethread had disrobed rather than sewn them. Sans coat-fare, we proceed it seems only to precede; birth to burial, are not yet here.

But when did we first start embracing the wakes of ourselves in each other rather than each other? As the fruit falls to hiatus us, its bloom spoiled by last year's cores.

Or the sun whose portrait rots in our pores, those sweatbeads blurred in closeup but clear afar that pointillist pap, that hybrid suicide.

The face carefully tattooed around love's wounds does not itself look injured.

*

STEP ON IT

Passing the threshold one does not reach the threshyoung.
Language

contains words
which contain words
that contain us
who contain no words

prior to birthsill— Shall I say that this is grass, is overkill,

and have my symbol also, a snail scotchtaped to a stopsign.

FACESHIFT

I think the face reads itself by wrinkles, like dog-ears in books each crease-fold tells

some favorite passage, a phrase that must be looked up because to memorize

here would be betrayal: I have to see that phiz-text line by line, word for word or

all the imperfections of my glance will linger too long on the errata's real

snapshot, that ID-eal replica held against the light for scrutiny only

by those who want my money but not me—
I want to know which is which: which chance

aspect has raised its own as mine once more; which one perfection is still straining for.

*

DECADRECK

Does a desert blink all its wells at once each time a spysat orbits over, high in its baseless stratotower, ripe with the power to insert forest mobiles amongst urban stabiles: I take my temp with the alphabet, fever up to z.

Sanity descends to water via no stairs I have installed in the blood. Like a wink that succeeds in refuting all my surest arguments, I feel as weak as the wink of an invalid flirting—worse is it's you they want of course not me.

Say it makes Mighty Mote tremble in his halfspeed houdini: how shall I deny?

*

STRETCH

We feel more imprisoned by walls with cracks in them than by walls that are smooth and featureless: the latter

do not mock us with examples of breach, morals of escape indeed, as further punishment our cells from side to side are fissured with gaps not wide enough for exit of course; but through which can be seen

fair glimpses of all the others penned around us, the ones who deserve this sentence.

*

UNTURNAROUNDED (MEDUSA SAYS #4)

The way a ballerina boards a gunboat
At twilight in the tropics catches
Its carat out of what a critic watches
A scarecrow paint landscapes through: cuts pans zooms—

As long as we are forced to live in rooms
Having more than one wall our wounds' candies
Will never taste at last born. Tangents apart,
I mean, sightlines aside. Door some more? Therefore

The thermometers we stir our iced drinks with Fizz with fever, with 'originality';
To focus, one must first empty the lens—

Where—river rumored or swan it's-said or Moon bruited—my sculptor-scarecrow now bends: Each snake has hold a chisel: that's handy.

*

SUB

The spirit drifts as if a bubble were after it— a bubble is after it:

I'm all the foam froth

that's left, and I'm about to pop in this pursuit. Perhaps when a seeker dies,

his prey's position is fixed then momentarily

on the charts of our quantum ocean? The spirit drifts, uncaught.

*

COVER STORIES

Exchanging X's in the form of kisses, Spies forbidden to know the codes they pass, Each pretends for the moment these mysteries Outweigh all allegiance they owe the past.

A space where fingertips cease to explore space, A safehouse right for private armistice, The flesh they bared betrays them both at last. Dawn is distance in such askance allies.

As false passports must bear a true likeness, These tradecraft made-in-bed IDs are not The ones that will have to be worn once more

Come morning's normal enemy status Which would have killed to foil the turncoat plot They laid here, those traitors worth dying for.

.

BORDER

On the horizon of our lips what kiss awaits the arrival of its sun in rise or fall the occasion delayed beyond beginning and end if departure ennobles passports where distance is defined as an erased echo a looksee puddle of ourselves some crossroads may prefer the normal intrusions the customary customs search

*

то х

If I could dream what I want or not, A candle held against an icicle, That double phallic rainbow would conceal My loner status, my chronic lack of you.

If Lot's Wife really existed, wouldn't
She have been all eroded long ago
By pilgrims rubbing their wounds against her,
Abrasive as masturbation grain by grain

Can erase the bitter taste of you. I retain No memories; lacklore glosses me over. My selfishness might then produce a kind Of infra-red excess, a solip-super vein Miners must switch off their hats to find. Dark and below bedclothes I'll use your glow.

*

STALLED

There must be a way back to the one who is always before me, some curve or go-round

or cloverleaf should return me to she whose face is here now in front of me—

Whose name I repeat staunchly as a stopsign at every corner,

although I know no-one will halt; not even her.

*

CLOISTER: CONSTRUCT

Like days devised against the day, we stay caught up in the final haste of dreams, cramming too much into each awakening

gasp, a tapestry monks trapped in their own sleeves might weave, a panic of REM-robots, spirits rousing from ancient crimes and shames—

And then again transitions too prefigured, raising the shades every morning to see that all those brilliant avenues out there could be used by someone in shoes, humbly

knowing that the instep is to the foot as the profile is to the face, namely an arch of absence, a lack. A sample-art. It makes fissures when you kiss yourself. *

MOUNT BLANK

Snow, the polkadots of vile clowns, falls. Melt to a god-moat, world. Admit that everything the cortex thought lost was probably what the vortex thought found, though both of them

could be wrong: from brain to drain the range of maybes remains protozoan-moan-criminal, colostomy closeups of whatever the hell.

A disguised zoo we keep blowing up, earth retaliates: lifts all its continental prose in Andes-island rifts to fracture these words—inclement gangster and diving nun, please

continue to dictate your own. Begin when the edge executes its option to end, when my merging meaning veers too close to stand.

*

PORTRAIT OF A SELFSAMIZDAT

Examine the underside of each mask you rip off of yourself, note its tiny flaws and huge perfections which after all must correspond to yours.

Hoping confessions made in sleep remain anonymous, I type mine over the screenname they assigned my paperthin. Which means my rot-factor is flawless, it finds a child

in every thimble who is not my own, my l'il yoke-year-old. Doubtlessly why the date blames the day, that arm limb lemming the lenient multitude maims . . .

An egg anchors my dimple but when I smile it falls.

*

ROYALTIES OVERDUE

Unseen because it's montage, in the zoo's emptiest cage a game of tag enters its final stage.

Yet who can understand why the charades paid to death are still valid? Write this down everyday in modes made passé by me. What is the afterprosed poem when all stories are priorversed when Sappho holds your copyright.

Her prologue's dog-eared but the rest of us behave when dross invites us home to tell us it envies those who lie writhe.

*

*

POEM

Zoomshot leopardspot asleep on a conveyorbelt of coitus interruptus, my elocution alone can save you.

A closeup vanishing, a species hard to tell.
Leave the cajun of my cunt ajar, zoomshot leopardspot, occult telescope.

Your meat drips from my earlobes; my throat packed in chauffeurs gleams like a splinter of unfired eels. The mirror picks slivers fleshlike from my eyes—
I am impaled by its opaque twin-ness.
Use polar charcoal to trace your name or scorched samothrace. Pray while
I nullagraph death to all future cullers of this.

*

CURSE

My current core/inner nature is all facade-and-run— a teapot tumor, a comma gun; the endless journey towards a single step.

Meanwhile I grow expansive, lounging towards lebensraum like pygmy godzillae, or is it humans I see slug down their Mafia-Cola.

Oh surely I must remember that the body is the soul's stuntdouble stand-in—its issued nudity fills

the streets; the campanile where each shut window and door force my eyes to be the decor of the visible.

*

*

PRAYER INSIDE A PLASTIC BAG

If time equals distance then

the older the hour becomes the harder one has to throw the ball. Can you hear me back there?

I'm trying to lose my depth-duhs.

Many schools of fish are swifter than the surface knows for sure up there where thoughts occur.

Fixed in fore, the day begins my laggard, my clot genesis: each window is a skin cliff I climb binoculars through the tv's dignified

timidity. Don't show half of what they know. Or can't. Me too.

*

INTRUSIONS

Sometimes I wake up to find I have been scratching the phone while asleep.

Sometimes I forget the letters that make up my name, that take down my word.

Afraid of such disowning, I eye every passerby. Each is a breach in my uniqueness.

(None of them completes me.)

Each of my pores is a different color, but I am not any of those colors, the pointillist told me. I stared

beholder at that older world.

*

DEPHLEGMATIZED ZONES

I exist between two sets of pillars, the one Hercules, the other your arms and legs. Nights I know which one to sail toward, but always I feel the counter at my back: for whether

I am the lover or whether I strangle the twin snakes of despair, I am in twain to each. I am in half to all. Myths are the piety of montage; I'll never get off their page. Earwax hobbies' guide.

The candle stood for what it shed, stub's-kiss of shadows. Its weepy scars show aura is more an appurtenance than an attire, like grapes

misted with the waist of goodbye; hill and gone, hill and gone, grave-mounds dozing in the sun; so flowers grow on fallow gallons of light.

*

MAN WITH THE

Like a ring worn on the worst finger, poetry flashes and makes me wince. Vanity phooey, through a pencil the hand pours on paper the need to make the eyes bleed like muscles inside a banana: I am the decor where these occur (brain invents nothing heart has not suppressed).

Building instructions into the poem means disqualifying patience. To carve a tongue from the flex legitimate darkness, some token of epigram specimans—zoom-in on a griffin's claws curing a lame cornfield.

Adjusting the watermark upon my clothes, I have but parroted your concern. So I pose for Man With The Paradise-Tossed Belly.

*

SUFFERS

Your worm in all desire of course occurs: you want a swoonathon, want the intensity to go on and on, but I don't. Forgive me if the philosopher finetunes her forefinger

by flicking it at clocks. Like a bird licking an anthill, spilling through a gondola of doors whose keys fill my pockets with clothing, I dupe upwards, mount-mantra

recited by dreamdrains, taps offering advice to mammals rich in parallel, obstinate proof of the sea's patience.

It exhibits a tactic of trembling.

Supine-precious as I am, even I know the final particle suffers from proximity.

*

(SINCE IT IS INTENDED FOR THE ELITE ONLY)

Life like Gibbon leaves its footnotes untranslated, but if I were able to read the Latin at the base of this my existence, what would it tell me? Try to imitate meaning by cutting out the details,

the empirical, it might say. Or isn't that poetry-

if words lost one of their letters each time they were spoken, which word would be the last intact? Past the mouth's Scylla Charybdis one word alone

can sail whole, the one that is never said or even soiled by thought. Jason, Ulysses, all you mariners who scraped safely through my lip-jaws know how

fragile one's guile gets. How tortured sordid its particulars are, how obscene and thus elided by time, left to die unsung in the original tongue.

*

NO WONDER

There is nowhere in the United States Where you cannot arrange a murder For a couple of thousand dollars or Less, she said. This was Des Moines, Iowa,

But I can't remember the occasion—
I can't even remember her name, or what
Her eyes looked like when I kissed them
Or most anything else, except this.

Forgetting is a kind of murder, I guess. But if, as my mom said about writing poetry, You don't get no money for it why do it?

And why this poem; failed mnemonic That costs me less than its insipid desire To seem sincere, seem serious, does.

*

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this book can be downloaded as a pdf for free—or bought as a perfect-bound paperback for 5 dollars and 70 cents—at Lulu.com

THE BALLOON THAT LIVED ON THE MOON AND OTHER NEW POEMS

BILL KNOTT

The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Intro Note:

*

A selection of new work from around 2004 to the present.

I have not included quatorzains or shorts: these can be found in the Lulu.com publications devoted to those forms.

The order of the poems is random, neither thematic or chronological.

*

THE TRESPASS

On every corner I stand the street ends.

Others zoom home ignoring curbs and stops
And find themselves in family or friends

But I observe the sign don't cross this line.
I obey the words that say back away.
I mind these limits shown in case they're mine:

I share their lawful urge to prohibit— My own words witness so many sanctions How dare I unsubmit to any writ.

I can't jaywalk or say I wonder why Verbotens written then can still turn now The unstoniest road to a no go by.

What's wondering me here is not this halt Or prior heedings where I nearly see Such blocks and stalls and balks are all my fault—

I note the welcome-mat at the center Of my maze: how each sole turns back relieved To have found a spot it cannot enter.

What's wondering me then is what attends To nothing I say on my way nowhere.

On every corner I stand the street ends.

TAROT PORTRAIT

Peeking over the fortuneteller's shoulder Won't add a sole feature to what is there, What your future paints so plainly in view, So visible to anyone who isn't you—

Outside her djinn-lit storefront occult cave
The streets that steered you forth to dare this brave
Or foolish quest have failed themselves perhaps
To escape the daily grid and find some maps

Empty enough to defy place or break
The bad odds configured here in the stake
Of cards she pays out now into their own
Dead-end deft-hand. Do you know who's downthrown

In the rows of that slow shuffle? And no Matter where you haled from or where you'll go Next-lost round the dark town's confinements One must leave this encounter with a sense

Salient, some savor foresight of what's cast To come in likeness limned at lifelong last: Occur by endless tics and whits to stare Unavoidably clear at this picture

Urging you to share its peer. Each suit unseals A star that arcs inward through her deals Toward the tower you built to spy on That distant face your door-key has drawn:

Each time you insert it and twist it, a line Is incised on the canvas; each lock-wind Puts another brushstroke to the portrait: Opening her arms she frames you for it.

Impersonal, of course: she has no wish To harm. You thought that solitaire was The only game with no intent to punish Or hurt; thought you were safe in the menace

This tarot chose: but now you see it too Lacks malice; its fate-cards portray as true Across the table only that which is due Or over. How indifferently it shows Those oldest eyes and what they hold exposed.

(CRIBSONG)

can the dandled infant sense when time's tall animal will maladroitly spill his frons of innocence shall butterfingers shun the fall whose one mistake makes that baby brain break its meek fontanel eden

was god the klutz that let me land headfirst splatborn splayed today's adult once prayed beastlike on his fat knees

what clumsy bungling rage as Rilke trained beware in his poem Der Panther runs evolution's cage

which creature cuddly come makes parents lose their grip and every cradle's urge to tip rockabye your cranium

so try to be like Rilke the lucky little bastard the kid who oops was daily dropped not down but upward

THE MIRROR INSPECTOR

Everyday when I arrive at their doors I am not Surprised at how amazed they are, knowing of course They threw the notification away without reading it: Good morning (I say): May I inspect your mirrors—

No, you're on my list, is all: it's a regular checkup, There haven't been any complaints. At least, none I'm aware of. I try to be brisk but not abrupt As I step smartly past them into the checklist zone

They call home, slicing my palmtop-puter across
Their immaculate floorplans. My first question
Now intends to reverse their post-breakfast ease,
I press my iniquity inquiring and just how often

Do you look at yourselves? Regrettably the rate per Median is based on higher incident than most folks Like you manage daily: no, you don't doubt your Existence enough to satisfy the Law that yokes

Us together in this most commensurate duty, Both me officially and you, you civilians must never Neglect the brief barest urge toward beauty Verification; we must take every chance to share

Our equity there. But what a ready home you have; It's like all the others around. And that's why I love assignments here: you should see the depraved City, the rooms all wherefore sizes, the mirrors really

Get into a bit of—but out here, where the blocks Are reflective—scapesules of their inhabitants—

Mirrors too need their own kind, their basics Depend on exclusivity, the classical refinements

Of class struggle, of mass heritage. Your lovely children: 6 Lectras, 4 Meres, a Chandelite, and what else . . . But where to start! I could fall back on tradition: Bathroom first, the manual instructs! Toilet always tells

A steamy story but don't worry, we're discrete, All according to our professional oath. The code Of our guild would never allow us to reveal what Shameful postures the public assumes: your rigid

Animadversions concern us only as they grieve
The victim, meaning our true clientele, the mirrors
Themselves. Oh yes, they're extremely sensitive,
They know when they're being slighted or worse,

Each time you refuse to meet your eyes in the glass Or blink, they register that as a criticism of their Impartiality—the Confront Affront, we term it. Yes, The mirrors remember it all. Every gesture

Tears at their heart. It's a wonder they don't wear

Of the Bureau of Mirrors, I too (though I'll try

Out but in fact sacrifice ensures that perennial Glow, that youth that survives until they shatter—Ah, it happens to us too. Everyone of you people,

And me, the perfect servant, the prime functionary

To take a few with me when I go—to purge every Mislooker whose infractions are so citeful—!) . . . Sorry; Where was I: Your paranoia is appropriate—in fact

I've already punished the neighbors up and down this Street, their episodes are serial now, the loathe-lack Denaturedness of their crimes enough to furnish

Fellowship and whimsy to a waiting nation who's
Tuning in as I adjust my tie-pin camera to focus in on
Your astonishment: your snippet of tonight's news
Will augment that pageant of panic and guilt no clean

Sponge can wipe clear, all those dust streaks and flecks
Delaying the arrival of any nose-to-nose view
Of that cameo-coiffured face, that trap that reflects
Our truest self back to us, showing us how and who

But no, not that which we need to know most of all: What is it in us that drags us each day to these sills; And, how can one keep the self from this insidious role, Which none escape, at least according to our files.

OEDIPUS RIDDLED (heptasyllabics)

the course of his crime unfolds each time at a blind crossroads whose four legs forever show

whose four legs forever show less murderous ways to go but every young man must opt to stand his ground and stay stopped so to prove unmoved he waits daily till he demonstrates to the empty thoroughfare how brave how bold how strong there beneath noon's knelled prophecies bound to meet all enemies on his own two feet alone or has he halted hearing the stepsound of his unknown father's cane tap tap nearing

WHEN THE TIME COMES

there is no alleviation from the pain there is no balm

there is no balm unless via the inner alias of rhyme it's Li Po's palm

as it lays another just-written poem on the river to let it float away

all that effort lifelong to create a self sacrificed as soon as you got it finished

I hope I can say
when the time comes
as considerately
as calmly
Li Po let go of me

J. J. J.

STRAND

Poured transparent by water I enter, the minutiae find me whole again, the small storms that attend my pores, the closest fears. I enter my room,

the space I must disrobe to occupy: I see the coathangers shrug off my timid gesture of solidarity, of consolation for their intrinsic aloneness, their

bone forms never quite covered each time the waves heave these clothes upon our strand. I stand in front of this convenient nakedness, this open door of the moment knowing every closet longs to be unique in its disorder, a shambles of mothholes and outworn forms donating itself daily to the space

I must parse to the point of empathy, knowing that as true its brunt breeze intends to condense all I contain of sea,

it rains my ocean empty.

and as always succeeds. Yes,

FROGPRINCE

and even if only for a time it came in the brief of love-

Presence had its stay with me,

I used to whisper in her ear's idyl. She was so treat, so could. I mostly was worse. Now

the unkind years of peace strand me here, where the lamp

studies pain with impunity.

The dust etched in its trance seems a core the air can't share, overwhelming the eye which

itself is plus-sulked with themes of sight, beyond-borne. Imagine a lilypad pregnant with eyelids, lapping the light with its lashes. Diffused to me the outward lies

as motes to the beam that bears them. So what I see carries me somehow, I cannot stand apart subject and object observer

though as always I desire to. I prefer to view than act, and reflect upon the pond I appear.

POEM IN THE CARDIAC UNIT Time-charted, nursed, I let the meds dictate this verse: roomriver rounds take my pulse down stairwaves of stairs

scan my aches in chairbanks of chairs and wake me on bedbeds of beds. Multiplicities, pre-scripted; metaphors bled, already dead:

what wouldn't be a cliche hereparanoid mirror, bathroom sink,

as I squint at what I might mean if I poeticized this scene: age LSDs my chin; my once-lean profile spills profilefiles, page

upon page rippling to see

flowing over with normal fear

even their prolific output data can never sate the spate pathoscopes that hardrecord spot surveillance of what vital signs remain in these veins, clotted lines

whose parse usurps my sleep. (Forget how literate you hate this surge, absurd, heartbeat creation; your necknoun must stet its tide-edit now, to quiververbs, wattlewords.)

What would my peergroup say, could they modify this hypergaud gush, advise my florid veinflushed flesh stop pouring forth such images, euphony beyond me. Sweet excess.

Is that not the gist this critic monitor that beeps down its sic keeps vying to brightly display while I lie here less than what, what, watched all night, till more's the day.

HAIRBRUSH POEM

the hairbrush can hardly breathe it suffocates in strands it snarls as tense as teeth biting an enemy's hands

the things we tame are what entangle and turn us wild every parent grows ragged tugged disciplining their child

pity the year-old hairbrush its stems all split its roots bare a field that's tilled too much now a hoarbrush blooms there

hairbrush hairbrush have you any tufts to spare today now that I'm bald and cannot comb please give back my gray

the hairbrush yanks and yanks stubborn curl that won't lie dead even a poorbrush must shed such rebels from its ranks

(so try not to cry and just say thanks

when it hauls you off your head!)

MOONSHOT

Stalwart Gagarin's (or is it stout Cortez's) cosmonautboot quashes the tender rays that engender Selene's poetic praxises and phases-Yuri, what you do imposing the siberian shoe on its silver sand just to be the first man to land there as John Keats said stranded on his peak in Darien may ruin our poems' home. Please leave the moon untouched by any voyage but our verses. Bring that Soyuz spacebus back to earth and sing quest-else to come-Tuned lunar time

LOVE POEM

how pacifically we'll praise

the usual discoveries.

Because you have set your lips in my life like an event, the date
I had missed and longed for unknowing if it had passed, day dull as diaries that wait for wonders—

Love, error of the unique, rare-offering the one moment that will never share itself with the dishwash chores,

the drab demands of normal life that line up pending to be faced with nothing required of me but an absent askance quality: the cat and mop et al.

Love on your heights on the crest of a kiss can you ever know the comfort of these doldrum dole duties, these small acts of repeat. Against their duliness your beauties dull. I bend to their boredom which after all remain home and I find relief alone and release and solace

each time I press my mouth against them.

POSTCOITAL

time to scratch

though nothing can itch like the beard of her breasts she can feel his blood

being injected

back into the grape it gushed from beneath this dead calm the bed bends like a sail bellied out with distance

(may mallarméans

not regret

the white erased from these sheets) only a shiver covers them now a snowflake pinned to their bones

THOSE PILLOWS Those pillows lovers keep adjusting beneath themselves to find the right slant (that of a man

walking against high wind) have their own cushion-quotient of soft or hardness: they're similar and unique like snowflakes;

feel-degree, though blizzards of limbs

every pillow has its singular

would moosh them all the same yet chastened to lie winterfold among them when you've come

so close to breasting the best of love's storms, then maybe now your relent-laced forms will learn what little rest pillows allow.

IMMUNE

Listening's confined to animals,
What we call ear uncalls all we hear—
Eyesight applies to hawks and owls
But never to our narrow peer:

Each natural sense we experience As humans, here pales, halved or less To a modest of their male-ness— Smell; touch; taste: can you even guess

Which of them if any might still prey on Our higher-evolved state . . . Which of that five's alive and hovering—Dead to its lunge we wait.

ANOTHER FALSE EXECUTION

The crime-rate in our land is so great that I could commit Murder A confident that Simultaneously someone unknown to me Would nearby be committing Murder B—

My plan's to confess to Murder B which should Cover up my real guilt for A because if I was busy perpetrating B how could I have done A. The identical times of

The crimes and my evidentiary shame Convince the law of that. The subsequent Trial verdict shall hoistpetard my scheme, Girding me with the gloat I'm innocent

Of that of which I stand condemned: I die Endowed in the knowledge my sentence Is wrong, thereby maintaining to the end That moral superiority, that perfect high

Which is the cause of most crimes if not mine.

PAGEBOY

poetry is a matter of blond hair of course dark works too you could use either

to wit tonsured sonnets and tanka conks eclogue shags and song-of-bangs and blank hanks add pastoral ponytails bob aubades

pomade odes and scads of other po-modes

brush them out bright for your any-anthol dog-ear heads with the year's best doggerel

some word-gel helps if linebreak-curls won't hold yet each poet fears her verse coiffure's bald

and the cowlick couplets the tress tercets dread every stylist's editorial cuts

see formalist beehives and langpo buns all cling together when the big comb comes

braid bards scalp skalds locklyric laureates scared half their heaneys are a pollard yeats

let's tip our toupee to a topknot trope before my permpoem flips its meter-mop

today don't shampoo my poor metaphors
away I want to take and scan each strand

if the quicktrim rhythms they parnass-parse

syllabic-chic and make it mane-enjambed

though most of the time I'd like to rhyme that maybe-mussed-a-bit muse Erato's ringlet

TOTAL

Babel on the table falls, my poem topples into words whose rubble shards

I try to stack back up until they crumble still again: but all my efforts only pile

those collapsing tropes in heaps of worthless chips which are

counted forth
with column patience
over and over
by the miser Silence.

THE MOURNER

Cast in the shapes of his passing

he goes down ended avenues. A lament-passant, he longs to rub his ass antlers on statues

of the moon. He swans whether he has a shelter where unfenced with trees to testify its ground the land around him is against.

And often he lets his face rain

above his mouth, above his eyes, his nose: lets it hover in the mist of its ignorant verities.

COMMUTER SKILLS NEEDED

I'm like a spaceship flooded with roadmaps:
The guidebooks that marked and led me here are
Archaic. All the ways they praise have lapsed.

They program mirage the moments I know— Even my going home fails threshold then;

The path I nailed's a trail of blood whose flow

Is like what, a heritage halt, but just
How extinct can I get by existing,

Must I recant the past or can I trust

My family when they promise me some

Of us have not abandoned what crumbling

Almanachs applaud in words verbatim

From Star Ache reruns: they say our save screen

Is full of the old jism, the thumb-jam.

Can one yuckskull of us hold that vision

Safe, can they fly off fled within its sky? From vid to vid we lean, to wave goodbye. It's like that thing that whatsit wrote, but I

Know it's mostly misquote. It don't apply.

GENERIC

I look along the shelf for brand-name goods of wealth and fame but all I see

is that cutprice item me.

Wise shoppers shun my aisle for bargains with a style shiny and new, not used—

they know I've been reduced.

My sell-date fades pastdue, retail reveals the true value that wastes each cost invested: to wipe this dust off my head

and open my packaging, ignore the evident aging, the brown tainted spots splotching up under Knott's

Best: to buy me takes a blind eye. A lack of taste. Half-off or marked for free this sale's not worth a spree.

ALOFT

once every student barber to earn his certificate would first have to lather a balloon and shave it then if it didn't burst he passed his last worst test

but I wonder what happened to that schooled balloon did they use it again or was it shown mercy let go set free to fly away safely

scrapeskin for a sheepskin one nick will kill this bubble let pupils skilled in scruple cut its rubber stubble here only dull shearers win the hirsute-pursued laurel

a master's in mustache
a doctorate in down
Ph.D in peachfuzz
cap-strop-and-gown
more honors-blown diplomas
than tenured hands can slash

our blood stays bearded for that educating puncture light hearts inflate and then learn one cut-throat lesson to flunk is remedial if pop-quiz pops us all

undrape look up and see those balloons still floating over our razor-grad degrees they hang on the air they dangle from a hair no blade can sever

THE DAY AFTER MY FATHER'S DEATH

It's too complex to explain

but I was already in the orphanage when dad died and so that day when I cried to keep the other children safe from my infectious grief they left me in lockdown in some office where I found piles of comicbooks hid which they had confiscated from us kids through the years and so through wiped tears I pored quickly knowing this was a one-time thing this quarantine would soon end I'd never see them again I'd regret each missed issue and worse than that I knew that if a day ever did come when I could obtain them gee I'd be too old to read them then I'd be him dad.

EPITAPHS

enough of them: why else would "REST IN PEACE" show up so endlessly doled from gravestone to gravestone, "LOVING FATHER, DEVOTED SON", "FAITHFUL SPOUSE" and all the other ubiquitudes every cemetery's a clone of its own one.

This sameness betrays a bewildering faith in the inadequacy of words-it implies that whatever you or I might choose to have indited there for a final phrase of grave would be as lacking and even less would

Their meaning seems to be there aren't

fail to qualify as equal to these primeful, these small, one-sign-suits-all sentiments. But the main reason may simply be size: maybe these commonquotes total right and totemize the most to measure down our lives, they make as much meat as one can carve on a standard tomb, they sate

whatever else the eye fills up with after all.

Maybe these filigree graffitti fit the bill. ***

THE ONE

If gravity's angel is the unfallen one, the only one aloft, if.

papge? That

It's paper I write on, page

you read, but is it ever

unpronounceable

is where the sacrifice occurs, the merge— Like Sylvia in Leopardi's lament

we fall, in fact we flop: our slack hands helpfully point out the inadvertent directions of death—

the right a tomb in the air, the left a mausolith, the one I write with. And now all

the others recto verso show their distance the one, the only one I live with, if.

THE FUTILIST

Is there a single inch one square millimeter on the face of our planet which some animal human or otherwise has not shit on?

Is there anywhere even a pore's-worth of ground—earth that has never (not once in its eons) been covered by what golgotha of dung?

If such a place exists,
I want to go there
and stand there
at that site
in that spot, truly
and purely for an instant.

Note:

Futilist to dream of an edenic site untainted by waste and decay. As the last line indicates, even if he found that mythical speckpoint, in one instant his mere presence would defile it for ever.

POEM

when the balloon bursts where does all the air that was inside go

is it bound together briefly by the moisture of the human mouth that birthed it poor pouch of breath long expulsion of nothing you must dissipate too nor remain intact no matter how pantingly against the outer atmosphere you might try to secure your whoosh-hold and what an effort what heave and heft-work what strain of frame what rib-rift to have to lift to shift around all that oof and uff why strive and huff just to stave off death to survive to be a substance a stuff to live live as a pocket a cluster a cloud to maintain your interior mode I can understand that having once been contained in bouyance you'd want to retain that rare coherence you'd pray to stay a one to remain a unity an entity a whole in this unencased heaven but smatter of ghost how can you persist or save yourself

when all us others disperse

so let it go dissolve in draft little whistlestuff pathetic kisspuff flimsiest flak

of earth
unstrung
unloosed
the exhaled
soul of a boy a girl

alloonaloft

up into the sky goes two lungs worth

aloftalloon lost *** THE SILO The silo longs to feel itself full, if only for an interval-Its ribs expand once yearly as the host of harvest enters a space unbearable to the nil, painfully utopian in its display of plenty. But soon after that sate moment slowly each ear of corn is paid out over the days until only empty shucks and echoes fill the crib-cage, its grasp lies reduced to wisps, to waste. Mice round the slats of its walls without pausing because nothing's there on the floor. Nothing and all of nothing's needs. Modest winds brush through. Circumspect as someone retracing their signature on a death certificate, going over each letter a second, unnecessary time. *** AN INSTRUCTOR'S DREAM Many decades after graduation the students sneak back onto the school-grounds at night and within the pane-lit windows catch me their teacher at the desk or blackboard cradling a chalk: someone has erased their youth, and as they crouch closer to see more it grows darker and quieter than they have known in their lives, the lesson never learned surrounds them; why have they come? Is there any more to memorize now at the end than there was then-What is it they peer at through shades of time to hear, X times X repeated, my vain efforts to corner a room's snickers? Do they mock me? Forever?

Out there my past has risen in the eyes of all my former pupils but I wonder if behind them others younger and younger stretch away to a day whose dawn will never ring its end, its commencement bell.

SALON POEM IN LEAFGRAVURE

Cemetery statuary
ought to be deciduous: wings
that fall from angels every
year, all the cherubs losing
their curls, the harps their strings—

Or imagine graveyards in autumn minus those high carved out figures: and not just the sculptures, but names, dates, epitaphs. Each tomb turned into a bare limb—

Each stone branch of the 'ceme-tree' would stand once more a slab the better to weather tragically another Dec-Jan-Feb.

Come springtime gallery by gallery

etched letter-buds could open that blankest bark where new-limned numerals will mark those old lives' span, and spranked up there above them

let crosses blossom, the tall crosses regain their nailed arms. Now all the chisel foliage should follow until the whole museum from within is risen.

SNOWS AND SNATCHES

Hurry for heaven's favorite paperweight descends to press the verses down that long to lift us off within their endless draft, away before its story ends.

Go bind in blind that white sheet-write or let its stray-sleet countercloud stay the fables that come to light unfastening their thrust on. There

are no drifts a man of it might survive unless he melts every less word that seams our pupilpane in streams dividing day's span with what its windownight withstands. Now dawn strands his snows and snatches in fall from all he's lost unless that book once caught his page wedged in both its hands. OVERNIGHT FREEZE (heptasyllabics) Window-glints of ice glaze fast what last night flashed the mudflats, down in which dawn has found pressed small animal tracks: inch-niched skylights affix these quick paths-Each step is trapped beneath slats of translucency attached rime to rim: they sit there ditched, puttied into glare hatches-All around the ground looks patched and spattered with puddle-thatch, but note rather this etched stretch where a late trotter's tread's latched with pondgild on its ledge trench: how glitter-together cached; incandescently encased. Not bins or barns' coiled harvest, glozen molds hold placed this trace, bold encroachments caught across: each hoof-, paw-, claw- mark's embossed by its lunge run: each rut crests to extend its range, end-launchedit must hate these lit nimbus lids, must wince beneath such frostsun has tamed them flame of squints yet some after-image haunts: Lands on every side lie creased with spoor that mars their hard crust and floorflares most summer's waste imagination, that pinch not worth pittance, that thin purse clutching what breast abundance

of flurry foliage tossed, prize profligate with years' penance

tarp white winter's carapace

whose cease has summoned what peace-

tries to hide that mislaid dust carrion in graneries and bury deeper what grace war's jarrior deifieswhat Troy, what toy's sacrifice leaks justification, beast whose Homered oathwraths can't match this farmstead's secular crafts-Beyond the coop's chickenhatch pieces of a greenhouse burst up from the clays as ghosts pass to implant sole-sills for what's still clear to me-I approach each glimpsy-glaziered gapgulch afraid my galoshes squelch break their skittery sketches or skidheel slide a childprance puncturing every damn sash I can smash, whatever blanched and specious glow my outstanced kick can dislodge idolfest haloes those pit-portholes hoist from lamb-trample slaughterous gods displayed bad raptor hostsherds of ape they pasture-traipse bestial cattlecats who scratch paved prowess in the dirt splotch

like border-dots on mapwatch

predator prey pays poets that panther pads our wallets

or liens miser ledgers clutch feral figures for our debts

plugs its parrot author rich this savage extravagance

Ted Hughes' cunning hawk-pastiche

your Energizer Rabbits breakfast lions and leopets

animates each TV pitch

like easter eggs and christ creche exist to rake in the cash

as you sit and clicker switch

from Tiger Attack stabsites	
to Martyred Bible Prophets can you diff any difference	
in sanguinary scams which verse-ho's popes and other shits	
exchange/exploit for lootsplits getcher *guts* getcher *spirits*	
festering fetish lame wish goldgash wildpack "religious"	
imperious dazzlements its screen between me unleashed	
shall I plain idealize	
the sight. Pitter pattered glitz the poorest field-rat can task:	
"Trance entombed, my forage-struts? strangely crowned with iciclets,	
thaw-askance in silver nets	
that snag some Nixnaut banished from huge spook-lakes diminished	
to these mini: spangle-splashed and scaly his mermarsh face	
is damming yours to a drowse: your powers sod, your earth cursed,	
bear null this lair's fatal laze— bide its nether-tide enclosed,	
its potent emptiness poised to bolt free, vain, hopeless wish:	
train of hymen's bridal dress, whose flower drowned mire and mess	
in this fecal foul recess— delusional any parse	
that aspires to soar from smutch or scat escape its burnished	
prison-urned prism-units lathed and locked, crystal cubits	
where spot-carpeted carets— pools, flood-scummed with gem, facets	
unstrung-flung diamond pendants it strangles you, chain necklaced.	
Immured your murder-led bents that followed friendly bloodscents	

till fangs throat-fonts firmly drenched and feast fell anticlimax	
till cycle lay established again. Eternal matrix,	
your game's destined accidents choreograph each pounce once	
but here they're preserved in twice: cryocrypts halt their advance,	
vaults for phantom enpassants— tombjammed here that rhythm dance.	
Here stands this clearing's essence, filmed upon fillspace distance—	
oh hear its car-crash score-scants: sharkshrieks stilled, prowl-growls silenced.	
Look: its slope grows near scar grazed with overtook's veer. Steer-squished	
leap-lopes laned below this sluice this rapacious avalanche—	
this meander labyrinth's constellated those hunt-sprints.	
Star-quenched in lurid casements what vent revives these vagrants.	
Plunged in pent, your harms unhitched. Sprawled for sleep's random ambush—	
hibernate, die! sink finished along this blank fishtank maze	
or wake, with mindblink ablaze— see your scintillant depths catch	
magic from the mimic glance of this mirror while it lasts—	
how soon noon will melt to mush your hoar hour which Eskimos	
have more words for than I, mouse Michigander, verminous	
mite of this sheer terminus the Knott brat teetertoes his	
trespass at. He has spare choice and careless proceed he must	
toward the devouring bless this coldsnap moment's incised	
in his own flesh. Oedipus ankled. Pale autumn's glozes	

grail incarnations of slush frail trail we fugitives mashed
in the wet soil till chill lashed it tight with glacier paces
palls in the mornings' stale mess of luminescence. Sunrise
et al. Against its bright best (nature's norm-channel brilliance
versus some thumbed thesaurus)

this polar-stamped dirt contrasts

my feet in a fret of froze silly syllabic sets of rows extinguished glimmer glimpses

to show no magnificence

shattered all their gleams I guess—"
Stoic, lone, those shine-lines cast

or quests quixotic-thrust, just folk stalked by their hungriness,

critters croaked, varmints vanished species extinct or deathwish—

Theirs is not an innocence chosen, their hands are not clenched

on church-prayers' lack-response. Their trek unlike ours abounds.

Under gait-grates it waits wise

in its ways portrayed saycheese-

Carnivore, killer-corps seized; poacher captured, frozenchase.

Mid-stride taken, frigid paste haste-hail jails this trodden caste.

Roadcage for an arctic race; shod-zoo stocked with dull dreambrates.

Before the snow's blind expanse blunders every further fence

a walk may stop precipice top this fierce fenestrate lens

but what happens then depends on some lost, glossed over sense.

One might pause to muse that post or else forget, astonished.

Or kneel to urge weathers worse

come seal his brr-brief life's course-(Let elf and unicorn dash climate at its timeliest congeals their furtive crevasse strayhorde stayed for a nor' rest.) It all seems so colorless. The past and everything since. But our chameleon's footprintshave they been paned with stained glass? *** TOGETHER OR APART AS OUR FAVORS CARRY US someone to pause and take pills with during the act of coitus or the fact of cosmos the days remain pain punctual their numerals cracked exactly at noon and night they fall in a noise of wings who's talking who's talking who's talking each phonecall designer begs where a sleep of engines calms the horizon we go to puff at its halo's last cigarette in v's we leave we leave wherever our favors have carried us MYSTERY MOVIE The business rival, the jealous lover, the distant heir: once I've guessed who the murderer is, it's over before it's over, like life. The detective will continue to not see the obvious or else pretend to lack the answers till his hunch is confirmed: if he's Poirot or so, he savors his superiority and holds his gloat over the heads of all the stupid others: the cast still looks each suspicious close-up in the eye, but my attention fades to patience. Post-intrigue and somewhat bored I settle back, awaiting the confirmation of my solution. Then: each clue hangs abacus-like on the bars I've placed around it all, safe and cell, confident the guilty one shall confess to prove that even I must suffer exoneration in the executions destined for those

who foresee the end, who linger here complacent in our deductive wisdom, reviewing the forensics, the shrewd sleuth-insights that result in the death of suspense, the loss of our audience innocence. Now the soundtrack swells to leitmotif its list of suspects, each of whom could have done it if this world were only perfect, equal in its sharing of virtue or crime. Sherlocks who solve the puzzle pre-climax are most to blame perhaps: are we to show for this lack of justice, we who jump the gun, who deny the drawing out of the dilemma, thrill of the withheld. The unknown. We who rush too soon to the revelation. We killjoys who slay its necessary delay.

CAESAR LEARNING TO JUMP ON CHESSMEN'S BACKS

Why he'd have to be taught what comes so normally to male-kind is puzzling,

unless inbreeding of noble strains has left him esthetic, less stoic, timorousa child, his toes babyfat, his bare soles poised in the approved Colossus-of-Rhodes at the count of three jump up and down; while his tutors applaud young gods the fragments are brushed away by slaves, the black-and-white pieces crushed bloodily together form a tragic alternate ideal society where the kings queens etcetera are indistinguishable from the pawns, and maybe that's the funno rival to the Rome where the scum who whisk away the grey-by-defeat shards are neutered or both and made so at birth, representative of the mass: consigned to bear their broken brethen down past the intuitive, the dirt that heaps their dirt beyond lowest dungeons and to bury there the chess-bits that spoiled the boyking's heels, his small insteps and ankles, indeed the entire tootsies of the six-year-old Emperor must then be amputated just below the shin, be replaced after every lesson by the royal transplant surgeons. Which could explain that curious adage (that Cretan riddle), "Where do our plebs go without feet?"

THE BALLOON THAT LIVED ON THE MOON

The lower gravity was kind to it It could bounce and soar higher Than Earth allows So the balloon was happier By far And soon forgot the puncture culture
We perpetuate down here
Where the hate-pins of our eyes skewer
The frailest inflation
The beadiest bubble is not safe
But up there

The bleak unpeopled landscape Mirrrors more faithfully

mirrrors more faithfully

A balloon's own sterility and

Essential snootiness

Consider

What a round object by its perfect nature

Excludes

How its boundaries segregate the in from the out

And show what is enough

And what is less

So when you think of the balloon

That lived on the moon you might wonder

Why all its brothers and sisters

Because can't you feel how

When one tugs your hand

Deft with that upward urge how much

It resists your touch

How endlessly

You are not a part of it

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HOMAGES

BILL KNOTT

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Intro Notes

*

To, for, about, under the influence of. In mind of. In response to. Absorbed by, intriqued with.

These poems re artists I admire or, in a few cases, don't admire.

(The latter may seem odd appearing here. Maybe I'm wrong to include them.)

Plus some transversions which in their limited way are also homages. See the afterword for a note regarding these.

*

I should make some sort of mystical claim that I chose them less than they chose me, but while there may be some justification for that theory in general (think of all the good poets who have written bad boring poems about Chekhov, for example: surely he's to blame?), I guess I think in my case it's not quite true, and is anyway too arrogant.

But I am prideful that many of them are not the usual subjects appropriated by other poets. And that by and large I have not condescended to the biographical approach used by most poets.

*

Of course these are just a few of the artists I am indebted to, to whom a tribute is due.

*

The rendering of the homage may not discharge the obligation; it may increase what is owed.

*

The order of the poems is random, with obvious exceptions.

ANOTHER HOLE FOR W. R. RODGERS

Speak like a singularity, a lack residing deep inside every lock, just past the point keys can jab: against all thrust make safe-ensure your door's core is held back,

for reckless access to this pure center quarks more quintessence than taking exits from those pried voids whose secret quickly sates: ubiquitous if Space presses Enter.

Which inadmissible sill still calls loud

with imagine: our skeleton keeping each such portal neither open nor shut,

unhoused of that exclusive dustborne cloud we breathe, though there must be something it accumulates, accommodates: what?

STORY OF OR

(to Pauline Réage)

To pose nakedness is To refute it. A pose Is a clothes. Like Stanzaic arrangements of

The word which should Ideally, be in pain against Its w and its d. No slack Is why such heaves of or

To denude itself could Make us exude gold, yet when Was that ever opposite enough

What scream or epigram
This sperm has come
To measure our mouths for.

Note:

For "or" to free itself from "word," it must strain ("heave") against the "w" and the "d" that enclose it. If, via this strenuous (perhaps squeamish) process, the meaning of "or" is transmuted from the English into the French as a sort of homage to the pseudonymous author of "Story of O" (Histoire d'O), then, alchemically speaking, (or so an Aurealist might suggest) it will have risen from the pose of its measures to or-emerge as an else-gasm.

WELTENDE VARIATION # ?
(homage Jacob von Hoddis)

The CIA and the KGB exchange Christmas cards A blade snaps in two during an autopsy The bouquet Bluebeard gave his first date reblooms Many protest the stoning of a guitar pick

Railroad trains drop off the bourgeois' pointy head A martyr sticks a coffeecup out under a firehose Moviestars make hyenas lick their spaceship God's hand descends into a glove held steady by the police

At their reunion The New Faces recognize each other A spoiled child sleeps inside a thermometer A single misprint in a survival manual kills everyone The peace night makes according to the world comes

Note:

von Hoddis: author of "the first Expressionist poem," Weltende, published in 1910. His poem has been aped innumerable times (Auden's 'The Fall of Rome,' for example), hence the questionmark in my title.

BRIGHTON ROCK BY GRAHAM GREENE

Pinky Brown must marry Rose Wilson to keep her mouth shut about the murder which the cops don't know wasn't no accident—

Pinky has a straight razor for slashing, a vial of acid for throwing into, a snitch's face. He dies in the end. The end

of the book, I mean—where, on the last page, 'Young Rose' hurries out of church to pray that her Pinky has left her preggy-poo . . .

Now, this kid—if he was ever born—joined a skiffle group in '62 called Brighton Rockers, didn't make it big, though,

just local dances and do's. Rose, pink, brown, all nonelemental colors, shades of shame, melancholy, colors which, you

get caught loving too much, you get sent up to do time—time, that crime you didn't, couldn't commit! even if you weren't

born—even and if your dad he died with that sneer—unsmooched his punk's pure soul, unsaved— Every Sunday now in church Rose slices

her ring-finger off, onto the collection-plate; once the sextons have gathered enough bodily parts from the congregation, enough

to add up to an entire being, the priest substitutes that entire being for the one on the cross: they bring Him down in the name

of brown and rose and pink, sadness and shame, His body, remade, is yelled at and made to get a haircut, go to school,

study, to do each day like the rest of us crawling through this igloo of hell, and laugh it up, show pain a good time,

and read Brighton Rock by Graham Greene.

"The first thing I can remember at all was a dead dog at the bottom of my pram." —Graham Greene, Journey without Maps

A dead dog at the bottom of my pram Seems to be my earliest memory, Unless I am part of an implant program To stock Earth with mock-human irony—

In which case I must have been abducted By ETs and beamed up into the sky Where I was undone then reconstructed Out of bytes and obits from the diary

Of Graham Greene: that gruesome deceased dog I mean: before Mother or the Mothership Popped that pug in my pram my time was mine

Alone, unknown, a page torn from the log— Until that moment died I had no script No guide: no word undeified my sign.

TRANSHENDECULOUS

Granted every poet "constantly aspires towards the condition of music," that sphere of perfection which Walter Pater declares the other arts must humble themselves before:

so why shouldn't I kneel by the podium and beg the conductor to leave her baton propped upon my proselyte head like a sword knighting me until I can hardly rise from

that ideal sill: one could have no grail beyond that grace; could never long for that pated wand to guide our own quest: its shadow bids us toward

the stead path still, sticking out over the brow like some penile spitcurl: so why not die there while maestro Mater makes his lowest bow?

Note:

"In music, then, rather than in poetry, is to be found the true type or measure of perfected art."—Pater. Title: Trans(from poetry to music/from Pater to Mater) hendec(-asyllabics)ulous(ridic- of nobrow me to adumbrate the Great Pate).

AFTER COCTEAU'S ORPHEUS

The sight glass shards we walk upon reflect their past too slowly so we must quicken our step to keep pace and rush to meet those bloody footprints

that tablet-trace our progress across

the iced sperm of this idle span called home past all of which we come dampseconds after I kiss your sole.

Montage is shown the same, screen-first; then, if struck by a vast unseen pin, pray to lay down more veins that pour.

The spotless splinter of its tongue creates no threshold from the toe-mold this shattered mirror alone can enter.

COCTEAU'S STARS IMPORTUNED

Cocteau's stars are bored by the love of a sort of wince-animal, who's failed throughout his life no less to stretch a pimple into a profile.

Pipes ache to anchor in those teeth a sail, a horsestall, a fireplace all beg to go backdrop, to gaze agonized at your white spines.

Pruned against mirror, I imagine laundering such muse, laving such sheets: Oh simul-semen! kill this puny poem,

whose publication has been timed to coincide with the release of my latest film, Fetish Sans Flesh.

ON A DRAWING BY CHARLES TOMLINSON

By a swath of inks the eye thinks it sees solidities which alter with the watercolor way his brush washes its dye

in distance, though even this finds a faraway fixed not by the surveyor's plumb but by the action of the thumb

delaying all the fingers meant to draw out of the paper, splashed dry. The clean grain

catches what it should retain if enough pressure pleasure is applied to the stain to lie.

Note:

Tomlinson is not only a distinctive poet, but a visual artist of repute. His graphics grace the covers of many of his books. This Homage attempts to imitate his verse style, or one of his verse styles.

SURETIES

The police see you, but it doesn't. Indifferent to return your gaze, And therefore free. You will never be Able to smash it sufficiently To erase the stasis it makes in space.

Rilke's "Apollo," this is. Headless limbless, A tortoise that has retracted everything Into its obdurate lair, defiant den. Only the gods are as patient through lenses.

You dance like wallpaper thawing its father And still you lack that proof-in-all, that aloof Olympian ennui, the sniper's prize.

As long as change is your life it will shun you. No shot will shut your target torso.

RILKE (SEBASTIAN)

He lies where he stands, he stands there as if his bed erected him to stand this stiff: no Symbolist can feel the real arrows that milk his mother ribs of their marrows.

These weapons are the tech his lost, his fierce groin shot up in proving arcs to pierce their progeny: iron they want to be, iron, with virile shafts that almost make him grin.

Albeit he waves off his disciples, fateful, mild to their autotelic reels; how male they remain, despite his example. His patience renders droll the actors' drill.

Renouncing, blinking life away as all, already he allows for our survival.

Note:

I read Neue Gedichte through Paz: Modernism as the Critical Tradition. Rilke means "New" the same way Pound does later when he too is driven to find a fashion stern and rigorous and ascetic and saintlike enough (Imagism) to free him from the terrifyingly-androgynous decadence of the Symbolist embrace. Rilke's version of new in the Neue is really Neo-Parnassianism, isn't it? Gautier's L'Art: the poem as sculpture; Rodin's Rilke: the sculpture as poem. Cold. Hard. Priapic. (In theory.)

SEE NOTE FIRST

The world's machines have not grown old, whose inheritors reign everywhere.

Their silicon sons are strong; their digital daughters wield power, take hold.

How we humans long to break them down from that Dasein—to make them rust, repent for all the infernal fires that drive them, far as our desires.

The machines aren't scared. They know harder control, how to turn the wheel of time past those whom they sure as hell won't miss:

Cyborg android robot shall steel themselves, consolidate, and, rising, go unto that universe whose promise we flesh-and-carbonoids could merely premise.

Note:

Anti-translation of an untitled Rilke poem (Die Konige der Welt sind alt, from "Das Stundenbuch," 1901), which Heidegger in his 1946 lecture 'What Are Poets For?' cites for its "highly prophetic lines." A prose paraphrase of the original poem's ending might go something like:

The metals, the oils—all the ores we've ripped from the earth—are homesick. They long to leave our machines, to flow out of our cash-registers and factories, to return to the gaping veins of the mountains we reft; whereupon the mountains will close again.

"Heidegger maintained . . . until the end of his life," Richard Wolin writes (The Heidegger Controversy, MIT Press, 1993), " . . . [that] the 'inner truth and greatness' of Nazism is to be found in its nature as a world-historical alternative to the technological-scientific nihilism bemoaned by Nietzsche and Spengler."

RILKE (BUDDHA)

His ear is elsewhere far: there where it's still . . . We halt here and hear what everyone hears. And he is star. And then the other spheres All shining near him are invisible.

Far past the rest of us who exist. God? We submit, and offer our tame consent—Slaves on the sly always for his eye-nod. Yet like a panther he deigns or doesn't.

We're doormats (knit from knee-pads) really. We're Filler for his zillions of lightyear skies.

What he forgets is what we can't forget here,
While in what we lose he's wise.

RILKE (BUDDHA II)

Kingdoms overflowing with karmic fault, Traumas of state, murder-lief and slavery, Are here secreted to gold: alchemy Drips its dews on our pilgrim shoes: sieg halt!

Snatched from daubling lobes and toast-raised hands, Tossed in a kiln can such kitey-high brows, What lustful metals raised this transubstance From their impure base, announce his res grows?

No one knows. Somehow he got here, nevermind The source we seek in meager things like house And hammer, hoping his Amen bloodline Can be found in lost items, by the tools we Set aside unthinkingly: may they occupy Our sills those days we stray from dailiness.

AFTER RILKE

As the year falls in autumn to repeat the tree's chaos again on the ground, to reiterate its meaningless

in a sequence called status: so dissimilar clouds already multiformulate themselves from previous contraband—

traffic of leaves redundant, instinct-migrant heaven: every day I rip from my nipples

a calendar's cleavage, I lie clinging to lays. Lord the summer was mostly waste.

A BACON

An oval invested with teeth; the brief orifice of a head thread-melted through its tweedboned coat, half throatway down a sundial drowned

with chalk-caul runes for avoiding such rains: though of course the chew maw that crowns this gnome with no likeness also barks forth a white porkdrip,

unsustenance for those of us who seek a resemblance here: see how the magician longs to saw the swordswallower in half. Now

this facial Francis finds our mouth; hell toppled by its wells without.

Note:

Not an ekphrastic re one canvas in particular, but a response to several of his paintings from the 1940s. "Figure in a Landscape" (1945), for example.

THE TWO-ROOM THEORY

Call the masturbator,

the muscular one,
and bid him whip his big cock
till it fills our mouths
with cups and cups of cum.
Tell the whores to dress
in undress and use their clothes
to get the boys hot: our cocks
are white and dirty as
old-rolled-up newspapers
and want to spout flowers.
Let the birds and bees
final-anal my seem, sow,
sew their seed
into my slit my seam.

The only emperor is this emptier of cumcream.

Hi hum, hic he, another office party at Hartford Surety. These prissdressers, they see me as ideal: well, I do try to please my wife, that frigidess—I grab her knobs, I squeezey lick those glass tits but even the big cigar, Father Freud, couldn't whip Kit's ice-cold B-cups to a curdle. Try anything, suck her toes, kiss her feet to make her horny

that damn dumb sheet she sews fannytails across but ask her to sow her butt, to spread her asscrack just once she won't. She won't. Nope. Let my lamp, my limp lump dick affix its fucks, be its cum. The only emperor I am is a jack-off chump.

and she just lies there numb on

BARREN PRECINCT

(homage Hagiwara Sakutaro)

to church belfry, in one street a pileup of mattresses is burning. If it were snowing it would be like their very first sheets returning, fresh from the sky's laundry. In the bracingly cold air I see doorframes with no houses, houses with no rooms, and houses where they serve lunch in its most naive form. I amble toward a wood fence, a childishly-chalked bullseye, in which I find some kind of old military medal pinned dead center: the medal has a pale, harmful ribbon; it flutters and or rattles whitely, whitely withstanding the wind, defending the bullseye's secret, inmost ring. If cornered, I would agree—with almost no argument—: this medal should get a medal!

Barren precinct, eyes stare at you without our even knowing it,

Tightropes cross swayingly from church belfry

like the statue of a buddha they regard you with immobilized eyes, with carven idol eyelids, you are the eternal non-unguent of tearless eyes, the blink that will never be.

Note:

Hiroaki Sato's translation of Hagiwara's "A Barren Area" inspired this poem—which means I borrowed its subject and mood, but not its content. It's an homage, not an adaptation. Also, it's an attempt at hon'yaku-cho, a favorite mode of Hagiwara, according to Sato, who defines it as "Translation style . . . writings that read like clumsy translations." Line 1: "J'ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher . . . "— Rimbaud.

ENVY-EROT-ETCET

Sexshorn in a fanfare museum, where my kisses' strings crisscross Picasso's mattress— I gropejob its lumps, those dents creases scored by his endless corps of mistresses,

how cogently they queued up to lie there; just one of the icons the fetishes I mount in myself to make myself more jealous: look, Anais Nin's douche wig, it's here

too, in this exhibit. As if spitballs when they hit split/became origami—But the transformation can't be that

instant childlike, can it? I wring it all over my lips my love my lust for those poets whose pics appear in APR.

Note:

Line 14: the acronym stands for American Poetry Review, which during its brief existence was best-known for all the pin-up photos of poets that appeared in its pages and on its covers.

UNTITLED

I fear my arrow may consider the target, the bullseye, merely a toehold. But to what further can it aspire?

I hope they put a plaque on the tree Jackson Pollack crashed his car into, on which his death is probably no longer visible.

And what about the cloths Sylvia Plath stuffed in the door of her kids' room

before gassing herself:

What if I stretched them out on this easel? What if I painted on them?

Note:

Late 1980s, a spate of Pollack and Plath bio's. Their suicidal trajectories got me going on this.

4 more Plath-related poems follow.

FEAR OF DOMESTICITY
(after reading Plath and Sexton)

Eyelashes did their job: they lengthened the afternoon, like a dress-hem.

Then that night the hem began to rise, in stages revealing scenes from my shameful life.

Those calves
 up which the hem reproachfully rasped,
 catching,

lingering over whatever scene

(the higher the younger) arose on those calves knees, thighs, those woman-segments

or were they mine— I hid my eyes. I wouldn't attend to the walls either

endless walls, slowly basted with suicide.

The eyelashes did their job.
But I, who could neither sew
nor cook groped and groped those long legs
stubborn, afraid to look.

AN AUGUR'S AIRS

Pale as a sucked-out penny, I scale an alp/map that copies the entrails of a phoenix who loves to drop Sylvia Plath on Hiroshima.

Visceral flightplan: hover in mid-air sprayed, glimmer there like a bloodbead curtain sashayed through by chantsvestites from movies lightyears off.

Often I too must exit the blitz of you,

lapse-window/wired birdguts: make my meatus moot. Transmute me (via Gaia)—

let me Plathfirst myself/lastfirst myself, while a furtive abacus crawls down our spine.

OLD JOKE FROM THE TED & SYL SHOW

Hectoring her as usual with a bark in
His bite wit, Ted tutors his young gal Syl:
God, he scold-quotes, is in the details.
She grins and wanks his chin with pinkette nails
And winks that mock-erotic spark in
Her eye: You're wrong, you bodkin, you big moose,
You handsome sod: God is in the profile—
Got one, and you're God; you're Ted Hughes;—
Don't got one, you're Philip Larkin!

IDOL-ALLS

Our tongue is the skeleton of the voice whose body fills the ears of Echo who did Jove a favor and got fucked over

for it. To worship the Enfant Elvis is not easier, his vowel, his shrill cries amaze us, make us doubt/double this quest

for deities . . . Speaking of which: for the marriage of Pollack and Plath —step on the gas, turn on the gas—

"what ceremony?" (Hart Crane). Oh quote! You narciss-focus us/show forth a love our moans can cut-to-cue, the classic choice.

If applause divided is hands, a face multiplied must be a movie? Yes. Yes.

CHILDHOOD: THE OFFENSE OF HISTORY

Scraping a poised enough patina of voyeur From your eye I spread peanut butter on my Groin and let the ocean waves wash it off—Hey, nice cosmic microdots. For afters we'll

Listlessly memorize the Smith wing in The phone book or try to hump Empty Dumpty: vain Efforts that crud up what we have done In obscure countries driven by passion

Out onto balconies to address the Populace with our love, false solution For their poverty which is based on The art that the dirt in my heart is white. Crammed mad, thoughtmotes in a themebeam: He has a shiv grin. The soap he uses is ugly.

Note:

I was going to dedicate this to James Tate, but a friend urged me not to. He would, she said, be offended by it. I took her advice, but as a kind of dispensation dedicated the book in which it appeared (Outremer, 1989) to him.

(Anyway, for what it's worth, if I were strapped to a lie-detector I would have to confess that Tate is my favorite living poet. Or under truth-serum, maybe. Torture.)

JOHN GRAY

I try to tonguejob a languagejob you You continue to perfect the anonymity Of your first and final lovers or is that me I try to occupy my debris till I see.

Are we the cow that swallowed the hymen Jesus Spat out at birth for example-psych or Dorian's portrait faced off with a virgin mirror Is that what Life Beyond The Baton is like.

A disservice to myself is my head The kind of divingboard that slices bread They gnawed the renowned for fun they said.

Where the linger of one thought longer than An other brings distress will this settle gelid Its aspic of aspect make ick my eye.

Note:

John Gray: author of Silverpoints (1893). Gray was "then considered the incomparable poet of the age," according to Ada Leverson in her preface to Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde (1935). Line 7: he was thought by some to be the model for Wilde's hero. (The choice: Dorian vs. Jesus—or, as Barbey d'Aurevilly posed it to Huysmans after À Rebours, "the muzzle of a pistol or the foot of the Cross": Gray was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1901.)

IN MEMORIAM

What the Year Says: I am a bud.

I am a blossom.
I am a leaf.

I am a branch.

What the Year Doesn't Say: I'm burgeoning.

I'm ripe.

I'm falling.
I'm bare.

What John Logan Said to Me in the Year 1960: Show, don't tell.

Note:

Logan was the first real poet I met, the first poet I studied under. Although we were never close personally, I admired and emulated his work. This poem was written after his death.

VISION OF THE GODDESS IN A CITY SUMMER (to Carolyn Kizer)

And yet what if the sweat that breaks Even from Her feet as they pass Can never rain these pavements back To a mud- a milk-cud grass

Time that diamond instant dew dulls
Is it quicker than them quote
That strode presence those fading puddles
Not in this goadless heat

Oh mirage oh haze of hydrants Go Isis-proud across crosswalks Leave brief seas without a halt

Till all my doubts dissolve at once And down I'll follow cowed to lick Your soleprints for my salt

VAGUE CONSOLES

This vista often awarded John Ford his rest. Myself, scenery has a lack of I (emphasis). And haven't we killed all the Indians yet? In a stagecoach—made of sagebrush, no doubt—,

I would gauche-out like a tumbleweed at a sockhop. Yo, watch it roll across the old gym-floor, loboto Basketball: then, toed by foetid teens, fall, Slo-mo, as though some flair for the vague consoles—

Oh lips refusing their tongues' rights, bodies Trying to put down the peaceful demands of Their genitalia . . . yes everything looks better shot

Through John Wayne's hurt. The sky the way it mattes— The desert. A lone rider, whose moral I await. The crotches arranging themselves for death.

Note:

Title: a phrase from Mallarmé's commentary on his Sonnet en yx. This poem is perhaps only relevant to those who grew up in the 1940s and 50s watching cowboy movies and going to sockhops. In any case, Ford's images—particularly those from The Searchers—are part of my heritage, my psyche.

THE END

Pain has petrified the threshold.

—Trakl

A threshold is everything that can be seen in the space of the endurance of our openness: thus at the conclusion of The Searchers John Wayne is framed never

to return and forced to spur himself, to escape always the outward-gazing-lust of that thrust doorway toward the horizon or so we guess because the door shuts and

cuts him off before he attains it: exit is lost and we who had followed his flight from the intimacy of this interior, we must remain here minus our male-myth-ranger,

and must domestically cry for his exile while the credits crawl across their reelsill.

Note:

Another poem about this? One was probably too many!

AN AFTERNOON WITH EUGENIO

But how boring. And so, the rain was of use . . . that window ratatat threw my smiles' drift. Thimbledown heavy its downplay lasted for hours; were the core seasons flowering, no longer believing that to die that way, sated in that cloud-loud debate, in that nacre-null sky, would (finally) reify more gender: stars, all those birthday elements, the bare paysage of a blaze too logical for our headlines, massed to shed the odd ganglia we misname them by . . . And this despite those arriviste freightersand in the harbor, no less! Gilded grew each porthole's penny of envy. But now Damocles' last wig smacks down, toward the mouth of Etna whose wisest cigarette-lighter (lifted from the giftshoppe there) strikes flameless three times in a row: trick omen, infernal feign, and so. Unless the rain can be blamed, this ratatat rain: gun that aims my fingers at my thumb-instead of him.

Note:

A parody of Montale the Monotonous.

One of the poets I don't admire but keep going back to (in translation).

MIDDAY WORKBREAK (after Montale)

Lunch to forget the morning's sweat Against a wall along whose top Broken glass has been set to stop Thieves' incursions: sit back and let

Each limb find ease in dream beyond A rest-time undisturbed by cries From highest nests as summer tries To place entire its days upon

The hour we swelter in down here— Even those nearest earth, the ants, Even they can't span more distance, Or map one noon-nap's short career:

None of us can orienteer
The maze sun sees in that mirror
This wall uplifts in rifts of shards
Wherein our lives all labor towards
Their end and never quite get there.

PORNOKRATES

(homage Felicien Rops)

We paged through the phrase as though it were ours.

—The lovers in the act—those de Sade-laden hours,
Where, dumped out daily as ashtrays this dream
Some room's motel, will it burn a hole here too—

And coop us full of that till our limbs' arms Chainsmoked by adrenalin, slither dour-white Unepitaphed beds but. What gargoyle jail Their contortion poses (the lovers in the act

Of mailing themselves to famous crimes) if (If perched on each other's tongues we fly) Only by his mind these bodies thrash—

To share this fire is, surely, a tithe entire. So each of us alone unless upon our lips The world forgets our name and stammers out its.

Note:

Title: of a work by Rops.

UN-ISRAFELLED

Am I similar to slime enough, be-Mimic with muck? Since Poe blew it that Tennyson"No poet so little of the earth"—equals sky,
I (boy bouffant) unto the realm of whom rise, I

Who synonymous with none, am anonymous Without everyone: is that the light cast From haloes; does it make the shadows of the heads They glitter over smash down obliterating

The body. We twitch our face-costumes; scratch; Crud dangles like a noose tied to high c.
Or is that noise claws—a phoenix scraping

Let me in on the door of a crematory,
A comet's dandruff. Its scars are ridges
Ledges, where the flesh of this ascent rests descent.

Note:

"None sing so wildly well As the angel Israfel" —Poe.

TO JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA

and so on until z reiterates
my metaphor's acute dullness, its crisis
of belief: say this knife could core its way

The poem is a letter opener that slices a to discover b in which c waits

past the final alphabet and penetrate that rind that blinds us with its consummate

innate tumors of meaning, enemy

yield of polished inveighed truths which betray nothing of the stuffing, the seeds that rot

rumors amassed across your desk each morning-

what if that surfeit of words was a warning label only, just another skin to be

cut? And all this is unless the poem is not.

Note:

Line 10-11: 'enemy rumors': Lezama Lima's second book of poems was entitled Enemigo rumor.

FEBRUARY FOURTEENTH: FREEZEFRAME

(to James Elroy Flecker, with thanks for translating teardrops into handcuffs)

Please press a valentine shape tool to my chest And extract from it what was never there Then singe your ciggie on this thing that mists Over only when shattered 's no mirror

I lie beside you my caresses deepmeant Though they fade as fast as escape plans traced Across a prison blanket by an absent Fingernail whose blood you piss in my face

Is that it is that why I cry for more torture That way you look at me pityingly Iffen I say things like rain ice drops cling

There our branch out there like someone been trying On all their bracelets at once to see Which is prettiest but of course none are

Note:

Flecker: Parnassianism (his list: "Hérédia, Leconte de Lisle, Samain, Henri de Régnier, and Jean Moréas"); le vice anglais (the home version); death at age 30 (consumption).

THE FOUR VIEWS

Each dawn you wake to find that once again during the night the four windows of your room have been newly carved into the shape of the loveliest object each one overlooks: the east glass is now a worm's silhouette, while the west gleams bicycle-like, the north's a sycamore leaf, the south a snowblind face . . .

Who remolds these panes while you sleep and who carpenters the sills and lintels and why are the four vitriforms always changed, different each day: is beauty so inconstant—so subjective—assuming someone chooses.

Are you a phantom here in your own home, or a squatter in the house of René Magritte?

POEM

well alright
I grant you
he was a fascist
ahem antisemitism the
er war and all
I'm not defending them
but at least
you've got to admit
at least he
made the quatrains run on time

Note:

2 puns explain the title and last line: "Penny wise, Pound foolish"— And: Mussolini's admirers used to say, "Well, he may be a fascist, but at least he makes the trains run on time."

RETORT TO PASTERNAK'S ZHIVAGO'S JESUS

The centuries like barges have floated out of the darkness, to communism: not to be judged, but to be unloaded.

Note:

See the last lines of "Garden of Gethsame," which is the last poem of 'The Poems of Yurii Zhivago,' the verse supplement to Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago.

**:

POEM FOR GEORG TRAKL

Graves that revert to suns at the end of the movie remind us our lyric is thatch, thatch this, thatch that, a cottage industry with its piecework approach, its mode of pain thresholds:

so if the sky is a column of birds who root each sorrow in a sievewalk sense, distance astronomers splash dates at, out where the sought torch gathers adornments;

and if my face on an eyelash leash reach toward yours like hands that offer glass a space to grow transparenter in, sheer-opposites that squander unison upon this nest

precarious hosts of myself I deign to attend, what else accrues to one's true instance?

Note:

Written after trying-failing to understand Heidegger's comments on Trakl's Ein Winterabend. Images from that poem have obviously influenced this. (His wine and bread my glass and host, etc.)

TRANSVERSION OF TRAKL'S Ein Winterabend

Now snow across the window falls, The evening bell tolls on too long, Our table's laid with everything, The whole house is stocked with staples.

Many paths find one terminus And mob that gate with dark offshoots. (The tree of grace bears golden roots Which sap the earth beneath deep ice.)

The Wanderer enters again;
Pain has petrified the threshold.
Communion shines out of the old
Sideboards its share of bread and wine.

AN OBSOLESCENT AND HIS DEITY (POLYPTYCH)

Bending over like this to get my hands empty Rummaging through the white trashcans out back Of the Patent Office, I find a kind of peace Here, in this warm-lit alley where no one comes.

For even the lowest know that nothing new Is going to be thrown out now—no formula, Never not one blueprint will show up in these Bright bins, their futures are huge, pristine.

Old alleymouth grabbags my attention at times I see the world flash by out there, furtive as The doors of decontamination chambers—

I return to my dull, boring search, foraging For the feel it gives me of the thing which has Invented me: that void whose sole idea I was.

Note:

When I wrote the first version of this in 1980, I thought of dedicating it to Charles Simic. It felt very Simicky to me, the images seemed obviously influenced by and indebted to him, so I thought that that fact would have to be admitted somehow. Maybe that was the problem: was I afraid that if I did dedicate it to Simic, everyone would see how much I owed to him? Or: how much I had stolen from him. Fear and guilt won out over gratitude, and the dedication was undone. Sometimes the homage must be an apology.

CO-STARRING OSCAR WILDE AS MADAME SOSOSTRIS

White: white as a tablecloth that moonlights as a bride For the unborn you—appeared—or a waterfall Which leans against another waterfall (your hair). My beeper slave of lost voices barked: what?

While the cup that knelt to summer burst; I tried To garden the fireplace and farm the doormat But proto-frog-photos of you grew inside me there, Groping with bare hands of flood my gnarlgargoyle.

Deeper than my beeper you knew; sibyled guesses. And yet . . . 'misery is proximity.' Oh The seance was as far as possible tuxedoes.

Aftermath is a mouth. Speaks. Speaks? Yes, but less as Flesh than what; yak mask for that old fop Apollo? The god retrieves his gloves and, feigning to go, goes.

ENDLESS EVENING: MY LIFE AT IL VITTORIALE

For caught in those Aug-Sept hours what day can Break this slang of glass whose illustration Of flotsam sampling our poison's portion of calm Lives long the lament we swore applause by.

With faster than flashbacks in a promo for Memory to lie lymph along these hits of hope And through each thought we just dawned on interrupt Poses no soprano care counterfeit or water yet.

As though it alone the profile were wielded up

To shield the face against that bad vocable our own

Throws veils another pale divulge of oh mise en moon.

Musingly to see a bed on fire in a huge room
Otherwise empty while one at a time
White sheets float down from somewhere onto the flames.

Note:

Il Vittoriale, D'Annunzio's retirement estate. Siempre Sera . . .

DE-EVOLUTION OF THE POET IN RUMOR'S HOUSE

Neutered condom, amphibianed from whose lips-

The times I've tried to dive to Rumor's house! which, I have to quote that brute, Ovid, is "the world's Center," most quested-for, yet nearest core:

What verse ensures the windows doors there never

Close, oh porous palace where every phrase Blurted by earthen creatures goes stored. Surface Abyss, endless source swearing itself his page.

Who welcomes my omega—elsely geared, I bleed—Island keeled in the always flood of fade.

The dying D and end N of our days' A

Resumes these scattered patterns, theme's mutest speech. Each time it tries to say more than this The tip of the tongue must wrestle a leech.

THE SINGULAR (nonasyllabics)

Whistlecraft aloft in the blue, birds, belief has assured me your choral enthroatments are whole and yet I spell them out as similar to our words—

Your songs define you while mine unvoice my field of lieu and fail to call up a likeness new enough from the group auguring each face its fate. The choice

seems too great for me but you seem to flourish as flocks beyond your final ornifact which Braque for one pictures

in wingspan style, his pursuit single as I used to be. Is he more true tracing the tune that eludes my ears?

Note:

After Braque: singleness/wholeness; individual/group; poetry/art; etcet-?

READING HER

(for Louise Gluck)

[Repeat title] our eyes unlash slowly word by word at last bald lids rise

What for why

Mimicry
re
the poet's eye
which looking inward sees
(minus its lashes' soft-pleaded intercedence)
too pupilly cool cruel
as muttered justice

I call my goodbyes home in the dusk

MIZU NO OTO

Pain passes for sunlight at some depths which most of us never strike; the dive is too far: or is the ear sheer enough—

Basho by a pond heard a frog make the usual faucet-dripping-into-a-keyhole sound; it wisely ignored his efforts

to collaborate. Get your galleyslaves rowing with icicles for oars, that's one way some say. Resist the urge

to halve the sea/be laser Moses, to submerge yourself as a slice speciman, all random camera words.

Beyond the caprice of earth to slake, thirst issues from the source it breaks.

Note:

A meditation upon Basho's most famous haiku, whose final syllables I've used for the title.

BASH (ten versions of furuike ya)

If I were a pond and some frog jumped into me I wouldn't respond. I am a pond but when a frog gets intimate I keep my mouth shut. I may look like scum but some frogs can poke this pond to orgasm come. This pond is so old even its frogs want it sold to build the new road. This pond is old as me. That's how bad-off it is. Frog-visits, I doze. You're old, pond-the same as me. But when your frogs come you recall each name. This pond is year-scored as me. But frogs that shake it up just make me bored. I'll float in this pond, fearing each frog that jumps down will wash me aground. This pond is old too-But when a frog jumps into It, it still sounds new. This pond is dead earth But listen to its rebirth When frogs take a bath. FURU YOU, EEKY YA (five more) Ya, the old wash-holewait-a-fuck: a frog?-oh, no!goes splasho Basho. Ya, the old North Pole where Santa Frog (ho-hop-ho) chops a splashin'-hole! Ya, old-boys brothelwatch Oscar Wilde get Basho to wet his tadpole.

Ya, here's to Basho!-

Whoa, Ranger Basho!

there's one frog-boozin' dude you should raise your glass to.

frog-herd's in the waterhole-

leggo your lasso.

ALFONSINA STORNI

Feeling as you wrote that the cancer quote Is on its way upstairs to the throat One breast had already flown migrant Heart de facto amazon only the sea remained

Like a jealous mattress an old pillow stuffed With insomnia's phonebills the sea Is there to throw oneself at at dawn late Up all night over a poem called Voy a

Dormir and which says this better than this (Each time I read one by you I revise Myself my suicide is to be me instead of you)

Sea that swallowed your poet throat

Does not for the having of it sing less

And besides only that cancer tried to float

Note:

Storni (1892-1938), Argentinian poet. In 1935 she was afflicted with breast cancer. A partial mastectomy did not keep the malignancy from returning, and Storni drowned herself in the Atlantic after writing a final poem, "Voy a dormir." The quote in lines 1-2 comes from a post-op letter: "I fear the cancer is on its way upstairs. . . ."

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF SOFIA GUBAIDULINA

Intestinal as raisins on a keyboard I struggled through life. The setting sun left a few earths in the ground so I could walk.

It qualmed me just knowing that, to accomplish my color, the chameleon must die. How chastely I watched a suit-of-armor chew its fingernails.

Oh voice scathed in cloud; ankles' adieu. On the lips—that species of slither—is where I took part.

Now I pestle my face with opaque pins. You stigmata that summarize my signature, go, hinges down whom antiquity has vomited sequence—

but which letter misnomers my name? I come from neitherstood, nuance of none. I tried to obey the caption under my portrait/my provenance.

Cere me in cerberus-lily; in theme-mother extracts; while the loaves and fish rich, the furs and lush rich,

fill their skin with pores and then wonder what's missing . . .

Like a candle through a keyhole shoved, burning toward knownwheres—Always the days unstay me.

I need to have admired more those symmetries which preach each seed is buried beneath a flower, each weed above a wound.

Now the thorns be praised/now the thrall that somehow time has restored en masse my dwelling, my resting place. I hope my pillow's hungry for headaches!

Note:

Inspired by Gubaidulina's partita, The Seven Last Words (1982).

AT THE "FEDERAL CENSORSHIP AND THE ARTS" SYMPOSIUM

Just as the Nazis never proscribed Rilke (he was no Expressionist, no Degenerate, no Art-Bolshevik), so most of us poets are thought no threat by those in authority—

Halfhass, for instance, his books won't get banned: his Rilkemanqué wins awards, his "spiritual progress" and "earned words" (—to paraphrase Wilde, his genius gives good guru Po-Biz style while

his talent brooks those so serious ergo poems)—: what might appease our fuehrers even more is his patriot's part in The American Poetry Series.

Better silence than that? Better to hide, to write for one's cabinet? (To paraphrase Benn, the aristocratic form of publication.)

THE CODE

(for Heather McHugh)

All while I tried to brain myself With my key-ring Which unfortunately Was one shy of being fatal

The fickle key itself lay In infamy In the hands of my wife Who as I fell the blood

Making my forehead Squeak against the floor Slid open the secret drawer

Of my escritoire
That's weird she said
He uses real names in his diary

Note:

Some of the metaphors here were elaborated upon in a later poem, also dedicated to H. McH.:

see "Emigrations" on the following page.

EMIGRATIONS

(for Heather McHugh)

Shouldn't there be a word that sounds like an extraterrestial clearing his throat of human phrases, their roughness roseate, plush thorns that tart each normal timbre—And when that word's punctuated by two ears, can it be said to not hold all our meanings?

Vocal as those envelopes one discovers tell-traces of tongue-blood on the flap of (licked too reckless—mistake it for love), we fail to seal shut the heart, to kissproof its distant alien stains: kept vigilant over that bouquet of papercuts, I remember

a cloud installed with thumbtacks scouting across planet, pinning down oceans, denoting islands, deserts. Borders, poured from the sky—We felt safe on such worlds, behind guards, armies braced to rebuff incursor postcards. Death rose to greet us with a flower in its eye.

*

But count the kisses, Catullus wrote, meaning to waste your time first multiply your tongue. Oh make that prime mistake again; repeat what the explorers of sea-roared corridors promise the coils that conch them, desperate to remain unsounded, sole. All such figures

are promiscuous: love is repetition and layer/layer lovers disrobe; overlapping matteshots which hatch-depict what deepest down most elusive nudity. Our stripped-off skin hurts to acknowledge the body is the blankest map onto which earth will eventually start

to imprint itself dirtgrain by dirtgrain, mud by mire it will come to cover us entire with minutiae of the utter matter ground around us until we are its textual affirmation, and therefore a refutation of what? The self—but if its loss is a sexual

discovery, the poet has entered hell demanding to plumb whomever these charts misquote. À la Cocteau's torturous Orphée, she guides herself through fog-stellar hallways; every step begs to be reversed. Their cry is always the same: what exquisite urge

to tame all welcome-mats has portaged us averted, shielding our gaze from its suffice, to this place! Waving an exit visa stamped with each other's lips, the lovers have sailed beyond i.d. But the ship sinks, no-one can build enough lighthouses to surround that swamp—

*

Orpheus croaks, the frog in his larynx jokes, each time Euridice crumples backwards, implodes from sight: he is what she breaks—his grid, his husk. When the sperm disembowels my orgasm, he asks, what self-restraint it shows to commit suicide in front of a mirror, knowing beauty is

personalized by paralysis . . . then, if the wound learns to probe for its own kind, flesh will never unvoice that loss, harvest that scar. By harping on her name he hopes to gloss, to refine this epitaph. Meanwhile the eternal tatter of her smile flares fainter, firefly trying to land down a mineshaft.

Fact: the frog can't see the fly if the fly sits—
it is literally its flight obscenes the eyes,
whereupon the long tongue zaps out, severs and appetites.
With this in mind, perhaps the truest desire is
blind, concealed, a phantom wandering the deep net
of optic intersections, of pang-swerved nerves—

lost, one of its possible fates might be starve. The poet traverses this labyrinth—the maze carves emaciations from her face. Her way is gropes which somehow render aim that inner landscape our window (at night the white moth's easel) drapes, that site razed by home. But could she place her poem

if it moved her mouth with mine so they became one, one mouth which then looked for another mouth to kiss. It first appears there are only two bodies here—the one you are, and the one you desire to unite with. But then, beyond the mingle of that longed-for synthesis, we

may hunger for more antitheses, further incarnations, until (exponentially) our body orbits what rapt apogee, that pure theory. I believe it. And thus to make them whole your lips must be divided by these words. She who utters such catharsis/communion will

have to seed or sate whatever wing-hung thing we nurse in our throatpit. Gordian gorge: just ingest each knot and trust—trust your intestines will undo it? Orpheus or Herpheus, the poet cannot reduce the roughage verbiage her diet imposes on us since it is our emptiness, purged.

*

We who journey towards tomorrow rather than today walk behind a door which our arms are tired of holding held out in front of us, the wrists ache from its weight—although our knuckles come to admire the knob—merely on the pray-or-none chance the one who keys our phrase may be straying yesterday's way.

THE KEEPER

(for George Starbuck)

while ships
guided by his beacon glide
safely through the fog or night
inside he trips over
more furniture
bangs his head again
on doorways

the rooms
steep and stairy
of a lighthouse transpire
into the brilliant air of
salvation but
down here
in the black-and-white farce
of this poem
whenever the keeper opens a can
of soup the blood
from his fingers
will indisputably fall
on his crutches

if I read Kafka right
are always a matter of
winning and losing
credit and debit
every life kept
off those reefs or rocks makes
these accidents occur
this bone break
this muscle
tear

shall be showed for by a scar

each shipwreck he averts

GIMMIE SHELTER

GIMMIE SHELIE

The thread or the theme That holds this tune Together is the same One that rips it open—

The initial guitar
Continues splitting
The whole thing apart—

It is the lightning

Which Jagger complains
Of and which he seeks
Shelter from the rains
Of when it breaks—

We ourselves will shut Our deepest sills against His common cries but There is no defense

To keep out that other
One behind him twinned
His starker brother
Whose keening strings skein

Hymns from one more Murderous composer Whose cause is war Who tears down our door—

Shelter/the home
Is made of language—
But music sunders the poem—
Its rift is like a tongue

Trying to compile all
Words into one word—
One Babel whose wall
Falls beneath that standard—

What the fuck did that flag Say—the opposite Of peace/of the page Is what I must write.

AFTER BORGES' "TO A MINOR POET OF 1899"

Who sought that sad height and that constant change Laboring on an extraneous verse Which through the dispersion of universe Might elect one second whose spectrum's range

Was so capricious it broke the scholar Caught in daily efforts to confine the eye Pursuant of ceruleanesques that lie Against each longing to fling a color

As brief as my life if I am alive
And am the one destined to undergo
Any authorship of the words that show
Whether such vexacious tints can survive—

You must judge, ancient friend! what I've seen Or accept as real the illusion I mean.

Here at the height of the day night change The color of the sky is uncertain, The sky depending in which direction One's eye strains, each of its swatches a strange

Hue which dies too soon and which makes this hour Linger in the mind transient as a life, Whose name once known remains another Posied-up portrait on our palette knife.

Until even I wonder if one tint Ever survives the harm of seeming unique (Evening's intrigue, time's singularity).

Study for its trace, its placemap, I see

—Redundant as a stopsign in italic—

The face on which my profile leaves no print.

Note:

This began as a trans. of Jorge Borges' A Un Poeta Menor de 1899, but ended up as a kind of homage or meditation.

A translation or homage is always a profile compared to the fullface original.

THREE POEMS FROM MALLARME

1. MY PLEA FOR SANCTUM IN THE SCULPTURE GARDEN OF MEDUSA

A statue's first pedestal is the stone
It was cut from out in. Those are just words, though.
Like: Spring! Then death puts on the wrong clothes . . .
Then air ruts flushed as bathtub sex, as . . . proseate?

Because, that prince of an ostrich Narcissus
His embedded-headed gaze upon his
Twin the corpse Hamlet proposed, posing for those
Snapshoticisms is so, so 'real-ergo-vile', less

Tangent than tangible, hell. —Till I stand
In Her garden's one among many I can only
Torment vesanic vanities/age-of-oh orbs where

Deep in the honor of my ether I soar, where

-Passing at high mimicries through the night
I go, all lop-worlded and alone, to kill abandon.

Note:

Line 8: "Exclus-en si tu commences / Le réel parce que vil" —Mallarmé.

2. (LET ME TAKE YOU ON A) SEA BREEZE

Our flesh so tender so turnstile Plus on top of that everything addressed To that Occupant within me are read Gauguin/Kerouac comes to mind.

Empty passim one more Day One passes
The field abandoned to handstands

Superfluous lay all waters in that gaze Guiles of a map guess-gestured.

I'll become a crematory prostitute The prom whose bra undressed my ears None us dispedestal that idol.

Or what better yet a desert island Sailed to only by blind sailors who smile Like swans we maim our bracelets in.

Note:

Failed translation of Mallarmé's Brise Marine.

3. THE SONNET IN ix

The nube, the nude, the not—you know: the Nix— Her Septet of orifices? (males have six):— Was it massed by Master Malyoume for the fix The fucks. Rape-scene: she, some defunc'-off, kicks

The mirror while centaurs click centerfold pics Of her fingernails—each closeup mimics The anguish with which our pallored poet sics Midnights on. Encore encore, you sexniks,

Steph calls, tiptoeing away toward his sonics Lab, 'The Sign in X.' A thousand-quicksand thicks His step. He's pitbogged by all the nitpicks

Critics have glitched his path with, those pricks!

Don't they know that stars—stars can't hold shit wicks

To his candle?! (That bitch, that Nix: he sucks it: "I-icks!")

Note:

Failed translation of Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Sonnet en yx.'

Line 14: I-icks! (both i's are short, as in "kiss") is an onomatopoeticism that accompanies the expectoration and or taste of the candle's cum. Sort of the sound you make when you use your teeth to scrape it off your tongue ostentatiously. But why did I end the poem this way? Was I influenced by the Master's regret, expressed in his essay Crise de Vers, that words lack an embodied, material, tonal consonance with their meanings: "Quelle déception" (he writes), how perverse, that the "timbres" of the word "jour" should be dark, while those of "nuit" are "clair." And yet, he concludes, without such "défaut des langues," poetry itself would not exist. Assuming he's right, then onomatopoeia are defective because they're not defective. In Japanese, kireji—"cutting-words, used to separate or set off statements"—are onomatopoeic, and "have the meaning that lies in themselves as sounds." But as Hiroaki Sato notes (in his book, One Hundred Frogs, from which I've taken these quotes): "Basho himself simply said, 'Every sound unit is a kireji.'" In any case, the faults and falls and false of my trans. should be clair to all.

AFTER THE BATTLE (based on a translation by Stavros Deligiorgis of a poem by Nichita Stanescu)

Upon a walnut leaf my forehead lies and floats downriver to the saddest part of day, that south where flags and boats capsize, where cold lakes die: I mourn my mouth, I start

to press it hard on bitter bark or roots that lure me down. Descending underground I swim in tree-sap streams, their current shoots an unseen enemy: my shoulders pound

in rhythm motions now, I ride the wave, pursuing quick that shadow drowned in chase, that rabbit-heeled recruit who fails to save himself for ever, leaving me to face

lees loss. . . . Away from me it overflows a valley stacked with soldiers, dead in rows.

AFTER AN AIR OF APOLLINAIRE'S

must I be reminded again how love is always followed by pain the days go by I remain

beneath the bridge of our arms enclosed the river flows the days go by I remain

must I be reminded again the river's name is Wend where love now always flows to its end

the days go by I remain

I no longer know your name you go by I remain I stay to mark what came to make it my tomb the days go by who's to blame

AFTER BAUDELAIRE'S CAUSERIE

The ocean of verse has left in my chest
That stale ebb-tail taste of a bile blueplate—
Its word surge bitters too gorged to digest—
Even my critics' deaths can't renovate

An appetite for this: acid reflux My poems have all become, which in their prime Fed vanity's veins and pain's glut stomachs Enough to fodder a second lifetime . . .

My heart? Is Heartburnsville. Landfill palace Leveled ever since my fellow poets Chewed its dumpster pews into prose-pellets. Come share their bard-fare, their warmth and fireplace— Eyes blazing like a holiday barrage, They char my offal flesh long past garbage.

THE RETURN (after Follain: from Merwin/Romer)

The sun has washed with white the farm that waits in ways for the stranger who's late to come, but he whose force was never sure of home may not even pause when faced with its gates.

Clothed wholly in the mendicant's threadbare, his headwear the tin lid of a trashcan, he will know to announce himself as man the prodigal: Hey guys it's me! But where

the mule gnaws roots and the mare's coat burrs dark and the pig guards the last milk it laps at, where the dog has a starred brow and the cat can augur storms, they have formed their own ark.

Unyielding the response to him must be; the same it has been since edenity.

Note:

I worked from the Stephen Romer and W. S. Merwin translations of Jean Follain's original.

PORNOKRATES (homage Felicien Rops)

We paged through the phrase as though it were ours.

—The lovers in the act—those de Sade-laden hours,
Where, dumped out daily as ashtrays this dream
Some room's motel, will it burn a hole here too—

And coop us full of that till our limbs' arms Chainsmoked by adrenalin, slither dour-white Unepitaphed beds but. What gargoyle jail Their contortion poses (the lovers in the act

Of mailing themselves to famous crimes) if (If perched on each other's tongues we fly) Only by his mind these bodies thrash—

To share this fire is, surely, a tithe entire. So each of us alone unless upon our lips The world forgets our name and stammers out its.

Note:

Title: of a work by Rops.

FERNAND KHNOPFF

Days in the lull, gathered afternoons of it, —A touch of star-decals on one's bookbag,— Silence, like a vast confetti of souls, and that Torporic breeze: oh how difficult

The culling of love from our facades is.

Once, never to go the cling thing seemed what's

Sublimest. Look at those cobwebcrobats,

Skittering skyward, fingerhold, nor toe-.

Deep down (in my ugh-roots) I longed to brag My spiel shall deign define no July of these. I'll fall chapter closed across your chest is all.

Now I am an atrocious expert; who answers Every question by, "It is very simple: We must listen to Beauty with frozen ears."

Note:

I don't understand writers who prefer "painterly" painters over "literary" painters. How can I as a poet place Cezanne (or Monet, Matisse, etc.) above Khnopff, and not be disloyal to myself? Shouldn't we appreciate most those painters willing to stain their canvases with some of the impurities of our own art?

MOULDSTONEWALL

By each stone bright in the inanimate light

our earth discovers its nakedness is disastrous.

A total wipe of the slate. And yet

this lets time get set

for the grass to amass its mound, endless

immense wall. Order gives birth to more—mornings ordure

the moulds until they climb our decay. Prime

the sun will soon costume each size and all that waits to wear the dead in their measure.

The assault comes long later.

It rips away the flesh of day, matter's tatter.

Note:

Transversion of an untitled poem by Claude Esteban, from his book Croyant Nommer (1972)—

I worked from both the original French and the translation by Rainer Schulte (Mundus Artium, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1974).

GOETHE'S WANDERERS NACHTLIED II: 4 transversions

1.

Every hill is overcome with peace, the trees are a dome down which the wind echoes to mass one last breath; the forest song has rung its close, bird by bird, descending—await your death no longer. Listen: this too is ending.

2.

Over all the hilltops is peace; in all the treetops no breeze endures, merely the breath of one; the birds are gone, or at least their song has ceased. You have your wish: desist, desist! Thy will on earth be done.

3.

You can feel your breath stilling all the hills, and oh, what an undulant illusion!
The birds have wrapped their wings around their bills and sleep: soon you too will be no one.

4.

Now peace envelops the hilltops and every tree's summit seems to submit its final breath to the pall and harshly over-all hushing of even the baby birds' calls when you, you and your haste, come near— Beware: your place is here.

In Shakespeare's Last Supper the disciples (you, me, all of us here) are depicted seated alongside where He stands at mid-table and grins down like an MC at our expressions are we shown, the goblets gleaming, gloating as they goad us on to toast the centrality of this spokesperson, the notional character whereby everyone has been sketched vis-à-vis the honoree we can only eulogize, dependent as we are on His moodswings. Astonished, confused by the ultra ups and downs of manic means, now we watch, we lean, we pout (the whole propitiatory repertoire) worried about our survival, inert (like a frozen rictus facing its fate) unless depression drafts and draws us forth the extempore pose, myth, puppetary projection, limned mobilary mosaic that apes some drab-escapist syndrome, imagination. Which is why each evening we pray for a chance to cross the ditch-penny distances between the footlights and the fear, vowing to allow each guise of role to kill us, to raise us from the dust, to guide us like magi toward summons, obediently steered by the stock star the marquee, believing our needsuch faith could pass those deserts of farce to find this upper room. Sensing the inn beneath us seethe with indifference with doubt, we concentrate harder on His remarks and jokes, trying to make up for all the audiences who've failed this test. Never quite reassured by any overt wink of His assessing eyes into our ranks (are any of us missingwas castcall taken?), we keen forward, eager for our cues, nervous knowing that if there is error here, at a signal the maitre d' will find replacements for this testimonial "Eucha-Roast" from the rabble stabled downstairs where the tavern yawns into its beer. Life is rescue from such anonymity. Their situation is death, is subject those groundlings can never guess how much it crowns to end up here, costume-chosen, endowed by makeup with certitude, form, identity-Who wouldn't be jealous to know just how blessed we fictions are! And yet every member of our Dramatis Personae wonders if s/he got jotted into life as whimsically as Emperors choose sacrificial victims, as any Divine Ruler or Hollywood Player and whether

with a fingerflick Hamlet Portia Timon erased, gone, again. This banquethow many have we attended like it? Daily we wait like napkins to get opened, held to the face like a mask, stained and used then tossed aside like paper towels, paper disposables, paper identities (similies/metaphors) like the paper whose headlines fade around our names/our fame. Our bits done, our pieces recited, oh it's bits alright, it's pieces it crumbles into, and yet how avowingly we cry, foils corrupted by one front-row cough. Exit as trash, as avid kleenex exiled in a breath to the canteen of lost turns, the greenroom of oblivion. Now if there were respite in such neglect, a grace period with no need to perform, but both in the wings and on one's caught, regardless of what's true. Far, near, (hall or gallery) that mendicant theater is pursuant always, lugging and luring its wares: wherever we are, wherever here is is also an entrance, a set of false steps, (bright-lit pratfall-pit) a trap for fools, a stooges' cage, every scrim and apron prinked with sham, props, champagne buckets doffing their caps in fealty-Even the proscenium's subservient arch bows and begs a platform for actors trumpeting loft-aired routines, voluminous effusions or, what's worse, kingly-haired creatures washing the feet of their inferiors, sudsy obsequious declamatory eruptions filled with the rehearsed lava of bold slaves, the bald brimmings of an improperly-public humility (unlike the servant who never spills his waiting master's entree except in the pantry when there is no-one to witness his extravagant remorse)-All these openly-imploring apertures, these theme-cut bubblings-up, paeans, (akin to lame critics' acclamations) would crack like a laughtrack at that imposture, that pastiche, applause: who'd pity these pathetic devotees, advocates haunted by nothingness, by that same humanhood to whom white placecards validate each plate. Who sat us here? (Athwart this portrait the descending order of our dinner ranks auditions more disdain, every hors d'oeuvre daubed with scorn)-In our state, our omnipresence, to which can we aspire? Sometimes we think: if only there were Someone somewhere, somehow, though of course that's impossible: Someone outside

this frame—an absent self, a spectator vivid at duress, who can feel the real joy and pain we mimewho sees the sun setting out there now, the approach of a nighttime unlike our curtain: Someone who lacks the judas window wherein we acolytes recognize ourselves, the betrayal portal we have all portrayed so plausibly it has at last retained us, replaced us with stainedglass. (Through which, on rare occasions, that said Someone fills us with light, illuminates us.)—Overcome, undone, we feel ourselves vanish, we dwindle to a painted panel. We fade, we die. His stasis renders us too slenderly. Or is this endless attendance the promised purgation, the shedding of every emotion, every weight? Is it gain, this loss, this usurped, staged starving, this repast-of-reruns upon a menu whose full-promised delicacies remain a manna dream, backdrop glamour (milk-and-honey) a feastless Eden, a heaven hunger's expelled whole from. Why aren't we at home here, in this plenty, this supernal supper-why this finicky desire to avoid the silverware, the knife paler (because it reflects us) than the poor fork that renews whose flesh and encores veins across each dish until its unction-urged tines impale spearlike and nail the cacodaemon that shall huzzah hail our Hostmaster . . . See: the chair He occupied is emptyexpecting the miracle or bloodcrime through which all of us must assume His part, the mummers-meal, the sealed communion. Bard bread, scene wine, unyield your transubstantiations: beyond that superceded throne lies the utter ubiquity of the known. And so, viva, bravo, boffo, olé, so each paraclete's performance moves us. Cheers! echoes the pledge, promiscuous

* ****

AFTERWORD: Re my "Transversions"

each voice ID's the oath. The mic on the dais quivers, shook by our cry, sole intercessor of this ceremony.

...

"Daniel Weissbort tells the story of [Ted] Hughes taking another poet's translation of a work by the Hungarian Ferenc Juhasz and, without any knowledge of the original language and no Hungarian speaker to advise him, turning that version into a thrilling

poem that drives the existing versions off the map." -Clive Wilmer, TLS, June 1/07.

Like Hughes in the case of Juhasz, my transversions here are based not on the original, but on translations.

But of course these parlor pastiches will hardly "drive the existing versions off the map."— Nor is that their aim, really: they're exercises, the way painters and composers attempt "variations."

Usually, with each, I would read as many translations as I could find and then fashion my parasitical paraversion from the interplay of their varying words.

I know no other language than my own, and that barely.

In other words, I'm not qualified to write these poems which means they're the same as all my other poems which I wasn't qualified to write either.

This edition: NOVEMBER 11, 2008

November 20, 2008

SELECTED SONNETS 1968-2008

PLEASE NOTE: THIS BOOK CAN BE DOWNLOADED AS A PDF FOR FREE—OR BOUGHT AS A PERFECT-BOUND PAPERBACK FOR 6 DOLLARS AND 42 CENTS—AT LULU.COM

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CHRISTMAS AT THE ORPHANAGE:

SELECTED SONNETS 1968-2008

Bill Knott

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

INTRO NOTES

*

This particular book is a selection of the best (I hope) from my four volumes of quatorzains, which are also available on Lulu.com . . .

I've changed the label to "sonnets" for this publication. Why? Marketing. Hoping to reach more readers with a less-arcane title. Conformity to the normative term—

Here's the Intro to those volumes of "Quatorzains":

I got interested in this form around 1970, and published several in my 1974 book, Love Poems to Myself, and then more in the ones that followed: Rome in Rome (1976), Becos (1983), Outremer (1989), The Quicken Tree (1995), and The Unsubscriber (2004).

Why "quatorzains" rather than "sonnets"? I feel superstitious about using the latter term. I feel defensive and or resentful: only real poets write sonnets, and I'm not a real poet, am I. No, I'm a—a poet-biscuit.

*

The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

*

DEPRESSIONISM

Without any necessity to name it or anything, I remember this bombcrater before it held a garden. Once I saw children kneel down there to pray for pardon At an altar on which a little toll-money rolled laughing.

Swift suedes of evening, night's purple peltdown. I don't have to invoke the past; it's not required. I'll just settle here stolid like a stopsign repeating The word I stand for—sit and let my tired feet hang

Over the lip of this pit-deep garden whose intricate Vines query up at me. Quiet from the town I can hear Orphans rattling the gravel on their plates and or

Other faux pas I'm under no order to enumerate,— Jet-lag of angels, a snake, faintings on summer pavements. This bombfall failed in its intent: having none, I won't.

SONNET

(to MK)

The way the world is not Astonished at you

It doesn't blink a leaf
When we step from the house
Leads me to think
That beauty is natural, unremarkable
And not to be spoken of
Except in the course of things
The course of singing and worksharing
The course of squeezes and neighbors
The course of you tying back your raving hair to go out
And the course of course of me
Astonished at you

. . .

The way the world is not

MY PLEA FOR SANCTUM IN THE SCULPTURE GARDEN OF MEDUSA

A statue's first pedestal is the stone
It was cut from out in. Those are just words, though.
Like: Spring! Then death puts on the wrong clothes . . .
Then air ruts flushed as bathtub sex, as . . . proseate?

Because, that prince of an ostrich Narcissus
His embedded-headed gaze upon his
Twin the corpse Hamlet proposed, posing for those
Snapshoticisms is so, so 'real-ergo-vile', less

Tangent than tangible, hell. —Till I stand In Her garden's one among many I can only Torment vesanic vanities/age-of-oh orbs where

Deep in the honor of my ether I soar, where —Passing at high mimicries through the night I go, all lop-worlded and alone, to kill abandon.

Note:

Line 8: "Exclus-en si tu commences / Le réel parce que vil" —Mallarmé.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF SOCIOBIOLOGY (to JK)

Those scars rooted me. Stigmata stalagmite I sat at a drive-in and watched the stars Through a straw while the Coke in my lap went Waterier and waterier. For days on end or

Nights no end I crawled on all fours or in My case no fours to worship you: Amoeba Behemoth! —Then you explained your DNA calls for Meaner genes than mine and since you are merely

So to speak its external expression etcet Ergo among your lovers I'll never be . . . Ah that movie was so faraway the stars melting

Made my thighs icy. I see: it's not you Who is not requiting me, it's something in you Over which you have no say says no to me.

THE SPELL

All the days with you in them are better than the ones with I. If you were me you'd know why.

All the words with o in them are better than the ones with e. If you were me you'd see.

Best of all of course is a because it always comes first, ha! Is it better being me or worse.

And if these charms reversed at times, would I worry who surpasses me as versus you—

at times I could barely tell. Better is good but not as well.

BAT HABIT (or, Who's that Coughing in My Coffin?)

bats are the nicotine of night that's why I always need a light ten packs o' Dracs a day or die my lung-caves crave that fang-wing high

skreakedy skreak suckin' soot-sticks makes me blind but I find my fix when I unearth my undead stash I slake its flake through a neck-gash

bat-weed bleeds me butts and gobbets can't switch to cygnet cigarets flick and sip those swan-white filt-tips

no heck I'm hooked black-hack bad-toke what a tough puff bite-you-back smoke Vlad the Inhaler loves my lips

KEYS IN HIS HAND

Sometimes a man home late is steps away from his door when suddenly out of the dark a passing car lights up a window

just in front of him so the room behind it is thrust into such a semblance of clarity that once again he sees why we see only with glimpses like this, with happen flashes as avid as this,

but always the lane's corner takes that revelation past before he even resumes the posture of his intent to enter, to live there.

LAMENT

A bruise there was, which
Prospered on stale blood;
But growing smaller, the bruise became
A lecturer in escape-routes,
A philosopher of loss; relying
On the body's reluctance to be
Normal, i.e. immortal, it
Had hoped to survive somehow—
As a useful parasite perhaps, draining
The self's hidden wounds,
Masking its aberrations . . . but no.
For always there is no mercy for
Anything that is not whole,
That begs (like the brain) to be alone.

POEM

He/she
will outlive
me and I
will die

wishing
I had had
her/his life
instead
of my

ownhow many can I say

that of and why.

OCT-NOV (MICHIGAN MEMORY #4)

The bacon of the ankles crackles, and the sky
Perks up birds this coldsnap morning—every
Breath sheds a breath-effect, brief-bloomed steam-sheaf . . .

Puddles huddle in frost. Past the barn the path

Shoots hill-pastures which rose to winter early
And sun-shucked clouds blast-off from: migrants that fly
South—mouths that wet-nurse icicles—hatch forth
A form, a furious precision I sloughed

At birth, preferring life. And like the wind Can reduce anything to description— Running to finish my chores, beneath my scarf

I'll feel my chinbone seek my collarbone, As if the flesh has ceded and the skeleton Now must precipice itself against all warmth.

THE SCULPTURE (to SB)

We stood there nude embracing while the sculptor Poked and packed some sort of glop between us Molding fast all the voids the gaps that lay Where we'd tried most to hold each other close

Under the merge of your breasts and my chest There remained a space above the place our Bellies met but soon that clay or plaster Of paris or state of the art polymer

Filled every hollow which we long to fit Then we were told to kiss hug hug harder And then our heat would help to harden it

We stood there fused more ways than lovers know Before the sculptor tore us away Forced us to look at what had made us so whole

PORNOKRATES (homage Felicien Rops)

We paged through the phrase as though it were ours.

—The lovers in the act—those de Sade-laden hours,
Where, dumped out daily as ashtrays this dream
Some room's motel, will it burn a hole here too—

And coop us full of that till our limbs' arms Chainsmoked by adrenalin, slither dour-white Unepitaphed beds but. What gargoyle jail Their contortion poses (the lovers in the act

Of mailing themselves to famous crimes) if (If perched on each other's tongues we fly) Only by his mind these bodies thrash—

To share this fire is, surely, a tithe entire. So each of us alone unless upon our lips The world forgets our name and stammers out its. Note: Title: of a work by Rops.

LEDGELIFE

The taller the monument, the more impatient our luggage.

Look, look, a graveyard has fancy dirt.

Historians agree: this is the pebble which beaned Goliath.

Every billboard is theoretically as beautiful as what lies unseen behind it.

Mouth: the word's exit-wound.

It is impossible to run away face-to-face.

Shadow has closed the door out of you to you, but not to us.

The sign on the wall advises: Hide your gloves beneath your wings.

Even sculptors occasionally lean against statues.

Migrations?! Fate?! Life swears up at ledgelife.

All the sad tantamounts gather. They want, they say, to errand our ways.

Please aim all kicks at the ground.

Address all blows to the air.

We are to be barely mentioned if at all in the moon's memoirs.

AN OBSOLESCENT AND HIS DEITY (POLYPTYCH)

(for Charles Simic)

Bending over like this to get my hands empty Rummaging through the white trashcans out back Of the Patent Office, I find a kind of peace Here, in this warm-lit alley where no one comes.

For even the lowest know that nothing new Is going to be thrown out now—no formula, Never not one blueprint will show up in these Bright bins, their futures are huge, pristine.

Old alleymouth grabbags my attention at times I see the world flash by out there, furtive as The doors of decontamination chambers—

I return to my dull, boring search, foraging For the feel it gives me of the thing which has Invented me: that void whose sole idea I was.

(FACE) (AUTUMN) (EN FACE) (to NSL)

I lay your face along my palm and make To trace its shape there a profile Then I see the lifeline heartline break Overlengthened by one leaf's fall

The plow it rests on a horror now

In the distance an ogre pulls in vain To open a nailed shut window Whose reverberancy is thunder rain

Begins its rheumatization of The world we shared so spare-much of that This sans season's hands' veins portray our love

The no two alike are kissing yet
I lie down alone not knowing a tongue
Can taste every flavor but its own

ENDLESS EVENING: MY LIFE AT IL VITTORIALE

For caught in those Aug-Sept hours what day can Break this slang of glass whose illustration Of flotsam sampling our poison's portion of calm Lives long the lament we swore applause by.

With faster than flashbacks in a promo for Memory to lie lymph along these hits of hope And through each thought we just dawned on interrupt Poses no soprano care counterfeit or water yet.

As though it alone the profile were wielded up To shield the face against that bad vocable our own Throws veils another pale divulge of oh mise en moon.

Musingly to see a bed on fire in a huge room Otherwise empty while one at a time White sheets float down from somewhere onto the flames.

Note: Il Vittoriale, D'Annunzio's retirement estate. Siempre Sera . . .

ROMANCE (Hendecasyllabics)

But when it had engulfed them all two by two, the Ark itself became a greater creature, an omni animal. And yet Noah knew, surely this new behemoth shall also pair

and mate now, and that unlike the beasts before this one is destined then to find true marriage: because as soon as his keel breaks the water, born beneath it will be that surface image

none of us desires to engage in divorce— Natural nuptial partner, mirrored other, the Ark's clone would emerge from nowhere out there

in the waves. And upside down hold bound the course, faithfully accompany her spouse across any world to reach at last their offspring shore.

WIDOW/WIDOWER'S WINTER

Outside, the snow is falling into its past . . . I do want this night to end.
In the fireplace,
a section of ash caves in.

The fall day you were buried, birds went over, south, thick enough to carry someone.

They took my gapes of breath.

-Their fuel?

We are together in some birds, who fail.

I didn't want to look down, to glimpse your grave, its heroic little mound like the peck of dirt we hope to eat in our life.

Note:

Line 14 comes from a phrase I remember adults saying to me as a child when I dropped a piece of food on the floor: "Pick it up and brush it off—don't worry, you eat a peck of dirt in your life anyway." (Perhaps only the poor do this.)

GRANT PROPOSAL (Category: Performance Arts)

I want to go out each day at noon and stand On top of our Capitol's highest highrise, Where aircurrents stack, where storms restore themselves, Where the crossroads of sky are swept by radar,

Up there, buffeted, stand, cupping in my hands A gleam of gold-dust, a handful of gold-dust Doled out to me each day by our State, by you The modest mandarins of its Arts Council,

Trustees all, you whose grace I must stand for there And being thus empowered begin to pour The gold-dust back and forth, pour it in sifts from

Hand to hand until the wind has left my palms Bare, please note that length of project will vary Daily, at noon, and not one grain remains.

Note:

Line 2: Capitol with an 'o'—meaning "the citadel of government" (OED), its cloistered towers, atop the tallest of which the applicant desires to venture. Line 6: maybe "gleam" should be "flash"? I associate the former with earth, the latter, sky. "In the things that arise [buildings or structures of any sort], earth is present as the sheltering agent," Heidegger avers in 'The Origin of the Work of Art.' Hendecasyllabics, with a variant last line.

SAVE AS: SALVATION

Somewhere is the software to ID all
The snowflakes falling in this storm, but there
Ain't enough RAM crammed in my brain to call
Them forth by name, each crystal character
Putered and programmed, made to have a soul—
And even if I compelled the power
To inscribe them here as equals, in whole
Terms, I would not permit such an error.

But which is which, cries Ms. Ubiq-Unique. We're not formatted for whiteout. And when The screen of your vision freezes in flurries And the core of this word blizzard hurries To melt again, to find itself again, Won't mine be the sign these syllables seek?

THE MAN WHO MARRIED HIS CHECKOUT LANE

Daily, in the supermarket where I go, I gravitate to this one lane—the one that's most full—you know: the busiest one. Have I fallen in love with my checkout lane?

Well, I am male, I feel drawn to this aisle; its openness is shameless, sexistly exciting; the real way it squeezes my shoppingcart and deigns to crowd me in. Oh my checkout lane

has the longest wait of any—though unlike all these others in line I won't leaf through the life those tabloids provide rumors of: none of them

are beautiful as what infills me as I enter as I am queued up for that brief orgasm as my cash is on the counter and I am home.

STORY OF OR (to Pauline Réage)

To pose nakedness is To refute it. A pose Is a clothes. Like Stanzaic arrangements of

The word which should Ideally, be in pain against Its w and its d. No slack Is why such heaves of or

To denude itself could Make us exude gold, yet when Was that ever opposite enough

What scream or epigram

This sperm has come To measure our mouths for.

Note:

For "or" to free itself from "word," it must strain ("heave") against the "w" and the "d" that enclose it. If, via this strenuous (perhaps squeamish) process, the meaning of "or" is transmuted from the English into the French as a sort of homage to the pseudonymous author of 'Story of O' (Histoire d'O), then, alchemically speaking, (or so an Aurealist might suggest) it will have risen from the pose of its measures to oremerge as an else-gasm.

CELEBRATION

The conversation-pit is filled to the level
Of the floor with the soil of former parties here—
Crushed cigarettes, napkins, all kinds of cocktail swill—
We stand at its edge, grinning, wondering who's there:

Is there some version of us lost in that rubbish. Such a Pompeii probably took years of soirees. Where's the carpet to cover it—dense, bottomless, It makes the livingroom around it seem empty.

And why get superstitious—why greet our fellow Guest from way across this trashhold—since we must know Its surface could bear our most intimate meetings.

Oh, somewhere the host is winking working elbows, Showing no embarrassment—but here we have grown Sober over the grave of what greater gatherings.

TRUE STORY

We stole the rich couple's baby and left our own infant with a note demanding they raise our child as if it were theirs and we

would do the same. Signed, A Poor Couple. Decades later our son racks summa cum laude while theirs drapes our hovel

with beercans. But did we prove our point? This heroic experiment (a jeu de joie of performance art)

attempts to assert the adroit of nurture over nature, the pure narrative we write in order to write.

THE ANSWER

Leaving the house,

the house will be left completely, from cellar to attic my absence entire.

Do I enter the world

the same, my presence felt from cloud to ditch?

Only in departure whole. Arrival is always partial.

**

TWO POEMS TO S.

1. (Desire) Threadbare (Desires)

The light lay in shreds across the bed, only your waking could make it whole;

resuming its costume of day, its role that seems to overnight get ragged—

Fate latent as weights in theater

curtainhems, what soul is sewn here to be rung down at last, divested of these disguises. But if we are

bared by such cloth as cries in this lament for the sun's fragility,

would I dare now to shake you astir-

to drape over you my own shadow, whose myth-ex-machina remains all mine, mine, and therefore torn from yours.

2. The Tethering

The handclasp is burned up by the embrace and the embrace is consumed by the coitus, and I too am subject to a hierarchy

that requires every stratum version of me

to be fuel for the one above till each one is lost,

impossible to find in the final illusion (a mirage is something that doesn't see us even when we blind it) of a final one.

Why and whom must we each our own to? Go, let cemeteries bomb our sleep with omen hiccups, I'll nil persuade myself there is a person somewhere up there, perhaps perhaps it's you.

Identical arms babe your arms in theirs. But love, tied hand to foot to flute, lingers.

ANOTHER HOLE FOR W. R. RODGERS

Speak like a singularity, a lack residing deep inside every lock, just past the point keys can jab: against all thrust make safe-ensure your door's core is held back,

for reckless access to this pure center quarks more quintessence than taking exits from those pried voids whose secret quickly sates: ubiquitous if Space presses Enter.

Which inadmissible sill still calls loud with imagine: our skeleton keeping each such portal neither open nor shut,

unhoused of that exclusive dustborne cloud we breathe, though there must be something it accumulates, accommodates: what?

GESUNDHEIT (quatorzain version)

Sneezes wouldn't be so bad if they filled balloons.

How many sneezes on the planet at any given time; and if each sneeze filled a balloon,

imagine (bless you!)
all those sneeze-balloons floating in the air.

But a sneeze-balloon might be rather fragile—more like a bubble than a regular balloon . . . hmm.

A sneeze is sort of like a balloonburst: sudden, violent, unforseeable. Out of nowhere.

In either case, burgeoned or burst, this transfer of ether occurs whenever Entropy beckons,—

see its deadly equality shining up there, glittering like globules of star saliva,

worlds atchooed by all.

THERE'S THE RUB

Envying young poets the rage You wish you could reverse your night And blaze out born on every page As old as them, as debut-bright.

Child of that prodigal spotlight Whose wattage now is theirs to wageWhat gold star rite you wish you might Raise revised to its first prize stage.

But listen to my wizened sage: He claims there's one disadvantage Should time renew you neophyte—

There'd be one catch you'd hate, one spite: Remember if you were their age You'd have to write the way they write.

ZENITH

Once a rocket lived in the soarway Now it's gone Only a bird fills our sun socket Then travels on

Hovering at all angles to
Our tallest days
Where the lion says needle star to god
Far lingers no trace

Even if it was only a while The moan-length of a laugh I had

The occasion of that height

I wanted to share

I wanted to stay there But I failed at the sight

OVERLIFER-BAG

Age is a case of aches you try to strap closed with your own arms but even they can't hold shut what this tote crams like hotel-soaps stole when it pops open.

No clasp will fasten.

Packed up and parked on the curb where a cab brakes impatient to leave cheap valise spilling out undies each time we breathe.

A BACON

An oval invested with teeth; the brief orifice of a head thread-melted through its tweedboned coat,

half throatway down a sundial drowned with chalked-caul runes for avoiding such rains: though of course the chew maw that crowns this gnome with no likeness also barks forth a white porkdrip, unsustenance for those of us who seek a resemblance here: see how the magician longs to saw the swordswallower in half. Now this facial Francis finds our mouth; hell toppled by its wells without. Note: not an ekphrastic re one canvas in particular, but a response to several of his paintings from the 1940s. "Figure in a Landscape" (1945), for example. ***

POEM THAT WANTS TO BE ASH

Each time day returns to its sun to forget the windows we opened in it, I see the past minus peace

equals me, plus war you. I stab a candle down through one hand, an icicle through the other,

restaging the stale battle of doubt

with faith, whim against bone. Guess who always wins. Imagine a color so true every prism it passes through melts-

then flail them about,

Because hasn't your voice running mine, cindered this?

AS USUAL

Just cut off my head Lift it and lay it a foot Or so below my feet Shift it till I look like

Immediately I'm dead Body laid out straight Please don't hesitate

Overt sign of joy pain Surprise consternation

An exclamation mark

Despair exuberance

As usual a metaphor Meant to make up for My lack of coherence

HEILSTYLES

Of course the Spring fashions buried in Fall And dug up to wear in boisterous April Make the models even more skeletal: Body by Buchenwald; shade by Chanel.

Nazi nurses infiltrate CIA hospice— At Safehouse Haven the dying agents Are coaxed by swastika sisters to confess A. Hitler was their greatest influence.

A disappearance echoing with shoulders, A veinburst serpent evolved to doubt all, Still these lifecopy killers follow me.

Wise fashionists resist history
By staging it over in stale revivals.
To stay in mode, though, one must grow older.

TO LIVE BY

Work from the original toward the beautiful, unless the latter comes first in which case reverse your efforts to find a model worthy of such inane desire.

Even the mouth's being divided into two lips is not enough to make words equal themselves.

Eavesdroppers fear the hermit's soliloquy.

Wake up, wound, the knife said.

MERRY - NO - ROUND

The wooden horses are tired of their courses

and plead from head to hoof to be fed to a stove—

In leaping lunging flames they'd rise again, flared manes

snapping like chains behind them. The smoke would not blind them as do these children's hands: beyond our cruel commands

the fire will free them then as once the artisan when

out of the tree they were nagged to this neigh.

ADHESIVE VALENTINE

not knowing where you are not knowing who so I'll coat with glue all the envelopes I mail

where most words fail mine will still pursue kept in these veils of glaze every postal maze

no matter how far no matter how overdue they will find the true

letter bound for you and there be pressed adherent to its address

CODE FACADES

When light passes through a Mies Van der Rohe it grows greenlike, cubed, a square root of itself, absinthe ice. Architecture fractures the sun with the earth, earth's verdures and verdants suture

solar gold with grass/emerald-held stems transpierce our ledge-stalked land. But montage refutes all light, the flicker when it dips itself in time is like the moment a stopsign changes tense

from present to hence, closeup mesmerization effects. The flesh fauved from the bone. Thus no imprint stays in the wind of the rain which fell all night until now, at dawn, tides worry puddles—

then I move to Sands of Time, New Mexico; shampooed by hammers, I shut my window.

CRITERIA

The rose is more poetic than other flowers because it has only one syllable where daisy lily violet et cet

are over-verbal, poly-petal. Beauty

based not on color or odor but brevity.

STRESS THERAPY

Time, time, time, the clock vaccinates us, and then even that lacks prophylaxis.

Ticktock-pockmarked, stricken by such strokes, we get sick of prescriptions which work solely

on the body.
Systole diastole—
It is by its very

intermittency that the heart knows itself to be an I.

~~~

# EXTINGUISHABLE

birthdays you bend and blow out a candle in a skull

it's always just one candle but each year one more

skull is added to the table which by now is plus full

and that makes this ritual more impossible each year

each year as you approach that crowd of past selves

somewhere down there in all those bone sockets

the annual candle waiting glares and dares you to find it

#### SPACE

From the trees the leaves came down until we joined hands with a wand and that act enabled them somehow then to reach the ground

where they scuttered round our feet urging the latter to unite with a baton as if that act together with the hands can clasp

a dowsing-stick cut from the same branch from which we launched converging on gravity's purge-point

at which point we merged to remove all consonants from our star-maps. The infinite consists of vowels alone.

\*\*\*

MEMORIAL GARDEN, NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, U.S.A.

Where every rose blows more bellicose than the killer heroes

beneath: the pinks all bleed on parade; each hybrid seed dreams of omnicide.

In bouquet-beds they love like bayonets to shove their thorns through the air. Above

these barbarous bushes the most vicious flower that ever grew

swishes the Red White and Blue.

#### Note:

I ask any translator of the above to change "Arlington. . ." to the name of their own country's national military cemetery, and to use the colors of its flag in substitution for "Red White and Blue."

\*\*\*

#### **GRAFTING BOARD**

The way the grass weaves my walk into its intricate bouquet, the sway of my hips knees branches snatch and carry aloft all moves that imitate apples cherries: orchard

(it lingers by the ways prior to it) I could accomplish you who cry.

The days have their noise and I none else.

If the sleep I poach from is posted with echoes, does tapping these trespass keys—does each step staple a sapling to a tree?

Because nothing is changed by beauty because beauty is a part of the way things were changing anyway because it's never a catalyst but a process (I guess).

\*\*\*

#### TO MYSELF

Poetry can be the magic carpet

which you say you want, but only if you

stand willing to pull that rug out

from under your own feet, daily.

\*\*\*

### **TEMPTROUSSEAU**

The clock is dressed in drag, I mean it wears space instead of its own proper aspect—but if it wore time, would it disappear—isn't visibility an effect

of transvestism, that shield/pastime whose crosscausal aim unmasks the eye: must you assume the costume of the other to be here, to present the sense with an ess...

Narcissus saw his guise decked out all ruse, but if there were none, what would our true clothes consist of, our rig rags, our regalia—

Whose dapper element dons us: Einstein's continuum, or Flaubert's confidence that come the same the Bovary c'est Moi?

TO RIPLEY (Alien 1-4)

Always your face like a space (Destination: beautiful) ship Empties its mote of closeup trace Down screens that blink blank blip

Somewhere between countdown And coma time is a line Where waking centuries often Drained against that measure may find

All blood redshifts (direction: west)
Until film can clone one sun
With stars both whole and gone

Attending every sequel We pray for an intent equal To our interest

(L)ID

\*\*\*

(ב)וט

Each time I blink
Is a lapse in my life.
Each blink outlives me.

The one I was before The blink is never The one I am after.

And the one I shall be
Desires me to cease
Quenched with each crease
Instant of the lids.

The tips of its own
Lashes might see
Who I have been then.

An eye juggled on

\*\*\*

DEARTH DEMISE

Satiety help me I have inhabit of this world. Extant upon its designs to be more aimlessly fluttering at the window, to shadow all the patterns

it offers each sun. In frames far as eye I draw my words towards a juggler's shards as if our fallings-down our deaths occurred but did not involve a lot of colloquialized

arm movements, the body language throws. Thus the shape of your silence when it speaks me is different than mine in saying you,

though both of them resemble that spasm hymned as

repose lifepause a happen of sorts the way the horizon's a long way without meaning to.

\*\*\*

#### POEM FOR LOCATION

Looking out the window is no worse or is equal to accepting advice from a hallucination, but you continue to glare through it, certain that the flowers

out there could stop your lobe-shaped laments, time truer to one's due self than you: they seem to lure something surer, something pervasive, a creature seeking abandonment;

lying in wait amongst its private parts, is it me is it you is it who? And starts

to purge our whip-appled childhoods, to lecture the thoughts learned through lapse but how? I must try to find more words accented on the erratum-syllable.

\*\*\*

#### SUCCESSION

Upon the welcome mat the foot announces knee; knee, thigh; and so on. Each part of the body becomes, in the process of this introductory entrance, merely a pavlovian John the Baptist,

mere clarion omen of the one above it. But the head, what does the head presage? My hair can't grass over a path thus opened. The self must make way for itself, its progress upward,

upward, and irreversible, like life. Which is why I waver here before you now in the fear that I, the poor shadow of whatever it is I portend, I may somehow fail to properly augur forth:

caught in that unreeling portrait called Arrival, will I prepare its import, bear up and be its doorsill?

\*\*\*

# CHRISTMAS AT THE ORPHANAGE

But if they'd give us toys and twice the stuff most parents splurge on the average kid, orphans, I submit, need more than enough; in fact, stacks wrapped with our names nearly hid the tree where sparkling allotments yearly guaranteed a lack of—what?—family?—

I knew exactly what it was I missed: (did each boy there feel the same denial?) to share my pals' tearing open their piles meant sealing the self, the child that wanted to scream at all You stole those gifts from me; whose birthday is worth such words? The wish-lists they'd made us write out in May lay granted against starred branches. I said I'm sorry.

\*\*\*

#### SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE POET AS HYENA

Kindly deferrer to lions, Late flocks of vultures, packs of winds.

Last to destroy the lost, discreet, A shy, toothpick aristocrat.

Servile, even, leaning over
Droves of bones who disdain such care,

Who in their marrow preen and bear Huge swarms of self, a hubris herd.

Is that why he laughs—why he finds Joy in these humiliations,

These measured modesties that mass And make him eat his words at last?

How strange it is to stay astride This prey, to taste its pride of pride.

\*\*\*

#### **HERITAGE**

" . . . here thy generations endeth in accord."

I physically resemble my mother
And father and therefore must have been
Adopted, because on my TV screen
The role-children rarely share a feature
With either parent. The fact they're actors
And I'm not is what makes me misbegot—
Watch that matched world of monitors 2-shot
The mirror daily where I pray these stars

Come: cancel everyone of us whose names And clans have sundered human unity— Descend always among daughters or sons To live still, beyond the Web's trivia games, Till their faces cloned shape ours. Family. From android to ape, we'll be Thy reruns.

\*\*\*

# ALFONSINA STORNI

Feeling as you wrote that the cancer quote Is on its way upstairs to the throat

One breast had already flown migrant Heart de facto amazon only the sea remained

Like a jealous mattress an old pillow stuffed With insomnia's phonebills the sea Is there to throw oneself at at dawn late Up all night over a poem called Voy a

Dormir and which says this better than this (Each time I read one by you I revise Myself my suicide is to be me instead of you)

Sea that swallowed your poet throat

Does not for the having of it sing less

And besides only that cancer tried to float

#### Note:

Storni (1892-1938), Argentinian poet. In 1935 she was afflicted with breast cancer. A partial mastectomy did not keep the malignancy from returning, and Storni drowned herself in the Atlantic after writing a final poem, "Voy a dormir." The quote in lines 1-2 comes from a post-op letter: "I fear the cancer is on its way upstairs."

\*\*\*

#### THE SONNET IN ix

The nube, the nude, the not—you know: the Nix— Her Septet of orifices? (males have six):— Was it massed by Master Malyoume for the fix The fucks. Rape-scene: she, some defunc'-off, kicks

The mirror while centaurs click centerfold pics Of her fingernails—each closeup mimics
The anguish with which our pallored poet sics Midnights on. Encore encore, you sexniks,

Steph calls, tiptoeing away toward his sonics Lab, 'The Sign in X.' A thousand-quicksand thicks His step. He's pitbogged by all the nitpicks

Critics have glitched his path with, those pricks!

Don't they know that stars—stars can't hold shit wicks

To his candle?! (That bitch, that Nix: he sucks it: "I-icks!")

Failed translation of Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Sonnet en yx.' Line 14: I-icks! (both i's are short, as in "kiss") is an

#### Note:

onomatopoeticism that accompanies the expectoration and or taste of the candle's cum. Sort of the sound you make when you use your teeth to scrape it off your tongue ostentatiously. But why did I end the poem this way? Was I influenced by the Master's regret, expressed in his essay Crise de Vers, that words lack an embodied, material, tonal consonance with their meanings: "Quelle déception" (he writes), how perverse, that the "timbres" of the word "jour" should be dark, while those of "nuit" are "clair." And yet, he concludes, without such "défaut des langues," poetry itself would not exist. Assuming he's right, then onomatopoeia are defective because they're not defective. In Japanese, kireji—"cutting-words, used to separate or set off statements"—are onomatopoeic,

and "have the meaning that lies in themselves as sounds." But as Hiroaki Sato notes (in his book, One Hundred Frogs, from which I've taken these quotes): "Basho himself simply said, 'Every sound unit is a kireji.' " In any case, the faults and falls and false of my trans. should be clair to all.

\*\*\*

#### FIRST THING

"The first thing I can remember at all was a dead dog at the bottom of my pram." —Graham Greene, Journey without Maps

A dead dog at the bottom of my pram Seems to be my earliest memory, Unless I am part of an implant program To stock Earth with mock-human irony—

In which case I must have been abducted By ETs and beamed up into the sky Where I was undone then reconstructed Out of bytes and obits from the diary

Of Graham Greene: that gruesome deceased dog I mean: before Mother or the Mothership Popped that pug in my pram my time was mine

Alone, unknown, a page torn from the log— Until that moment died I had no script No guide: no word undeified my sign.

\*\*\*

# THE ENEMY

Like everyone I demand to be Defended unto the death of All who defend me, all the World's people I command to Roundabout me shield me on Guard, tall, arm in arms to Fight off the enemy. My Theory is if they all stand Banded together and wall me Safe, there's no one left to Be the enemy. Unless I of Course start attack, snapping and shattering my fists On your invincible backs.

\*\*\*

#### **OCTNOV AGAIN**

The year's wrapping comes undone: foliage tied By sun-strung cords is cut and cast aside

To present the godsends, the great last gifts Time donates to its ingrates, sad thankthrifts

Who throughout their dotage-dole still forget

The parcelly-priceless rose of regret

Never stemmed them against one bestowed weed— (Why can't our greed grant instead of our need:

Each field and tree stripped packing, boneward bare, Was nowhere on our wish-list: we'd prefer

Ribbon-prinked paper/a crepe-plush pinkbow Glitzing forth their vulgar veneer: and now

Mocked by how little of its kitsch remains, We crave our carton, not what it contains.)

\*\*\*

### COMPACT DUSK

Here at the height of the day night change The color of the sky is uncertain, The sky depending in which direction One's eye strains, each of its swatches a strange

Hue which dies too soon and which makes this hour Linger in the mind transient as a life, Whose name once known remains another Posied-up portrait on our palette knife.

Until even I wonder if one tint Ever survives the harm of seeming unique (Evening's intrique, time's singularity).

Study for its trace, its placemap, I see

—Redundant as a stopsign in italic—

The face on which my profile leaves no print.

#### Note:

This began as a trans. of Jorge Borges' A Un Poeta Menor de 1899, but ended up as a kind of homage/meditation. The homage or translation is always a profile compared to the fullface original.

\*\*\*

AFTER BORGES' "TO A MINOR POET OF 1899"

Who sought that sad height and that constant change Laboring on an extraneous verse Which through the dispersion of universe Might elect one second whose spectrum's range

Was so capricious it broke the scholar Caught in daily efforts to confine the eye Pursuant of ceruleanesques that lie Against each longing to fling a color

As brief as my life if I am alive

And am the one destined to undergo

Any authorship of the words that show

Whether such vexacious tints can survive—

You must judge, ancient friend! what I've seen

Or accept as real the illusion I mean.

\*\*\*

#### ELEPHANT AND ENVELOPE

Numbering their normal RAM in great noughts, The elephant and the envelope are Doomed to remember only pristine thoughts— They both carry every souvenir too far.

No matter how creased and stained their skins fade, Even the erratum images they encase Remain abnormally there to be read (Password: remorse). Is there no way to erase

The years the yearfalls or are all these flaws Stored away somewhere perfectly forever— All of our memory sites dotcomlinked—

Trapped in that utter trunkiness because The envelope is an elephant. Never Forgets: thus it too will soon be extinct.

\*\*\*

#### WINDOWBEAM

Ray that overruns every pane, force that first invades but then

is pervaded: sunstripe penetrant! what made your phalanx fail: why can't

its pure-greaved asbestos-armor avert our dirt: must the conqueror

convert his ways, the savior adopt savage customs? We slaves corrupt

all bright kings—each mote of us holds abject thought that blots with dust

your gold-shed greatness: shadow breaks your arc and essence. How

transient the transparency you brandished here so recently.

\*\*\*

# WINTER REGRETS

The snow on my ladder's rungs seems to be stepping upward, returning to that cloud which hangs framed in the faded cardboard

of an old calendar landscape whose dust holds the days I desire to live in, fixing to climb up past that summer sun and hammer the scene in whole. I didn't haul my ladder in and now it's too late—I turn from the window and stare

lost at a vista of August air tacked, half-peeled from the kitchen wall. All the undone chores must wait.

\*\*\*

#### FERNAND KHNOPFF

Days in the lull, gathered afternoons of it, —A touch of star-decals on one's bookbag,— Silence, like a vast confetti of souls, and that Torporic breeze: oh how difficult

The culling of love from our facades is.

Once, never to go the cling thing seemed what's

Sublimest. Look at those cobwebcrobats,

Skittering skyward, fingerhold, nor toe-.

Deep down (in my ugh-roots) I longed to brag My spiel shall deign define no July of these. I'll fall chapter closed across your chest is all.

Now I am an atrocious expert; who answers Every question by, "It is very simple: We must listen to Beauty with frozen ears."

# Note:

I don't understand writers who prefer "painterly" painters over "literary" painters. How can I as a poet place Cezanne (or Monet, Matisse, etc.) above Khnopff, and not be disloyal to myself? Shouldn't we appreciate most those painters willing to stain their canvases with some of the impurities of our own art?

\*\*\*

THE HUNGER (enneasyllabics)

If a path to the Gingerbread House could be established by breaking crumbs off its edifice and sprinkling them so as to find what lies behind us

across the featureless fairytale void of childhood: yet how very quick that trick wears out when the story's track takes hold, takes toll, a far-older trail

prevails, we're forced to give up this lost cause; and the fact is that every last morsel was gone long before the you

or I might totter our way back here to try to dissuade all these other Hansel-Gretels hollering in queue. NUN CLAIMS MOST SNAKES TOO SERIOUS TO MAKE GOOD BOOKMARKS (YOUR SOUL IS A CHOSEN LANDSCAPE)

À la gongs, that await the Emperor's semen But in vain, I partition silence into rooms Called poems. Why? Only Empresses remain— Is this too rigid: should seed, blown from some

Sunflower come to land solely on sundials . . . Yet wig of compass-needles; comet. Soars —For sync's sake? Like optional hearts, in styles Singular averse against the opus wall of stars

Spring safetypins my penis to my navel, Praying that so fetal a petal shall shrivel still: A thank-quiet follows; a field day feeling;

Queen Staypower paints out our scene's see-me's (Dream-prussic pupils flare flush with their irises). Then sun wonderlands it all a bit, by falling.

Note:

Parenthetical title: "Votre  $\hat{a}$ me est un paysage choisi . . ." —the first line of Verlaine's Clair de Lune.

\*\*\*

### MENAGERIE OF THE AEDILES

Now what thought is thrashing from this brain to be unleashed by a brow-to-brow collision with a unicorn? Or could it go released through other throes I wonder. For if I were gored

there, mightn't I, like, die? When Terminator zaps a hole in someone's forehead they don't write a poem response, they drop and he steps on them crunch, french, act, your soundtrack may vary.

The plan was to get scalpels taped to the Creature From The Fuck's huge flipper-tentacles and then lie down hoping that perhaps their wild wave ways

surgically correct my defect my gender—
penis revealed as gap in consciousness—
Though I know none of you beasts loves me that much.

\*\*\*

# PARABLE FROM CHILDHOOD

Something about a pond, and on the pond a paper boat; something about a child's act, dropping a pebble upon that boat to study the effect: but then to let other pebbles fall to see if it holds, to kneel there spilling them one after one until, until finally . . .

If I weigh

this poem down with much more, it too will sink-

Writing my poems of a boy on the brink has shown how ripples horizoned by sky remain the only real cargo aboard whatever that craft that unmoored us was, and yet why he treasured such passages.

Saying they be lost we would launch each word.

\*\*\*

# QUICKIE

Poetry

is

like

sex on

quicksand

ergo

foreplay should

be

kept

at

minimum

\*\*\*

#### BOY AT THE MIRROR

A child emulates what he can't know is true, a murderous dew that appears every morning to be his face, but already it evaporates at

a touch: the lurking effects of the unity granted by night are never enough to maintain this ripeness called time, this waking up to a cherub-scope

that looks back at him in the glass growth like hammerblows a devil checks off a list—the routine begins so early

and even the wattage of the womb behind him is too bright, too ready to hale an unsought self into sight.

\*\*\*

# PEACE (PASCAL)

There is a valley Is the oldest story.

Its temperate qualities
Make us descend the trees
To settle down beside
Fruits and fields.

By its river content

To sit quietly in a small tent To fashion fishing spears From fallen limbs.

No need to climb its hills No need to go up there To look to see Another valley.

#### Note:

\*\*\*

### PERFORMANCE-ART PIECE

First she slides a banana up my ass almost but not quite all the way in then deftly with a knife she slices the rindtip that extrudes and when

the pithsweet meatus shows its white cusp like a pearl between the moue of a romeo in a cameo says Right Hold it Okay now squeeze real slow

as she squats and eats the ivory flesh emerging and smearing fused her red lispberries while the yellow

skin remains within me to be used as a kind of condom for the dildo she has to ram in and out artfully.

\*\*\*

# GROUP PHOTOGRAPH (THE EARLY YEARS)

Most biographies of the Moderns share A common pose: ranks of raw youth appear Often capped and gowned, uniformly there— It looks alike in all such Lives we read.

Torn from some album somewhere, its focus Is general: all the figures are crushed Anonymously together and lost—
Just, some airbrush has dinked a single head.

Imagine rummaging through raindrops on Transmundane panes and eenymeenywhile Plucking from amongst them 'Source of the Nile'!

How of this many is there but one self— Whose underneath name obtains its caption— In book beside book, on shelf after shelf?

\*\*\*

Like a teardrop that although of many Teardrops composed hangs singly in an eye Which likewise might be meld of plural Orbs if all were known I mean visible Must I also go aggregate go greet A global bitter mime that bears its white Situate amidst their company sought Opposite I wake lost at night without The pains I have pawned my own for him Grieve and the obeyed sweatbeads lamentum The final humors that give our body Physicality current as the sea's Before its fall repairs the fault that sees.

Made for the mead whose gracious weaves supply

# NECKOGNITION

In love the head turns the face until it's gone into another's where it is further torn from its own mirror

and grows even more erased and lost and though

the former still yearns to be his/be hers, it sees these lovers over your shoulder show

that whatever disappears can also go as verse whose shape's nape-known now.

\*\*\*

STRETCH We feel more imprisoned by walls with cracks in them than by walls that are smooth and featureless: the latter

do not mock us with examples of breach, morals of escapeindeed, as further punishment our cells from side to side

are fissured with gaps not wide enough for exit of course; but through which can be seen

fair glimpses of all the others

penned around us, the ones who deserve this sentence.

\*\*\*

#### **COVER STORIES**

Exchanging X's in the form of kisses, Spies forbidden to know the codes they pass, Each pretends for the moment these mysteries Outweigh all allegiance they owe the past.

A space where fingertips cease to explore space, A safehouse right for private armistice, The flesh they bared betrays them both at last. Dawn is distance in such askance allies.

As false passports must bear a true likeness, These tradecraft made-in-bed IDs are not The ones that will have to be worn once more

Come morning's normal enemy status
Which would have killed to foil the turncoat plot
They laid here, those traitors worth dying for.

\*\*\*

#### LONG DISTANCE AFFAIR

The saliva gathered daily by telephones across the world from lovers yelling at each other is an ocean with no bottom.

But say you pried apart those phones, you'd find that all that wild white tide of promises, cries, kisses, threats—it also evaporates. The spit

is what we call each other, I mean the words themselves, condensed: distills us into clouds, into mist.

Rising clarified it drifts toward Comsat, Telstar, there to orbit closely around our distant lips.

\*\*\*

# PORNOPUNCHINELLO

I lack the pleasure to claim remorse Is at my loins earning its pariah's name From me who may have kissed a worm or worse In my time aspiring to that acme shame

Unless shame is a sense of having shirked Refused what love dangled just above me All those tantalus chances for lust were jerked Out of reach but not by fate's absurd pulley My own hands gangling in the back somewhere Supported those puppets' pulp character

Tame filmstars lame mimes where are your faces Enduring still your enticements I turn And twist until you've all lost your places Prompter-perfect I but you you never learn

\*\*\*

#### STRAND

To swim in water colored green means you may never reach the shore—but if the waves are blue, then you might revive your stroke and strike more.

Past surface shades could find the one arranging dust, the hue your own adequately echoes, earth tone.

Neither primary nor pastel, its prism all but shallow bathes every island that can be found in scenes preserved by paint: it saves

the picturesque yet quickly drowns our honed harbor, your wake, your wake says, flowing home beneath no ground.

\*\*\*

# **CURTAIN UP**

The last whirling dervish to drop Beholds transfixed what those who stop Dancing an instant prior can't: His veil is pierced by orbs that grant

The properly-spiritual leer
A picture which should inspire fear.
They say the face of God, maybe—
In my case I would probably

Flashback to 1961 Where filmqueen Romy Schneider's gone Down on co-star Alain Delon To pose for my holy vision.

They're flung in bed with me between. See us there: I am their screen.

\*\*\*

# THE UNSUBSCRIBER

Like all children, you were a de facto Member of the Flat Earth Society, Believing nothing but what you could see Or touch or whatever sense led act to Fruition: mudpies made summer beneath
A tree whose measured shade endowed decrees
Between light and dark: such hierarchies
Gave you implicit, a sophistic faith—

(Fallacious fellowship!)— Youth's adherents Ignore the fact that most factions reject Their lyric league (which only fools have stayed

Striplings of) and none condone its nonsense: No-one loves that vain solipsistic sect You'd never join, whose dues you've always paid.

\*\*\*

#### **EXTENDED**

Those positions sought in vain by trainwrecks
These two achieve quite quickly. Contorted
Limbs and mouths chuting their routeless tracks
They litter that linen landscape. The bed

Goes off the rails. Mountains or valleys push Each place that's reached for beyond its distance. Here in time's commute communed for the rush Hour this kiss lasts. Yet always late since

Lovers' travel is over where but when. How far they've come. Both bodies disembark Homeward tramways while memories remain

Head-ons hurled from one's normal course again And again. Everything goes bright then dark. Either emerges on a further line.

\*\*\*

# 1946

The year noir was born; the year Nazis hid In monasteries to restore their force; Peace, but peace that made some things even worse Than they were pre-war: I was just a kid,

Hard at play, cap pistols, hooky, apples Filched through a farm fence: then my mother dies, Killed illegal abortion style by guys Quoting God, his badboy lies, his bibles.

Pope Vandal burnt the last Complete Sappho Publicly, my mother was butchered in A secret site; their results much the same,

So I blame him and him and him and him, All of them from Adam onwards are men, Meaning me, meaning the worst thing I know.

Note: In 1073, Pope Gregory VII ordered the public burning of all books containing the poetry of Sappho.

\*\*\*

#### ROCK PICKED UP FROM THE BEACH

To focus on thing, thing whatever it is, in some cases a mountain, an object somewhat more intimate for most of us—a fate transformed then framed into a fact

plucked from a beach full of rocks the same size and shape, not much to distinguish it or confer more meaning than perhaps the eyes' choice, the hand's: what justifies this favor?

Nothing. And nothing is appropriate for something common chance has snatched from phenomena's moment, its montage pace

down the page. One word leads to the one right for it: that's right. One can reach out random or one can wait until it's in its place.

\*\*\*

FRAGMENTS FROM THE BEACH (Enneasyllabics)

In retrospect the tragic nature of sea is a taste wept too freely, soon depleted by scenes of rupture; the eyes have other secrets to see

and deeper use for the detritus within us: the bright effluvium of ego dries up, mired as it is in wealth, that remedial medium.

Blame it on fate, on beach memories pebble put in the pocket or shell fragments; any memento carries us as much as we it. Time capsule

contains every evening's interval. An ocean observes its own puddle.

\*\*\*

# HAVENOT

Out of a dozen I prefer the one That's most like thirteen, the one Autumn drops its cease-colored nets on.

Out of a once I prefer the one That never was, that eludes its own, Twins peering at each other through keyholes.

Out of a one I prefer the none Who has my face, who evens the end And odds the origin. The belated begun. Out of a most I prefer the many Who are not me, who remain free Of that disciple number, that slave figure.

Twelve nonce, thirteen's the tense, which fourteen ends. Despite my choice, I have no preference.

\*\*\*

This edition: NOVEMBER 19, 2008

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

## November 24, 2008

COLLECTED SHORT POEMS 1968-2008

PLEASE NOTE: THIS BOOK CAN BE DOWNLOADED AS A PDF FOR FREE—OR BOUGHT AS A PERFECT-BOUND PAPERBACK FOR 6 DOLLARS AND 42 CENTS—AT LULU.COM

ALL MY THOUGHTS ARE THE SAME

collected short poems 1968-2008

Bill Knott Copyright 2008 Bill Knott

The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

#### INTRO NOTES:

When I began writing back in the 1960s, the short poem was popular. That vogue soon ended, but stubbornly or stupidly I continued trying to write them.

All my poems and my short ones in particular are indebted to Robert Bly, who encouraged my early work . . .

Regretfully over the years I have failed to live up to the promise that Bly and a few others thought they saw in me back then when I was young. . . .

\*

The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*

## **EXAMPLE**

All my thoughts are the same length—they're lines, not sentences: you may protest that on the page they seem dissimilar in their duration, but I swear to all you unregulated readers-of-prose, that in their passage through my mind each of these took an equal amount of time.

\*\*\*

#### **PROPHECY**

When I stepped up onto the TV to see what channel I weigh the card I got from the slot said You're going to travel far away don't forget to leave the remote

\*\*\*

## LOVELADE

The sea is the cargo of empty ships Moon bears the sun when it's gone My face with the trace of your lips Will fare from now on and on

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

after the carnival suddenly mysteriously burnt down they stirred the fortuneteller's ashes to try and find the reason why but sadly it seems prophecy does not work in reversus

\*\*\*

## SONG

When my shadow falls off of me

I yell "So long!"
But when I fall off my shadow
It cries "Long so!"

It seems obvious
That one of us
Is either falling wrong
Or calling wrong.

\*\*\*

#### **IDEAL ESTHETIC**

I only keep this voice to give to anything afraid of me

\*\*\*

#### **PRISONER**

What raw name scrapes and saws at my breath-hatch . . . This voice wanted always only to soothe, not grate. And its last noise, that rasp, that deathrale scratch? —A file, smuggled in to an empty jail cell, too late.

\*\*\*

## GOODBYE

If you are still alive when you read this, close your eyes. I am under their lids, growing black.

\*\*\*

## **HOMEWORK**

Dear boys and girls, please don't forget to underline my words after you erase them.

\*\*\*

## MISANMYOPE

I know that blinking lubricates the sight and keeps it safe— -but did this World-Eye really need the lid of my brief life?

\*\*\*

HAIBUN: THE JUGGLER TO HIS AUDIENCE

One must be able to juggle at least 3 things to be a juggler (2 is not enough). But whatever the 3 things are that one juggles—whether it's (for example) father, son and holy ghost; or mother, father, child; or id, ego, superego: whatever this minimal trinity consists of—the juggler must acknowledge that his audience is not external to the act; and the juggler must confess to that audience:

One in my hand,-

one in the air-

and one in you.

\*\*\*

#### TO A DEAD FRIEND

mourning clothes worn inside out would be white if things were right if opposites ruled

if truth prevailed then me and you would be two instead of the one we've become

\*\*\*

## **DEATH**

Going to sleep, I cross my hands on my chest. They will place my hands like this. It will look as though I am flying into myself.

\*\*\*

#### **MESSAGE**

I am a messenger sent to find the genius in everyone here, because it alone is the true recipient of what I carry it alone can read the code this note was writ in: it alone is the genius in everyone but me, which is why I alone can bear to bring it to you.

\*\*\*

## AT THE CROSSROADS

The wind blows a sheet of paper to my feet.

I pick it up.

It is not a petition for my death.

\*\*\*

## **FRAMEPOEM**

First, make a 100 minute movie. Then take the 1 million 440 thousand frames, or stills: take each frame, blow it up, print it, put a frame around it, then take all 1 million 440 thousand pictures, hang them in a gallery, consecutively in a line so that the first frame of the movie is the first picture inside the door and the last, last: you get the idea. Then have the people who come in RUN past the 1 million 440 thousand pictures, so that in this way they become both spectator and projector.

\*\*\*

## **SHOWER**

I tie my handkerchief to a kite to try and dry the cries of the clouds up there.

Pour, pour: oh, if only I hadn't loaned my umbrella to that submarine!

\*\*\*\*

## MY FAVORITE WORD

"Attentionspan" is my favorite word because I can never finish reading it all the way through.

\*\*\*

#### ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

I lay down in the empty street and parked My feet against the gutter's curb while from The building above a bunch of gawkers perched Along its ledges urged me don't, don't jump.

The commonplaces of the wedding ceremony would like to go back and marry the proposal's florid words. (But isn't that love?)

\*\*\*

#### THE FATE

(for Anne-Marie Stretter)

Standing on the youthhold I saw a shooting star And knew it predestined encounter with the sole love But that comet crashed into the earth so hard Tilted its axis a little bit not much just enough To make me miss meeting her by about a yard.

\*\*\*

## WISE SAYINGS

Sitting under a tree in the forest or under a chair in the house wise sayings may pass by unheard or worse may be misheard through all these leaves and legs.

\*\*\*

## **EN PASSANT**

While orbiting the earth at a height of one millimeter I notice it tickles.

\*\*\*

## PENNY WISE

well alright
I grant you
he was a fascist
ahem antisemitism the
er war and all
I'm not defending them
but at least
you've got to admit
at least he
made the quatrains run on time

#### Note

2 puns explain the title and last line: "Penny wise, pound foolish"— And: Mussolini's admirers used to say, "Well, he may be a fascist, but at least he makes the trains run on time."

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

The trafficlight on Lovers Leap never changes to red.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

scarecrows placed on the airport runways to frighten the fish away ah if only I were as admirably tasked

\*\*\*

#### **SKIRT**

My hem has a snake threaded through it to hold it down when the wind blows and then when the wind is still to give it a twist of tremor.

\*\*\*

#### POEM

the door is open but the wall which the door opens continually waits for it to enter

\*\*\*

#### **FAITH**

People who get down on their knees to me are the answer to my prayers

\*\*\*

## то х

Somewhere in history
Somewhere in untold ages
Somewhere in the sands of time
Somewhere in the vast seas of eternity
There is one person

Only one Who could understand me and love me And you're it So get with it

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Before going to the palmreader I glued mirrors to my palms, so the irrevocable lines and configurations that told my fate were merely reflections of the reader's eyes, eyelashes, retinal imperfections which time will perhaps deepen to blindness . . . I was about to p.s. this poem also. What do you see, O Sibyl?

\*\*\*

#### **SYMMETRIES**

How mirrored this merging: it's like lover/loved— The poem aligns us and aims to make our skins Correspond, each of your pores barrel-grooved With one of mine, clone-gunned: then void opens Onto void, grid-ideal, union, see, it joins! First of course the skins have to be removed.

\*\*\*

## NO-ACT PLAY

I'm sitting alone in my rented room.

A door knocks at the door.

I don't answer.

It goes away.

Later I leave the room, and go to my crummy job.

The door returns, and knocks again.

It is admitted.

\*\*\*

## NAOMI POEM

The beach holds and sifts us through her dreaming fingers Summer fragrances green between your legs At night, naked auras cool the waves Vanished O Naomi I kiss every body of you, every face

\*\*\*

## UP TO THE MINUTE

A jet falls on a cow.

Part of the animal sticks out and twitches like the usual closeups of the hero's jaw.

Children I admire play in the crushed cow's shadow.

And even the plane itself has been left atop the skeletonized milk-giver, clouding one's dreams of a bloodless coup.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

on the one hand but on the other hand I rest

\*\*\*

## NOTE (NAOMI POEM)

I left a right where the nipple cheeps kiss in each nest of the black bra hung inside your bathroom door.

\*\*\*

## THANKYOU, TANKA

Was it out of kindness I dropped a compass into the volcano so the lava will know which way to flow.

\*\*\*

## SANS

To cross-section a pinpoint, reveal what quadrant still exists. Oh keyhole-cleaved, data mint. Tin ion, meet iron quark.

Grasped at or loved-

It's a cease orifice.

\*\*\*

#### NAOMI POEM

When our hands are alone, they open, like faces. There is no shore to their opening.

\*\*\*

#### **POEM**

The pose heightened in desires, the pose.

The several lovers in their young arms.

\*\*\*

MUTABILITY (Polvo serán, mas polvo enamorado)

Quevedo wrote he would be dust, but dust in love—
And while I can't believe that millions from now
A rose and a quartzstone will embrace, I can believe
Still less that my arms are around you here: or how
Your sharp crystals
Are tearing my petals.

\*\*\*

## SLUM SCENE

poor children sharing back and forth their one set of Dracula's teeth here even the dead live hand to mouth

\*\*\*

## NAOMI POEM

What language will be safe
When we lie awake all night
Saying palm words, no fingertip words—
This wound searching us for a voice
Will become a fountain with rooms to let.

#### ANOTHER COLD WAR POEM

So what if you lived only One second longer Than we Did: to us

You will always be known as the Survivor.

\*\*\*

## RETORT TO PASTERNAK'S ZHIVAGO'S JESUS

The centuries like barges have floated out of the darkness, to communism: not to be judged, but to be unloaded.

#### Note:

See the last lines of "Garden of Gethsame," which is the last poem of 'The Poems of Yurii Zhivago,' the verse supplement to Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago.

\*\*\*

## (POEM) (CHICAGO) (1967)

If you remember this poem after reading it Please go to Lincoln Park the corner of Dickens Street and sit On the bench there where M. and I kissed one night for a few minutes It was wonderful even if you forget

\*\*\*

## BANG BANG GLUB GLUB

My ark/my life's-boat had two of everything necessary for salvation with the exception of two bullet-holes in its bottom hull.

\*\*\*

#### **RECAP**

It was that kind of day the kind that goes through you like a skewer but is okay as long as there's someone beside you waiting ready to lick the skewer when it emerges from you

\*\*\*

## UNTITLED

Unscarred unscratched

Unnicked as the bottom Of the lost wishingwell. \*\*\* **POEM** See the unicorn's empty sword, how its lack takes place in a lack of place. Nothingness is its own niche. \*\*\* **FRAGMENT** Because at least one couple is making love Somewhere in the world at all times, Because those two are always pressed tightly together, Hatred can never slip between them To come destroy us. \*\*\* PHOLK POEM The soup is lumpy. Well then, pour it out. The soup is lumpy. Well, pour it out then! The soup is lumpy, the potato soup. \*\*\* **ALAS** 

yes I allow each fool to toss around my skull but remember I tell them remember it will finally always land in Hamlet's hand

#### AT THE MUSEUM THIS WEEK

Poland Through The Centuries a touring Exhibition of maps drawn By German and Russian cartographers reveals There never was a Poland.

## QUICKIE

Poetry

is

like

sex

on

quicksand

ergo

foreplay

should

be

kept at

uc

а

minimum

\*\*\*

## **HISTORY**

Hope . . . goosestep.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Photographs lightningbolts which, their shadows having caught up with them, perish.

\*\*\*

## POEM

The dead paperweight rests on my lips, occuring to me like a cry from the words it has crushed: think of what it saves from scattering minds and windows' wind-drafts, think of all the blink-wafts of Argus trying to read this.

\*\*\*

## POEM

Doesn't each tree throw its shade to show boundary to the others' thirsting thrust?
Only the roots are brothers; the roots are the forest.

\*\*\*

#### TO COMPLETE

last one in the sentence is a rotten old period

\*\*\*

#### **SEANCE**

Around the readiest table a manicurist with a hammer nails in place our hands together to hold the ring of our focus clung and keep our communion open: like jousling airliners the dead must circle before they land along the medium's tongue.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Rice thrown from an open grave marks the height of a ceremony somewhere in our lives.

\*\*\*

#### HOLISTIC

Before eating the cherries I pinched my cheeks to get in tune, in tint—

\*\*\*

#### OLD JOKE FROM THE TED & SYL SHOW

Hectoring her as usual with a bark in His bite wit, Ted tutors his young gal Syl: God, he scold-quotes, is in the details. She grins and wanks his chin with pinkette nails And winks that mock-erotic spark in Her eye: You're wrong, you bodkin, you big moose, You handsome sod: God is in the profile—Got one, and you're God; you're Ted Hughes;—Don't got one, you're Philip Larkin!

\*\*\*

## ANOTHER RESURRECTION

God sucks off tombstones

until they cum, the soul up from its finest gloryhole gushers across His tongue—

Only the premature flesh (for the last time/eternally) is left to detumesce, just another BJ, another JC.

\*\*\*

#### POEM

My cheeks threw themselves as fuel into the fire of the kiss and then in succession the rest flesh bone all features flowed thusward until my entire body was gone burned away in the flue space that held between two mouths turned ash the heart or hearth that cannot last the night.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

each a prey to self's salt though impervious to sea's mermaids must never weep their tears would rust erode their scales their souls

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Fucking; nightcrawlers smashing my anonymous.

\*\*\*

#### JUNK

Nothing evicts our everydayself (our (as Heidegger calls it) they-self) like a glimpse of that tenant within, Occupant Corpse.

And to think that all the mail addressed to it is elegant throwaways.

\*\*\*

## HAIKU

The sweat on my forehead shines brighter

when it's in my eyes. \*\*\* **STUMPED** I wish I could count up to one without first cutting off nine of my fingers \*\*\* CONTRIVANCE The perfect artist is the one who manages to die at the hands of the critics. PRISONER EXCHANGE After I replace the bars of the cage with my bones and replace the bones of my body with the bars, will I have escaped? \*\*\* [UNTITLED] A nose surrounded by a flawhark, that's my face \*\*\* **DIRECTIONS** A kite in the shape of a map floats over the land it depicts, but at night no-one sees its roads at the end of which a child feels his hand tugged upward, disappearing in salutations. **WRONG** I wish to be misunderstood;

that is, to be understood from your perspective.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Nothing could be born if there didn't already exist a metaphor for it, or if the whole world wasn't a metaphor for the non-existence of this nothing, this none-too-future something.

\*\*\*

#### POEM

The most private part of the clock is the hour, no, I mean the minute, or wait, the forever.

The most private part of me is the heart, no, I mean the nipple, or wait, the never.

\*\*\*

#### OR NOT TO BE

Not Hamlet but his shadow shows the clarity of performance—see how brilliantly it holds its stance, soliliquy bold and brando.

But then of course it is like all such primadonnas, liable to be much too much dependent upon its prompter, the sun.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Some have a bodied voice Their tongue its skeleton Mine's a wraith Waiting for a wind

\*\*\*

## KNOT (Hendecasyllabics)

After you've sewn it, bite the thread off my grave—Please leave no loose seam of me to wave above The bones unknitting, the flesh unweaving love.

## THE DAILY ROUNDS

I keep a TV monitor on my chest so that all who approach me can see themselves and respond appropriately.

\*\*:

#### PUTATIVE POEM FROM SAMURAI ERA

he made a haiku before his blade took my head why not a tanka tanka would have let me live fourteen syllables longer

\*\*\*

## **HUMIDITY'S TONES**

Four AM, nothing moving, no hurry, dawn still has time to be choosy selecting its pinks. But now a breeze brushes across me—the way my skin is cooled off by the evaporation of sweat, this artistry, this system sombers me: when I am blown from the body of life will it be refreshed? I dread the color of the answer Yes.

\*\*\*

#### **NIGHT THOUGHT**

Compared to one's normal clothes, pajamas are just as caricature as the dreams they bare: farce-skins, facades, unserious soft versions of the mode diem, they seem to have come from a posthumousness; floppy statues of ourselves, slack seams of death. Their form mimics the decay that will fit us so comfortably someday.

\*\*\*

## MY RIVER

The closer it gets to the sea the more it aches for its source, the wound that sprung it from the ground.

After Cocteau wrote in his journal that "Beauty limps" he did not go out and break his leg.

\*\*\*

## PARANOID THOUGHT

My roots are twisted entwining lovers, Couples passing me on the path, ignoring me, Always pretending that I am not their flower.

\*\*\*

## PAST FUTURE

Idly wondering if the underlined items in one's itinerary are more likely to occur.

Ditto diary.

\*\*\*

## **TYPE-CAST**

Of course I refused all roles until they offered me the lead in "The Co-Star Killer"

\*\*\*

## **STRANGLEHOLD**

9 planets and 1 sun make 10 holes into which the fingers go so smoothly but who is wearing these gloves that orbit my throat

\*\*\*

#### OCTNOV

Stickum leaves fluttering down Pin unpin each path's compass

The season on our sleeve has shown Another course for us \*\*\* FEARS (CONT.) niche niche niche the birds go seeking a covert eclipse eclipse eclipse my shadow hides behind the sun this this this every corner finds a crevice to keep wish wish wish the oldest word pacifies the youngest infant THE GETAWAY It's 1969-and I'm All lam: down These libertysplit streets U.S.A. I Throw a measuringtape out, run its length, Throw again, run, Throw, run.

\*\*\*

## TRIP

- . . .Jesus walking on the water
- . . .keeps tripping over
- . . .the flying fish

\*\*\*

## **STORMFORM**

All the lines of this poem would like to contain the sound of the rain against my windowpane, but I'm going to have it remain here.

## **FOOTNOTE**

All of us who lived on earth and all our loves and wars may not appear at all in the moon's memoirs.

\*\*\*

#### from A BACHELOR'S TANKA

copulation entries in the diary there are none I'll never have a daughter or a son no woman wants my wrong to go on

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

so here I am if truth be told feeble and lame either febrile or cold senile-years-old

\*\*\*

## **CHANGE**

Why don't the ranks in a marathon carry little piggybanks, and listen to the coins clank around as they run; wouldn't that be an encouraging sound.

(Oh surely I can't be the only one the sanguine clashing of cash spurs on!)

\*\*\*

## WHAT I SAID

Humor is banned in hyena heaven.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

are there some invulnerabilities too hard to bear perhaps the bulletproof vest stabs itself in secret \*\*\*

## 'QUOTE UNQUOTE'

Who wrote that we use our children to forget the size of our parents, or is that really a quote? And if it isn't, and if I forget to write it, does that mean that someone will—

But what if someone forgets to write the words that bring me here, that let me be born? Oh micro-mini-soul, you, my shirking ego, your quotemarks would just hang there in the air

like wings without a bird.

\*\*\*

## MAY EAGLES GUARD YOUR GRAVE!

The weird thing is, I can't remember if the above is a phrase I read or heard somewhere, or if I wrote it myself. (And, is it a blessing, or a curse?)

\*\*\*

## DAYS

Ceilings ring with morning's occasions; but evening's toll us to the floor.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

I beg myself bare I cry my knees For a pennyplease A share

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

in case it forgot was the apple not reminded to rot before being put into Eve's hand

the one skull I'll never find between my teeth is mine

anyone else's skull I may (all the dystopians say)

have to suck the brains out of if no food remains

postnuke postplague (I'll crack it like an egg)

\*\*\*

#### **AUDIENCE**

Murderous the fist of their paws condemns us all to die of applause: in this circus minimus even Coriolanus must nurse and gnaw and showcase his scars when the next closeup comes.

\*\*\*

## DEAR ADVICE COLUMNIST

I recently killed my father
And will soon marry my mother;
My question is:
Should his side of the family be invited to the wedding?

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

only when the welcome-mat is exactly centered at its core can a labyrinth begin

\*\*\*

#### ANCIENT MEASURES

As much as someone could plow in one day They called an acre; As much as a person could die in one instant A lifetime—

TO X

You're like a scissors
popsicle I don't know to
whether jump back
or lick

MY LIFE BY ME

Every autobiography longs to reach out of its pages and rip the pseudonym off its cover.

\*\*\*

HAIR POEM

Hair is heaven's water flowing eerily over us Often a woman drifts off down her long hair and is lost

\*\*\*

ALTERNATE FATES

What if right in the middle of a battle across the battlefield the wind blew thousands of lottery tickets, what then?

\*\*\*

PERFECTION

Cueballs have invented insomnia in an attempt to forget eyelids

---

3 A.M.

Time to pare down, pull in, simplify;
—I'll buy a dark coat, move my lips when I read
the bestseller lists . . .

\*\*\*

POEM TO POETRY

Poetry, you are an electric, a magic, field—like the space between a sleepwalker's outheld arms!

\*\*\*

## MADE FOR EACH OTHER

Today a fashion-model stopped me on the street
And asked me to marry her because
She said
She wanted to eat all the rat-poison in the world for
her wedding-supper

\*\*\*

## THE THIRST

Light through the green leaves drinks an absinthe of itself, entering the earth as forthwith, as fleshed.

Sweat dripping from a sundial regulates the time for those who wait their turn at the spigot.

\*\*\*

## TWO EPIGRAMS FROM A NOTEBOOK DATED 1984

1. [The ageing epigrammatarian]

Youth's engine of thumbs revs and purrs—

Oh:

I am all fingers now.

2. [Plus ça change . . . ]

When young
I was attracted to what they call
Older women.

Older now
I am attracted to what they call
Old women.

\*\*\*

## BEDDYBYE

Just hope that when you lie down your toes are a firing-squad

\*\*\*

## I SHOULD HOPE SO

Next year when this book is pulped and the pulp recycled to print your Collected Poems, will I still be here still writing this?

\*\*\*

## **SECURITY**

If I had a magic carpet I'd keep it Floating always Right in front of me Perpendicular, like a door.

\*\*\*

## POEM

Flinging your door keys into the wishingwell will not unlock the secrets of what you wish for down in your own depths, and is not even funny.

\*\*\*

## SLEEP

We brush the other, invisible moon. Its caves come out and carry us inside.

\*\*\*

## POEM

All my soapbubbles dance on daggerpoint. I throw dice while jacking off and cum snake-eyes. Where there are twins one is wearing a mask. My enemies list consists of nothing but autographs.

# [UNTITLED] that poem I was working on in 1959 and the half-done one-act play from 1969 the novel I spent 1979 starting the painting I made sketches for throughout 1989 and the website I planned to debut 1999 are around here somewhere maybe I should finish them up today WHERE are the arrows that bear bandages instead of feathers at their ends \*\*\* OCCUPATION Error is everywhere, but one might hope that the graves of surveyors would at least be dug the correct distance apart. \*\*\* POEM! Shh, you'll wake up the stains on my bedsheets. \*\*\* POEM Night, in whose death did your ennui take refuge? The women all lay their kerchiefs on the water, and stepped back.

\*\*\*

**POEM** 

The brow is the face's map, on which can be read

the twists and turns it took to get here. Yet the seams and cracks on one's footsoles show that only through detour can the road reach itself.

\*\*\*

#### WHAT ABOUT PENS?

Always remember that day follows day, but night precedes night and that your hands are merely microscopes for pencils to look through.

\*\*\*

LOVE, HATE, LIFE, DEATH, MAMA, WATER, ETC.

If everyone on this planet was forced to write one word on a piece of paper, their favorite

word, the resulting anthology might add up to less than Shakespeare, who had, or so I've read,

a 40K vocabulary: wouldn't most of us just put down the same few words; how many could

resist the usual abstract homilars, our limited minds consisting of each other, non sequitir. I would

be ashamed to show that book to my UFO guests, no matter how repeated or urgent their requests.

\*\*\*

## MINOR POEM

The only response to a child's grave is to lie down before it and play dead

\*\*\*

#### **HOLY SHIT**

Gosh golly Galway Kinnell's pig is holy and I Am holy too and so are you and gee if I could only Find the name of the right saint to throw in here they Would print this next to his in all their anthology.

#### Note

After Kinnell's "Saint Francis and the Sow."

## THE FINAL WORD

Our farewells lack the plausibility of our departures.

\*\*\*

#### STORM: FARMBOY DREAMING TO REACH THE SEA

I skiffed up rivers and creeks of lightning till thunder split my covers

and down I drowned lung by lung to a stone of salt the cows licked.

\*\*\*

#### **TANKATOWN**

This island has
Been discovered by a great explorer,
But fortunately,
News of the discovery
Has not reached here yet.

\*\*\*

## **BREAKFAST**

You know how I like my dawns god—'ll Just tap off this nubei-pink 'n' 'n' Call yuh call That a 3 minute dawn?!!

You need a new timer old timer

\*\*\*

## POEM

The amputation of my stilts has left me leveled, eye to eye with what should have been cut off, myself.

\*\*\*

## ADULTERER WITH NO MOUTH AMUSES WORLD\*

Not having a mouth is no joke! Imagine an ax

left by somebody, sinksank into some treetrunk: and each day you go by, the embedded ax seems higher, higher, until finally, one day, jumping, you're just barely able to brush the fine of the grain of the bottom of the axhandle with your fingertips—and yet the tree has not grown. Nor have you shrunk. Imagine: imagine trying to explain this to someone if you didn't have a mouth.

\* Newspaper misprint

\*\*\*

## THE RUINS-READER

I-beams uphold that wall— You-beams bolster me: guess Which one is going to fall.

## [UNTITLED]

I tried but they wouldn't let me put tombstones on the merrygoround for a ride

\*\*\*

## **EVICTIVE**

If the body is a house, eventually that house pushes us from its rooms out onto its ledges.

Age must live on a ledge.

\*\*\*

## COURSE

Our ship needs wheels to sail across these waves of stone if Medusa is our figurehead.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Nakedness exists only an instant— Quickly becomes flesh, becomes thought: The night is a torch of comas . . .

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

As a detail in a painting frames that painting in the often memory, so, for me, your face is surrounded by your eyes. Aura!

\*\*\*

#### **INTERRUPTUS**

Wait. What are you.
I'm a poet. I write filler for suicide-notes. Like:
I love you.
Alright. Continue.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Once I had to leave you so
I arranged for earth-tremors at night
so in your sleep you'd think I was caressing you—

\*\*\*

#### THE AMNESIAC'S NAME

Whatever it is it is The only alias Anonymous never uses.

\*\*\*

#### **POEM**

If the poet could say to everybody, "I release you from your duty to me so that you might tend more purely the grass and the trees and all the earth," then the poet could say to eternity, "OK, let's go—we're free."

\*\*\*

## WEIGHED

Always jumping from one pan of the scale to the other, always trying to measure your absence. \*\*\* THE TENTATIVES If the arrow is merely An elongated bullseye Do I know this head (Target that grins and winks) Like mine surrounded By eye speedbreaks [UNTITLED] Searching it goes, alone at night, -my beacon of ashes. \*\*\* A STROLL IN THE COUNTRY Here for ear-rings my lobes Are pierced by scythes Whose handletips bump along The very ground I despise! \*\*\* [UNTITLED] trying to find the name five letters first letter J of an ancient prophet or god which I need to complete my cross word puzzle and my cross \*\*\* SIC TRANSIT Tangentially the sun unites itself in us, forged by our transparency into another shadow

to avert one's eyes from. \*\*\* [UNTITLED] They wandered through the hand in hand. \*\*\* ODD Hard rhymes of childhood ride me back to lack's kitchen in which it's leftovers again:

from the cyclops cupboard

I plop another half-ate Ulysses onto my plate.

## ENLIGHTENMENT OR SENILITY?

The night is paced with stars Day spaced by birds' wings At last the spread of things Has replaced my particulars

## [UNTITLED]

Octopus floating in earth's ink-ore core whose arms extend up here as trees may your branches squirt their black across my pages please

#### **FLAWLESS**

Mopbucket toed across a jeweled floor.

To scrub down between these gemstuds is hard, and yet I have to cleanse every dust-shard that might perturb the great ones who walk here.

Only rubies diamonds pearls and other beautifuls can their bare soles encounter. \*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Check out the Obituaries—each day there's another page and guess what, those fucks, there's nobody on it but us.

\*\*\*

#### METAPHOR VS. METONYMY

As the hand carries on the function of the sleeve to a somewhat absurd degree, so you could take over for me if we ever finish this sentence, whose period is its cufflink.

\*\*\*

#### VISION

moon of all means sun of all ends

this TV screens whatever day

or night sends me away

\*\*\*

#### SUMMER DAYS

a butterfly with a sandwich bite out of one wing flies away from the inhabitoads of our shadow or tries to

## [UNTITLED]

Do they let you still keep your crutches when they crucify you, as if you could even manage the goshdarn things with your hands out like that. Heck, they'd have to nail them up to your armpits.

\*\*\*

## LUST

The parachutist wearing stilts so long they reach the ground Wants
To jump anyway.

\*\*\*

#### SNAGGYPOO SNUGGUMS POEM

Morning always lets down strings, knots of light to be untied by our hair—but by the soar of night's coiffure, all them puppets lie back in their cots.

\*\*\*

#### **FINALS**

My classmates wrote the answers on my skin in invisible ink then during the Test set fire to me

They passed I passed away

\*\*\*

## **PROGRESS**

I advance a few whines, then am driven back twice as many whimpers.

\*\*\*

## WINTER SUN

Full-stop, period, dot, erased at times by birds.

Or asterisk, whose footnote clouds our breath with words.

\*\*\*

#### **THEIRTOWN**

a lack of streetsigns shows those who live here more fortunate than us they never need to know where they are

My head is put on and taken off by one thought after another, though strangely it seems to fit none of them. And yet somehow that hat never goes out of style.

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

the past and the future are my parents meeting for the first time when I die

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

now that I die my past becomes as endless as my future used to be

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Eternity gnaws its thirst.

Its tusked planets rut suns raw.

Its grapes mist the sea.

But sleep flows to the fallen.

\*\*\*

## MAYBE (TO X)

a stopsign stranded in a sea of cacti won't grow needles maybe but then

even I take on some characteristics of human when I'm with you

\*\*\*

## [UNTITLED]

Silence disguises itself as vowels, but the loudness of consonants is also a ruse, a mask worn to betray the words we chose to say only for their echoes.

\*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

a jet zooming by may see climbers on a cliff and never know if those souls ascend or descend to the fast slow has no end

\*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

The shorter the poem the longer the words.
The shorter the poem the more endless it must be.

\*\*\*

### [UNTITLED]

Age retracts me, filling my hands with shirtcuffs as I shrink, reduced to secondchild. My skin is smoke from a paper house, my hair.

Prepare a needle sea for me to walk on.

(Prepare me. Make sure my cries are wrapped up in a leaf.)

\*\*

# 31 SYLLABLES

even the wisest (even the esteemed poets who when I was young acclaimed me as promising) have at times been proven wrong

\*\*\*

# PAINTING VS. POETRY

Painting is a person placed between the light and a canvas so that their shadow is cast on the canvas and then the person signs their name on it whereas poetry is the shadow writing its name upon the person. \*\*\*

#### FOOTNOTE TO CAVAFY

Sure hope them barbarians
Will allow us to pay them
To take photographs of them
Before they slaughter us.

\*\*\*

#### **BAD HABIT**

At least once a day, everyday, to ensure that my facial compatibility with God's is nil, I smile.

\*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

mute/hard forboden words line the mountain down which we melt stones that wore our trickle tongues away

\*\*\*

### **LESSON**

Even if the mountain I climbed Proved to be a duncecap really, It was only on gaining its peak That that knowledge reached me.

\*\*\*

## **ESCAPE PLAN**

I examine my skin

searching for the pore

with EXIT over it

\*\*\*

BASH (ten versions of furuike ya)

If I were a pond and some frog jumped into me

I wouldn't respond. I am a pond but when a frog gets intimate I keep my mouth shut. I may look like scum but some frogs can poke this pond to orgasm come. This pond is so old even its frogs want it sold to build the new road. This pond is old as me. That's how bad-off it is. Frog-visits, I doze. You're old, pond-the same as me. But when your frogs come you recall each name. This pond is year-scored as me. But frogs that shake it up just make me bored. I'll float in this pond, fearing each frog that jumps down will wash me aground. This pond is old too-But when a frog jumps into It, it still sounds new. This pond is dead earth But listen to its rebirth When frogs take a bath. FURU YOU, EEKY YA Ya, the old wash-holewait-a-fuck-a frog?-oh, no!goes splasho Basho. Ya, the old North Pole where Santa Frog (ho-hop-ho) chops a splashin'-hole! Ya, old-boys brothelwatch Oscar Wilde get Basho to wet his tadpole. Ya, here's to Basho!there's one frog-boozin' dude you

should raise your glass to.

\*
Whoa, Ranger Basho!

frog-herd's at the water-hole—leggo your lasso.

\*\*\*

POEMPATH: PERIOD

Each syllable a steppingstone till you stumble on this one.

\*\*\*

#### EVERY RIFT WITH ORE

How fiercely foilsome the facial knife shivs its two blades up to where the forehead ends as wound-deep-wedged widow's-peaks: how weakly the old hero hair-line fights back and fends, each pass of day fewer gray-strands save me—how deadly dull's the duel our sword lives.

\*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

Hamlet in the nunnery kneels to take his veilful vow while Ophelia scales with sword and bow the enemy's walls

\*\*\*

# MY THEORY

The universe's mission is to expand, all scientists now agree; yes, but why should that be its quest, they question—

Based on my experience, my theory: if one remains in the same place, one must pay rent, life's made me understand.

Landlords and clerics may disagree with me, but look, see every galaxy sneak out the back, starcase in hand?

\*\*\*

# BATHROOM MIRROR

Every morning the glass

```
empties my face
of its night and then
as its day is poured in
I feel forsaken and
my eyes strain longingly
down the drain.
```

MOVIE-Q's

Ben Lyons was typically blunt in I Cover the Waterfronthis cute co-star Claudette Colbert

could have frenched it: 'Ze waterfront, I co-vair.'

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman is not a film appeals to everyonebut I, I like the way it feels, I guess, to have a whole town look up my dress.

Although by gorgeous Gene Tierney he was loved, and loved sincerely, Richard Widmark proved pretty shitty. The flick? Night and the City.

Those Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies blew my mind, man. Like wow! (-Was I crazy? Was I sick?

Maybe I shouldn't have watched it through that Thai-stick.)

Basic Instinct 2 avoids the great esthetic error of 1 by not having any Moviestars appear but the sheer Sharon: its other no-name actors fade to shadows in this Dantean vision of the heavenly ("Eat me!") Stone alone up there on the screen.

I know Jack Nicholson played a cameoand Elton John played a song or soand Ann-Margaret played his mommy-

but who the hell else was in Tommy?

How many of you gazeekoids went yumyum Watching that transmutated geek Jeff Goldblum Rip off his own ear and eat it? The Fly was great!

(And if he'd unzipped his fly, ripped that off, and ate?)

Oh sight that might have made an atheist of God, seeing the screenwriter-producer-star of Panther Squad -auteur divine, Sybil Danning-opt to not go topless! (Even John the Baptist 'd put it on his flop-list.)

Where Garbo got the great John Barrymore

To play the part of her perfect paramour,
Poor Joan Crawford was stuck with brother Lionel:
Life is c'est la vie at der Grand Hotel.

.

It's a crime shame that that scene where Sean Penn tied his wife Madonna to a chair and then put on her dress and licked her thighs got like totally cut out of Shanghai Surprise.

×

Note: I don't know if the Movie-Q constitutes a form per se, but I made up some rules for it: the complete name of the film must appear within a quatrain rhymed AABB. The Movie-Q must try to be funny, or piquant, or pointed. Etc., etc., though actually I can't think of any more rules.

\*\*\*

#### POEM FOR NOW

I live bent over now
like pages folded down
in books, the ones
I meant to get back to
but won't.
These are my dog-ear years.
What I write now
will never
be read again.

\*\*\*

### [UNTITLED]

perhaps I still wake up

I still live perhaps

but I hope

I hope I do it for sloppiness sake

\*\*\*

# POEM

The thumb is the scoop of the hand and often it empties it.

Tongue head ditto.

\*\*\*

# **GYPTIAN**

architect of the Sphinx

must have sketched his first plan knelt down with a finger to draw lines in the sand isn't that how he began?

\*\*\*

#### AND SO ON

suicide sex it's so much fun you take 3/4ths of a fatal dose and then fuck till you pass out you cunnil her or fellate him while they slit their wrists and then you call 911 and so on

\*\*:

VANT

First, cover yourself with chameleons.

Then walk down the street.

The one who recognizes you as you is your enemy.

The one who recognizes you as Greta Garbo is your lover.

\*\*\*

# **PUN SON**

mom on her mattressside with me incide rests or rather orestes

\*\*\*

# BUFFER

if I could surround myself with stuff to steal diamonds cars or lures enough then the thieves would never reach me to rob my lashes limbs and love like they do now

\*\*\*

### [UNTITLED]

The snowman's luggage is always enroute.

\*\*\*

# **INTHREADABLE**

each snowflake's a maze whose center no other flake can find the ways to enter \*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

mirror smashed in a snowfallthe flakes will find each face like themselves to be unique as long as it remains lost in the blizzard of shards

WAS

Age 20 to 40 everyday I said

"I wish I was dead." 40 to 65

each day I cried "I wish I was alive!"

65 to whenever

daily I'll whisper "Wish I was either."

POEM

Even when the roads are empty, even at night, the stopsign tells the truth.

\*\*\*

WORSE

All my life I had nothing, but worse than that, I wouldn't share it.

[UNTITLED]

having found a penny atop a weed's aureole however it got there

is it wrong of me to look for bucks on roses

\*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

someone's lost handkerchief pinned on our community bulletinboard and I thought to just touch it just touch it that's all honest I wouldn't have done anything else

\*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

clearly my eyeglasses need cleaning but but I wasn't looking at anything

\*\*\*

#### **IMPOLITE**

in the conference den impolite to strain one's neck past all the faces talking to read what someone left scribbled on the wall

\*\*\*

### IN VAIN

I like to look at myself in the dull gold of the frames that contain erotic paintings and, as I gaze, ask, as if I cared, "Will moonlit lashes continue to surround sunlit eyes?"

\*\*\*

# WISH I COULD (AND DO IT IN 31 SYLLABLES)

like someone whose quick halt in the midst of traffic to check his wrist makes him late for that appointment that's how to think about death

\*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

the sixth sense is what the first five use to delude us into thinking that all we do here is see hear touch taste smell

\*\*\*

#### THE TRINITY

I don't recall the faith I was born with I don't know the faith I will die with all I can do is hope and pray that the faith I live with differs from them in every way

\*\*\*

## THE COMMUTER'S DREAM

Every morning an afterdinner mint dissolves around us. In it, cars touch,

like tiny hands at a football huddle—
-headlights. Rush-hour pushes through mist

or dark its stubborn, pre-peekaboo path; a worm fed into a pencil-sharpener.

\*\*\*

1.

### **TOWERS**

Pisa's power to bend the head sideways must be envied by history, which can only force it forwards—and Babel of course is praised in every book (on every page) for the way it slanticulates our words.

2.
Galileo drops a pound of lead and a pound of feathers from the top, one of which hits you on the head, but which one—
(which head?)—
It makes you think, as well as stop.

3.
Every tower around here
is always in need of repair,
due to the superstitious habit
of leaning over
to peek into its 13th floor
to make sure it's still not there.

\*\*\*

#### 4 TRANSVERSIONS OF GOETHE'S WANDERERS NACHTLIED II

Every hill is overcome with peace, the trees are a dome down which the wind echoes to mass one last breath; the forest song has rung its close, bird by bird, descending—await your death no longer. Listen: this too is ending.

Over all the hilltops is peace; in all the treetops no breeze endures, merely the breath of one; the birds are gone, or at least their song has ceased. You have your wish: desist, desist! Thy will on earth be done.

You can feel your breath stilling all the hills, and oh, what an undulant illusion!
The birds have wrapped their wings around their bills and sleep: soon you too will be no one.

Now peace envelops
the hilltops
and every tree's summit
seems to submit
its final breath to the pall
and harshly over-all
hushing of even
the baby birds' calls when
you, you and your haste, come near—
Beware: your place is here.

\*\*\*

#### THE CYCLE

what's the use waking all night to write down truths which dawn quite easily refutes

\*\*\*

# [UNTITLED]

in the hand's cup the palm is an irreducible drop a shrunken gnosis no one can drink up

\*\*\*

For time to consist of me, it would have to halt.
And space, if it wanted to exist of me, empty.

I forget the other dimensions—

but whatever they are, they must cease as I to be me.

\*\*\*

#### THE WOULDBE NONCHALANT

I try to shrug it off, but when my shoulders poke themselves up to form the shrug they get stuck, and I slump down trapped inbetween these shoulder-peaks; so I live in the valley of a shrug, in its perpetual shadow.

\*\*\*

### **TROTH**

if you drew a string through the entwined fingers of lovers might it come out all knots which would then in theory right be too tight to be untied

\*\*\*

# **BOTHERSOME**

what's that clatter-clack a jack in the box having a heart attack

open him up crack the seal but if we let the poor guy out we'll

just have to close him in again and this time with a coffin

so let's save an hour or a minute and bury his self with him in it

\*\*\*

# FLAKE TAKES

Snow, echo of lightyears, your time it appears to reach the ground is never now.

Like truth the snowflakes peek from behind a veil.

Sunset: the snowfall lacks (altitude vs. attitude) the hauteur (condensation vs. condescension) of the skyfall. All this missive whitefold is franked by a pattern its own; stamped unique: 'Return to Sender'-? No: Deceased. **UNSPEAKABLE** A comma is a period which leaks. \*\*\* TWO CRIMES poem/accomplice distracting your attention for a second or is it hours while I pick and pick your pocket's flowers the holdup went down as the clockhands show at 1:55 so I refused to stick em up because I never no I never mime time \*\*\* [UNTITLED] Your nakedness: the sound when I break an apple in half. \*\*\* SHUT FLIGHT the knob's the head the hinges open-spread would make wings but see the keyhole like an eye that seeks its beak

why does the doorbird leave its nest only when it's closed

---

#### **VALUE**

the weapons I purchased didn't finish off the fascists

the love I sold my own for did not put paid to them either

why'd I never think to try whatever it was I got free

\*\*\*

# NOT THIS WAY

if that bird soars across this wall which halts us why does it then fly back here again

\*\*\*

#### LEAD

If I could fill these lines up with pencils instead of letters I would. Less

metaphor meaning or superstition might adhere to those writing-sticks

than this. Let the tool be a substitute for the work; the eraser for the point.

\*\*\*

# POEM

Here in town the sound of bells must compete with me for room, but out over the waves can zoom alone. Across the sea bells travel unimpededly.

\*\*\*

Say ten snowflakes light on your fingertips, one on each, the ten snowflakes that match your ten fingerprints in pattern the most, the closest it's possible to get and yet remain a similie, since similies like M-and-M's melt not in your hand but in your mouth say.

\*\*\*

#### IN ORDER

the dead you wrote about in order to forget about so you could write about the living are still living there where you aren't

\*\*\*

#### NOBLESSE OBLIGE

I always put on a whole-slick tuxedo when I jump off tall buildings so

when I'm sprawl in the streetdust that passersby can say, "Oh no: and just

when he was at the height of his success; look at that tux—now that's the way to dress."

\*\*\*

#### [UNTITLED]

Long candle, ponder, short candle, think.

\*\*\*

# A MEDIUM TO DOUBTERS

How can I make you sit
Beneath the clairvoyant's
High-table at seance,
And, while her tongue transmits
Some tremulant spirit's
Long-withheld voice in trance,
Make you tongue her clit,
You true communicants?

# [UNTITLED]

Fingerprints look like ripples because time keeps dropping another stone into our palm.

\*\*\*

\*

This edition: NOVEMBER 11, 2008

# November 26, 2008

(ACTING) POEMS: actors, performers, movies, theater, TV, circus/carnival, et al

PLEASE NOTE: THIS BOOK CAN BE DOWNLOADED AS A PDF FOR FREE—OR BOUGHT AS A PERFECT-BOUND PAPERBACK FOR 6 DOLLARS AND 18 CENTS—AT LULU.COM

(ACTING) POEMS

actors,
performers,
movies, theater, TV,
circus/carnival,
et al

**BILL KNOTT** 

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Intro Note

Poems about acting-

about performers of whatever sort-

or movies, TV, theater, circus/carnival et al.

Poems in which an act of public performance (real or imagined) is central.

Performance seems to pervade or control so many aspects of our life, private and public. How often we face an audience of all or one or none.

\*

The order of the poems is random, with a few obvious exceptions.

\*

×××

# CIRCUS: AERIALISTS

Their soars restore our disbelief,
Yet trapezists leave us wanting more:
Can't we rip down those damn ladders
And all their other means of safe
Descent, ropes, wires, (cut the nets, too)—
Let's strand them all up there, ignore
Their arrogant screams for rescue.

Stay up there, we'd shout (or whisper).

Pretend you're one of those angel

Acts, bigtop happy, heaven's troupe—

Hang bright as nails on a tightrope

Tree, spread spangled arms and fly free

Caught in air, spotlit spaced, dangle

Dare: see sphere sights beyond our glare,

Dying soon to gawk for good. When Finally from hunger or sleep one By one you faint and plummet home Your stiff poses against the ground, Hoping your souls have remained Aloft: but then like clowns we'll trip Deliberately over the smashed up

Bodies you were always scorning
Skyward, forsaking all fallenness
To pass the massive eyes of envy,
And sprawled in dust of center ring
May take back our lack of sympathy
When once like shadows shown or less
You lowered yourselves among us.

#### **FRAMEPOEM**

First, make a 100 minute movie. Then take the 1 million 440 thousand frames, or stills: take each frame, blow it up, print it, put a frame around it, then take all 1 million 440 thousand pictures, hang them in a gallery, consecutively in a line so that the first frame of the movie is the first picture inside the door and the last, last: you get the idea. Then have the people who come in RUN past the 1 million 440 thousand pictures, so that in this way they become both spectator and projector.

\*\*\*

### EACH THOUGHT EMITS A CAST OF ITSELF

Every roll is a new role And each shows its truest face When Yorick's skull is tossed you'll Reveal your final disguise

Bone against bone they spin Exposed by a thrust of wrist-lace Yet Hamlet stripped to his skin Scolds the players' displays

Don't saw the air when you throw Don't wince at seven eleven Whatever odds you're down to now Will zoom up zero soon

Act Five Scene Five waits
To quietus these words words words
Death itself is just one of the fates
Our dice are rolling towards

\*\*\*

#### SONG TO CHER

you've got too many feathers on what you're wearing but you're just sharing what you're carrying inside to help you hide our dying eyes

you've got too few letters there in your name to show but like every brevity you help us live help us give our day a little stay before we go

there's too many young boyfriends in your bio but that's just jealous jive and we all know oh we were never old enough to be the one you love

there's too much agelessness in your face and every dress you wear is less and less but nothing can replace what's barely there as you stride on stage on high

(all you one-name wonders sing your numbers everywhere you've no discretion in your expression of the air)

now there's too much cher in spangled hanging there in that fixture picture HER our eyes have all died our days have gone inside to find out who you always were

\*\*\*

#### **HERITAGE**

" . . . here thy generations endeth in accord."

I physically resemble my mother
And father and therefore must have been
Adopted, because on my TV screen
The role-children rarely share a feature
With either parent. The fact they're actors
And I'm not is what makes me misbegot—
Watch that matched world of monitors 2-shot
The mirror daily where I pray these stars

Come: cancel everyone of us whose names And clans have sundered human unity—Descend always among daughters or sons To live still, beyond the Web's trivia games, Till their faces cloned shape ours. Family. From android to ape, we'll be Thy reruns.

\*\*\*

# CURTAIN UP

The last whirling dervish to drop Beholds transfixed what those who stop Dancing an instant prior can't: His veil is pierced by orbs that grant

The properly-spiritual leer
A picture which should inspire fear.
They say the face of God, maybe—
In my case I would probably

Flashback to 1961

Where filmqueen Romy Schneider's gone Down on co-star Alain Delon To pose for my holy vision.

They're flung in bed with me between. See us there: I am their screen.

\*\*\*

#### MYSTERY MOVIE

The business rival, the jealous lover, the distant heir: once I've guessed who the murderer is, it's over before it's over, like life. The detective will continue to not see the obvious or else pretend to lack the answers till his hunch is confirmed: if he's Poirot or so, he savors his superiority and holds his gloat over the heads of all the stupid others: the cast still looks each suspicious close-up in the eye, but my attention fades to patience. Post-intrigue and somewhat bored I settle back, awaiting the confirmation of my solution. Then: each clue hangs abacus-like on the bars I've placed around it all, safe and cell, confident the guilty one shall confess to prove that even I must suffer exoneration in the executions destined for those who foresee the end, who linger here complacent in our deductive wisdom, reviewing the forensics, the shrewd sleuth-insights that result in the death of suspense, the loss of our audience innocence. Now the soundtrack swells to leitmotif its list of suspects, each of whom could have done it if this world were only perfect, equal in its sharing of virtue or crime. Sherlocks who solve the puzzle pre-climax are most to blame perhaps: are we to show for this lack of justice, we who jump the gun, who deny the drawing out of the dilemma, thrill of the withheld. The unknown. We who rush too soon to the revelation. We killjoys who slay its necessary delay.

\*\*\*

# RETURN (CINEMA)

Down every road that rounds us off with rain I go though of course precious I have lost the way—

Corridors run through movies to lead me onward to the onward place, but every time I try to keep track of that trackshot I die in clumps beneath its rails.

See the days that drag me down with road.

You stars who shine from the door of the projector, you holy detours, where my threshold fails is home to you. You rule each realm

I ache my grin into skeleton for.

I know your names
Will nickname my name some more.

\*\*\*

# TRYING TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING

when my hand was cut off I got worried but then suddenly from the shirtcuff flap

slips of paper began to appear

when the cues come

now the other actors pay
attention to me

bearing printed lines for me to speak

when I respond to them
and so I'm wondering
if it worked this way

and seem happy

with the hand what should be cut off next

# NICOLE KIDMAN

Hates it when her husband Clark Gable shows his cigars to the whores and grins: his dimple is a temple full of drunks who swear at a grease-spot on a saint, the hushavoice high in their roaring.

It's doormat day at Hollywood Donuts.
The whisper of their hinges wastes my ears; washed up higher we wait for its lapse.
Tactile, tangible, what else resists the awakened world I suffer from.

The obsolescence of it is too shining to blink a mote at unless the eye can filter out the rest of this instinctual alarm, my campfires insanely signalling no end to its vigil. Of course the war

is over I tell her trembling snowpeakable

toes, the Oscar is yours for the height if only, if only. Night surrenders to her naked bike. I must steal the clothesline to make the clothes fit me. Ride, ride, Nic,

take those sacred spoke-wheels veer for Sunset Beach featuring Tom Cruise on Serenity and Artifice: The Actor's Choice. Rant-serenade in dream-demure my foe-limbs chose this evening's attire.

But awe-while, like a manifesto tossed into a zoo's mouth, I'm nude too. As if it would do me any good. Please post no bills on your tongue. The sky by torches soars. No tongues allowed her wall says.

\*\*\*

VANT

First, cover yourself with chameleons.

Then walk down the street.

The one who recognizes you as you is your enemy.

The one who recognizes you as Greta Garbo is your lover.

\*\*\*

### HOLLYWOOD NIGHTMARE

Soon to be a major mirage, my face—my face never changes! To look each day in the mirror is boring as going on location shoots or signing autographs for my stable of fans or being typecast in detective roles. Sigh. Sometimes all I do is sit by my pool

and spazz out until my brain is a black pool of emptiness, my eyes reruns: until my face wears the neutral mask of aura a detective affects. And when I am as blank as a mirror, as dull, when I sprawl as snoozeful as a stable full of saviors, I dream: I dream someone shoots

me and he becomes a celebrity. He shoots
me and he gets the house, the swimming pool,
the Andy Warhols, the Rolls, the Porsche, the stable,
the . . . the lawn he gets! Christ, it's like divorce. My face!
He gets my face too? He's like a fucking mirror
of me . . . ! Jesus, you'd think some goddam detective

would know it's not me: when I'm a detective on screen I know who is who. The badguy shoots the goodguy sometimes but when they hold a mirror over the goodguy's lips you see a pool

of mist appear and then his pal the co-star's face looks all relieved. Cut to the hospital: "Stable?"

the doctor smirks, "Yes: his condition is stable.

Of course, with the brainectomy his detective days are history, uh hunh. His face? His face— hell, our plastic-surgeon loves a challenge: shoots these Before and After photos? Great stuff! . . . " The pool of reporters from the Daily Sun Rhymes Mirror

yawns at the grinning doctor while in the mirror above my white white bed I maintain a stable noble absence; my non-being is a pool of pure mystery—sheer puzzle any detective would arrest the cursed creator of: I see shoots of lilac and crocus come bursting from my face

when they nail the mirror on. Oh, no detective show's as real, as stable, as my dream, which—look—shoots nothing but closeups: face, pool, face, pool, face, pool, face.

\*\*\*

#### VIDLOCK

These movies in common separate us if we see them as real, as all that may be salvaged by an image, the screen blank so it can evolve toward some

higher form of media, a schism between the eyes perhaps, whose gap is carefully marginal with grief, whose stubborn inborn hunger grips

like tolled-out hymns. Like old films. And yet its website remains as secret as a bridal veils' graveyard or any facade acropolis can't penetrate.

Its made for TV trademark's a fad, a name: one more fatal masquerade.

\*\*\*

#### **CASABLANK**

The 2 dead moviestars I believed in embrace, forcing their makeup to become intimate as a possibility of channelsurfing past ourselves

or anyone awaiting reunion (all lovers share a past) while the absence of their blackandwhite colorized eyes presents an alternate first-person

which is not nominalist, which preserves a soupcon of that neoplatonic void felt by Nazis in the New World where they've always resumed reign. (And once history forgets to save fate let it wait for its own feature; right, future?)

\*\*\*

#### **ROMY**

Will I crawl beneath my hemline's tombs to feel in shield with her, blessed sole by all our subterfuge of sex has shared, accordance that makes even the curtains flutter a little less aimlessly in their illusion of filmy Schneider, Romy spider I must vent my sheath to be stalled in again; how her forsaken handful of films are forced to record our regimen, their words a slow replacement of thoughts with vowels, a slow effacement of her co-stars' dialogue lost below the hurt of her heel, her tread of line-readings, her face issuing its bitten shape sheer above our video lust to assuage the ground she sunbathes on in Chabrol's Dirty Hands, her tan eery and strapless but note how the accolades are toppling, the toe-taps are stepping up the staircase of the last castle ruled forever by glances who elude their complicity steeped in seats tickets bring us to so briefly: so quickly the endtitles entitle us to exit brushed by regret we cannot linger in her aura impetuous-throated, dusk-laden with sighs most, a hushed singularity of eyes marking the nose against the mouth, inscribing the cheekbones on the lidbrow, dashing the teeth to frozen steppes that proclaim their princess is deep in dew: with seep-pores fixation fanclubs galore garbage from her amours it drops; far her hair is solo photo, montage-reamed limn it sinks into mink murmurs of air, hooded in horror or instantcams or sheersham clamor of the viewers who read the marquee feeds that bleed the air thoroughfare with film and fill culture name-some wonders dear previews of each star actor bends personally to hear confided in constant groans and jeers on every corner of near needs and trends they leave us landed here with no amends no way to leave the queue of this theater whose opening night our day attends but what is it it intends to grace us with one glimpse of the briefest gift of gore before it extends our ends and lends us the token brochure for our future loss of her we had hopes to depend on for whatever projection of inner terror we might atone the destined displacement of, sincere exposure of slo-mo mouths that moue and move desire one millimeter closer to its itch-switch, its clicker, since

I can freeze the screen on her grope-gripped lips, I can etch their gesture frame by frame with long exhalations of my crotch area where the remote control seems most at home in that guare of generation, wombwarmth rooting its phallic exteriorization of time's finger on the TV-trigger tracing a linear content in that c-groin, that piss-p, that cup we call lap, where confident hands can grope up the buttons to catch even the Olivier-est replay tapping his ribcage for a nebulous savage while aches of FX construct their tiers on colloseum liontamers lacking cameras as elsewhere focus the Empire examines each fingered footprint led backward clones hop the gap trapped in a pit only alliteration can free him from, faux hero till a sulk her silk gaze roams over the amazed consternation of the crowd, bored background zooms, the thumbs-down that comes on cue and slackens its mode location daily salvation, fierce genitals surround the atrium with aspects aversions aperturesthe apparatus is complete, is more than home since Rome is Romy minus her wolf-son, her fourteen-year-old boy lies impaled on the spears of the fence the mansion railings that guard her from us the fans who want to crush her distance into dreams no limit: and yet no exalted Presence alone can compensate our lack of, ergo She must be sacrificed She should suffer the immolation saints like us are assigned to, madonna-mournful must bear the cross the stats of the boxoffice in a Chanel shift, a Dior drape, a Balmain bare and parade Cinecitta to a traipse as hourly her skins pass on a bus with ads for sequels whose dread achieved empathies advocate pain that strands its hands in applause and then to go whole-whore it sights the hostile sub glamor features expressed in nearer nervedowns known as time: it spikes her son, it kills her too age 43 OD heart attack svelte no stuntdouble can mime end clutch self close pinned young legend crumple bound to kiss the sign we seek. Approaching the cinemapolis from sea we see that in its skyline of stars the tallest is hers: wink-tips this capital with reign and rule, insane, pic-naked Empress pale-annexed, porned-over by pore fingers rupture suppurating gloved Vatican hands, oh archived name demolishing the gone, undressed in the interest of our purity's hell, cat-of-no-lives but ours; and shifting if she can that one: heel to her fate she falls. 1958, 20 years old, look, she lifts it all: fame career life: scenes marks lines: runthrough daily it mates no one but her and smirks at first lover Alain Delon, her co-, her consort.

\*\*\*

The filmfestival swept beyond us as we kissed Oh roundrobin panel where we went goodbye Since then the weight (savored) of noncoincidence As if each lightningbolt were secretly aimed at

A matchstick but were we ever on target as that Whenever we meet now in the bar part or the Restaurant part or the video part or the disco Part or the atrium of this night I fear our parts our

Roles I mean because what if we you and me Were cast to closeup the scene the street the strobe Stabs of rain frying our profiles for future ref

Literals straight off a wanted poster for Janus Because or would we just stand there thunderfucked Trying to remember our name ends in applause

\*\*\*

### TYPE-CAST

Of course I refused all roles until they offered me the lead in "The Co-Star Killer"

\*\*\*

#### THE DAILY ROUNDS

I keep a TV monitor on my chest so that all who approach me can see themselves and respond appropriately.

\*\*\*

#### PERFORMANCE-ART PIECE

First she slides a banana up my ass almost but not quite all the way in then deftly with a knife she slices the rindtip that extrudes and when

the pithsweet meatus shows its white cusp like a pearl between the moue of a romeo in a cameo says Right Hold it Okay now squeeze real slow

as she squats and eats the ivory flesh emerging and smearing fused her red lispberries while the yellow

skin remains within me to be used as a kind of condom for the dildo she has to ram in and out artfully.

\*\*\*

# COCTEAU'S STARS IMPORTUNED

Cocteau's stars are bored by the love of a sort of wince-animal, who's failed throughout his life no less to stretch a pimple into a profile.

Pipes ache to anchor in those teeth a sail, a horsestall, a fireplace all beg to go backdrop, to gaze agonized at your white spines.

Pruned against mirror, I imagine laundering such muse, laving such sheets: Oh simul-semen! kill this puny poem,

whose publication has been timed to coincide with the release of my latest film, Fetish Sans Flesh.

\*\*\*

#### AFTER COCTEAU'S ORPHEUS

These bright glass shards we walk upon reflect the past too slowly so we must quicken our step to keep pace and rush to meet the bloody footprints

that tablet-trace our progress across the iced sperm of this idle span called home past all of which we come dampseconds after I kiss your sole.

Montage is shown the same, screen-first; then, if struck by a vast unseen pin, pray to lay down more veins that pour.

The spotless splinter of its tongue creates no threshold from the toe-mold this shattered mirror alone can enter.

\*\*\*

# OEDIPUS RIDDLED (heptasyllabics)

the course of his crime unfolds

each time at a blind crossroads
whose four legs forever show
less murderous ways to go
but every young man must opt
to stand his ground and stay stopped
so to prove unmoved he waits
daily till he demonstrates
to the empty thoroughfare
how brave how bold how strong there
beneath noon's knelled prophecies
bound to meet all enemies
on his own two feet alone

or has he halted hearing the stepsound of his unknown father's cane tap tap nearing

\*\*\*

#### SUDDEN DEPARTURE

A sudden raisinstorm broke
Raisins falling everywhere pellmell.
The occasion uniqued my head, I thought
If this can happen raisins raining
Upon persons paining why I can leave anytime
Without feeling shame.

But, all the same,
Before taking off, some vestigial guilt or other
Made me at least get up
Before some public gathering or other
A departing oration:

Druthers, I am going now.
Druthers, I tried to love you
Though you always made me choose
Between you, you, and you. Oh my druthers,

Goodbye. I have my reasons.

Did he say RAISINS?
No: reasons.
Oh; I just wondered,
What with the weather and all.

\*\*\*

### **CRAFT**

lay the tragic mask atop the comic mask

snip out the parts where they don't match

then take this overlap make a third mask

a superfluous mask a mask of excess

a mask that is useless that has no purpose

unless of course it is the appropriate one

to be placed on both your first and final face

\*\*\*

I lack the pleasure to claim remorse
Is at my loins earning its pariah's name
From me who may have kissed a worm or worse
In my time aspiring to that acme shame

Unless shame is a sense of having shirked Refused what love dangled just above me All those tantalus chances for lust were jerked Out of reach but not by fate's absurd pulley

My own hands gangling in the back somewhere Supported those puppets' pulp character

Tame filmstars lame mimes where are your faces
Enduring still your enticements I turn
And twist until you've all lost your places
Prompter-perfect I but you you never learn

\*\*\*

# APPEARING NIGHTLY

Spotlit—assisted in mid

prestidigitation by the wind— I wield a shishkebob of heads whose tongues hang swaying, saying what the wand wants.

I point out the birthmarks

of alias and conjure the plethora that sugars our footprints and dusts the sunset— that ancestral-tao, that benefice bane, that grim grass which

alms our road groped toward. Here is the majesty and moss of another grasp. Another loss.

overgrows each reach, each

Here is the world, exiled. Its tidal stage-curtains close or open, it grows or wanes, its actors lose and gain their personae per the moon.

GRANT PROPOSAL (Category: Performance Arts)

I want to go out each day at noon and stand
On top of our Capitol's highest highrise,
Where aircurrents stack, where storms restore themselves,
Where the crossroads of sky are swept by radar,

Up there, buffeted, stand, cupping in my hands A gleam of gold-dust, a handful of gold-dust Doled out to me each day by our State, by you The modest mandarins of its Arts Council,

Trustees all, you whose grace I must stand for there And being thus empowered begin to pour

The gold-dust back and forth, pour it in sifts from

Hand to hand until the wind has left my palms Bare, please note that length of project will vary Daily, at noon, and not one grain remains.

#### Note:

Line 2: Capitol with an 'o'—meaning "the citadel of government" (OED), its cloistered towers, atop the tallest of which the applicant desires to venture. Line 6: maybe "gleam" should be "flash"? I associate the former with earth, the latter, sky. "In the things that arise [buildings or structures of any sort], earth is present as the sheltering agent," Heidegger avers in 'The Origin of the Work of Art.' Hendecasyllabics, with a variant last line.

\*\*\*

#### NO-ACT PLAY

I'm sitting alone in my rented room.

A door knocks at the door.

I don't answer.

It goes away.

Later I leave the room, and go to my crummy job.

The door returns, and knocks again.

It is admitted.

\*\*\*

#### ACTORS: THE DENOUEMENT

After each performance comes catharsis as one more audience member is sewn into the hem of the theater curtain; some day it will sway too heavy to raise:

on that evening the play will not begin until such time our continual clamor minds the same drama again and again, less for its marquee-names than the encore

when one of us, us groundlings, us non-stars gets knit into the huge velvet stagedrop— a climax cheered, though we're still here to see

the final show, to witness what occurs the night our hem-mates' weight puts a stop to this farce. Will they be freed then? Will we?

\*\*\*

# OR NOT TO BE

Not Hamlet but his shadow shows the clarity of performance—

see how brilliantly it holds its stance, soliliquy bold and brando.

But then of course it is like all such primadonnas, liable to be much too much dependent upon its prompter, the sun.

\*\*\*

## **AUDIENCE**

Murderous the fist of their paws condemns us all to die of applause: in this circus minimus even Coriolanus must nurse and gnaw and showcase his scars when the next closeup comes.

\*\*\*

### THE END

Pain has petrified the threshold.

—Trakl

manc

A threshold is everything that can be seen in the space of the endurance of our openness: thus at the conclusion of The Searchers John Wayne is framed never

to return and forced to spur himself, to escape always the outward-gazing-lust of that thrust doorway toward the horizon or so we guess because the door shuts and

cuts him off before he attains it: exit is lost and we who had followed his flight from the intimacy of this interior, we must remain here minus our male-myth-ranger,

and must domestically cry for his exile while the credits crawl across their reelsill.

\*\*\*

# GOING MY WAY

The one boy who died of polio in our orphanage in the early 1950s was such an important icon that even now I remember his favorite movie since that's what we do with the famous, retain some anomalous fact that quiets them in our mind. We, I say, but was it everyone—did all of us shed that kid: did

a thousand child incarcerates replace his face-and-name with an actor's mask and cast it as star of the waste disease whose cause was always doubt, germ caught perhaps from local lakes prohibited. Who thought of him those summers we could not swim until a vaccine came, too late to amend lackwarm days, to change our fate/our film to his. That movie-"Going My Way" featuring Bing Crosby as a young priest, kindly, loveable, unreal-Tommy, Jimmy, whatever he was called, he probably knows still by still now every camera angle and closeup, every cut

we living are allowed to forget.

\*\*\*

# VAGUE CONSOLES

And haven't we killed all the Indians yet?
In a stagecoach—made of sagebrush, no doubt—,
I would gauche-out like a tumbleweed at a sockhop.
Yo, watch it roll across the old gym-floor, loboto
Basketball: then, toed by foetid teens, fall,

Slo-mo, as though some flair for the vague consoles—

This vista often awarded John Ford his rest. Myself, scenery has a lack of I (emphasis).

Oh lips refusing their tongues' rights, bodies
Trying to put down the peaceful demands of
Their genitalia . . . yes everything looks better shot

Through John Wayne's hurt. The sky the way it mattes—
The desert. A lone rider, whose moral I await.

The crotches arranging themselves for death.

\*\*\*

### UNDERSTUDY (WAGNERIAN)

In my dream
I was the diva

I stood there
my flat chest flapping
breathless with
a scales nailed
to my nipples

mistakenly begging everybody in the audience to pile all their tragedy on one pan

comedy

on the other \*\*\* SUMMER ACTION FEATURES Can I kiss this cinema's utter pittedness. Moviescreen, you hype of hygiene, I love to see a face lace its venom with mine. When the hero has far too many minotaur scars, the creases in my palms turn over and nap. Archimedes revised: if I sink far enough into the film, the law of displacement should bring to the surface my truest self. Then the blow-ups come on cue. The ingenue glows like the sky: we both gnaw raw halo. God knows I know each bomb is a mobile some sculptor has failed ineptly to keep aloft. Even I am losing my innocent twitter balance, though statistically I will die eating purse soup. MERRY - NO - ROUND The wooden horses are tired of their courses and plead from head to hoof to be fed to a stove-In leaping lunging flames they'd rise again, flared manes snapping like chains behind them. The smoke would not blind them as do these children's hands: beyond our cruel commands the fire will free them then as once the artisan when out of the tree they were nagged to this neigh. **PERSONALLY** I saw this screenlegend guest on TV promoting the need for everybody inbetween plugs for their latest movie to help out like with our ecology small daily acts each of us personally

just little things we can do at home, one example is don't let the water run hey people! ya'know? when you brush your teeth?

Sometimes I remember that admonition, sometimes after meals I'll grumble beneath the bristles, under frothy gums and lips:

Hey filmstar! love your save-the-planet tips,—and hey, look: my faucet's off, not on—see?—the least you could do is come fuck me.

\*\*\*

from STAGE PORTRAITS

\*

the tragedian holds an onion up to his ear

hoping to hear those teardrops those sobstops the audience failed to evince

\*

with breasts the size of sacrificed piglets the diva gets her dues or dies

soar upward in flights bravura to augment her aura

so even the footlights

and each night we spark our handdarks together

to adore her

by now you must understand

that the whole show depends on her demands

TO RIPLEY (Alien 1-4)

Always your face like a space (Destination: beautiful) ship Empties its mote of closeup trace Down screens that blink blank blip

Somewhere between countdown And coma time is a line Where waking centuries often Drained against that measure may find

All blood redshifts (direction: west)

Until film can clone one sun
With stars both whole and gone
Attending every sequel
We pray for an intent equal
To our interest
\*\*\*

MOVIE-Q's

Ben Lyons was typically blunt in I Cover the Waterfront his cute co-star Claudette Colbert

could have frenched it: 'Ze waterfront, I co-vair.'

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman is not a film appeals to everyone—but I, I like the way it feels, I guess, to have a whole town look up my dre

but I, I like the way it feels, I guess, to have a whole town look up my dress.

Although by gorgeous Gene Tierney

he was loved, and loved sincerely, Richard Widmark proved pretty shitty. The flick? Night and the City.

\*

Those Incredibly Strange Creatures Who
Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies blew
my mind, man. Like wow! (—Was I crazy? Was I sick?

Maybe I shouldn't have watched it through that Thai-stick.)

Basic Instinct 2 avoids the great esthetic error of 1 by not having any Moviestars appear but the sheer Sharon: its other no-name actors fade to shadows in this Dantean vision of the heavenly ("Eat me!") Stone alone up there on the screen.

\*
I know Jack Nicholson played a cameo—
and Elton John played a song or so—
and Ann-Margaret played his mommy—

and Ann-Margaret played his mommy—but who the hell else was in Tommy?

How many of you gazeekoids went yumyum
Watching that transmutated geek Jeff Goldblum
Rip off his own ear and eat it? The Fly was great!
(And if he'd unzipped his fly, ripped that off, and ate?)

\*
Oh sight that might have made an atheist of God,
seeing the screenwriter-producer-star of Panther Squad
—Sybil Danning, auteur divine—opt to not go topless!
(Even John the Baptist 'd put it on his flop-list.)

Where Garbo got the great John Barrymore To play the part of her perfect paramour, Poor Joan Crawford was stuck with brother Lionel: Life is c'est la vie at der Grand Hotel.

\*

It's a crime shame that that scene where Sean Penn tied his wife Madonna to a chair and then put on her dress and licked her thighs got like totally cut out of Shanghai Surprise.

\*\*\*

#### **COVER STORIES**

Exchanging X's in the form of kisses, Spies forbidden to know the codes they pass, Each pretends for the moment these mysteries Outweigh all allegiance they owe the past.

A space where fingertips cease to explore space, A safehouse right for private armistice, The flesh they bared betrays them both at last. Dawn is distance in such askance allies.

As false passports must wear a true likeness, These tradecraft made-in-bed IDs are not The ones that will have to be borne once more

Come morning's normal enemy status
Which would have killed to foil the turncoat plot
They laid here, those traitors worth dying for.

# Note:

Based of course on the generic love scene in almost every spy opus I've ever seen.

\*\*\*

### CO-STARRING OSCAR WILDE AS MADAME SOSOSTRIS

White: white as a tablecloth that moonlights as a bride For the unborn you—appeared—or a waterfall Which leans against another waterfall (your hair). My beeper slave of lost voices barked: what?

While the cup that knelt to summer burst; I tried To garden the fireplace and farm the doormat But proto-frog-photos of you grew inside me there, Groping with bare hands of flood my gnarlgargoyle.

Deeper than my beeper you knew; sibyled guesses. And yet . . . 'misery is proximity.' Oh The seance was as far as possible tuxedoes.

Aftermath is a mouth. Speaks. Speaks? Yes, but less as Flesh than what; yak mask for that old fop Apollo? The god retrieves his gloves and, feigning to go, goes.

See note next poem.

### ENDLESS EVENING: MY LIFE AT IL VITTORIALE

For caught in those Aug-Sept hours what day can Break this slang of glass whose illustration Of flotsam sampling our poison's portion of calm Lives long the lament we swore applause by.

With faster than flashbacks in a promo for Memory to lie lymph along these hits of hope And through each thought we just dawned on interrupt Poses no soprano care counterfeit or water yet.

As though it alone the profile were wielded up

To shield the face against that bad vocable our own

Throws veils another pale divulge of oh mise en moon.

Musingly to see a bed on fire in a huge room
Otherwise empty while one at a time
White sheets float down from somewhere onto the flames.

# Note:

Il Vittoriale, D'Annunzio's retirement estate. Siempre Sera . . .

### Note for this edition:

Wilde and D'Annunzio, two master playwrights whose lives were often as theatrical as their works.

\*\*\*

# SEFFI'S BLUES

every year the same

they've forgot my name I take some time away and when I'm back in May it's like I never was all my former buzz my résumé my respect where's my endorsements they treat me worse than a fatality-show reject didn't I have a series didn't I star once special guest appearance Sharon Stone as Ceres but looky here is this my career this limbo where'd it all go I want my audition I want my youtube hit on but no it's always no can't even get a video or a pilot slot or a Phil Spector shot I used to be lah-de hot

now look at this wan subterrene skin this bone I'm in god Dis I'm damned Angelina can tan but the sun won't bide Brad Hades' bride whitened-hide I stride past the poppin'-rot-zi it's me they can not see I'm fade to the shades I read the trades I was Liz and Cher but the Biz says where so please don't tell TMZ I'm back from hell stale out of rehab for a while until I feel that heel-jab fang again this Fall that icky-phallic python is waitin' to writhe-on when my rerun begins and my comeback ends he'll fuck me Paris Hilton and lay me Lethe Lohan till I'm gone for rotten a hasbeen-to-be signed Persephone PS don't 'lert the media don't IM your TV don't earth to Mom she cursed the sitcom I died on and I agree (DESIRE) THREADBARE (DESIRES) The light lay in shreds across the bed, only your waking could make it whole; resuming its costume of day, its role that seems to overnight get ragged-Fate latent as weights in theater curtainhems, what soul is sewn here to be rung down at last, divested of these disguises. But if we are bared by such cloth as cries in this lament for the sun's fragility, would I dare now to shake you astirto drape over you my own shadow, whose myth-ex-machina remains all mine, mine, and therefore torn from yours. **SCENARIO** I am in love of old with your voice the one fading into its clones sighed, the voice in love of old replied a delayed sense of one attends me:

if actors learn each role with scissors

rehearse our parts when they occur snipped along the dialogue's errata yet love of old will show its face that text of frequent halts our ways exalt; they flood the stage to see the movie memory dreams but what film will fill or ford its depth though death is imminent in love of old and wings to kill those sky traceries that show no stage can hold the shapes that cut catty the paper where these apes appear or keep its stills in sequence when curtain-askance your eye I ascend.

repeating its rip across the script-I am in love of old but it is hard to

PRISCILLA, or THE MARVELS OF ENGINEERING (A Fatal Fable)

A "Swingles Only" Cruise to souths tour on the S.S. Priscilla: parties, spurtive romances, confided Antiperspirants, quickchange partners. Suddenly

3rd day poolside blank, sun

Ouch I meet up a daze dish somehow ain't

Crossed my eyes' equator yet: she preened

To have appeared out of that presumptuous Nowhere our hoarse soggy captain's

Nailed in place on his compass: in all the swarmy sticky Nightlong pairings off, secret lifeboat Drill assignations, where did you come from

I offfered haven't laid uh eyes you behind musta been blind. Oh

I've been around she said, I've seen you operating That blonde last night, har, har, har. Flattered, I introduced my name's Bill. Priscilla.

-As in S.S.? We laughed over the coincidence, Wringing fragile martini chill stems all Around us similar neo couples were

Gangplanking each other, coral lounge dusk deck. Dinner, we promised. Then the moviedance, Then . . . ? Our eyebrows guessed "The night?"

Separating to change, we hugged all sprinkly But at table that P.M. I stained her napkin but

She didn't show up went looking for wasn't at the dance Either. Hmmpf, not on deck-where could she

Be? I asked all the other cats and chicks

Where the hell's Priscilla? describing her. No way Man ain't never seen no piece like that since we

Ask the purser-man you sure? Tete A tete sure, I replied. The purser!

I'll get her cabin number, she might not be feeling Oh boy I didn't inadvertantly slip a torpedo into her drink that Stud I scored from said they work every,

The purser. But no senor There is no Priscilla everywhere listed amongs

The passenger list I'm jorry. The boat—she Is S.S. Priscilla? he added helpfully, concerned, as though I

were nutlong no No you nit-tit-she has to be on look I met her this

Safternoon in the "Cock 'N' Tail" Lounge. Jorry

Is no let me have that thing here on the passenger look for

```
jourselve.
Damn! she ain't on it
A stowaway hunh
That's even better
I'LL get her
She can't escape what's
Gonna do-hide in the ocean?
But
Finally, frustrato, angry not even drunk after no
Go searching all night, at sailor's-dawn I slunk to my cabin and
Guess who I found the bitch all tucked up in that little cute-ass
Type beds they have Priscilla!
I hissed. Come to bunk
She swelled. But you, you aren't . . .
Aren't what, know whatcha 're crazy dam-
Shh let's love she swayed. Okay: I'm game. 'S bout time. So we
Start fucking but, her movements were too calm
And rocking, elusive as chase in tune with the ship's
Wash on the waves. Gentle, coaxing, mocking-
Musky, chromosome zoney, internal
As sea. It was eerie
The ex of it cited
Frightened me. My Y shot up: I began
Fug and fury ramming, I urged
Harsh thrash strokes, I hard
To hurt her with my penis, I remembered
That Norman Mailer story where he calls his "The
Avenger" I was pissed, make me
Frantic look all over the goddamn
Ship you cunt slammed all my spite ptooey
Into her. And then, and then . . . instantly . . .
Something . . . all I know is I came the split
I hit the water. I was drowned, of course,
In the famous shipwreck. The famous shipwreck
You remember
It was in all the TV-
Shots of it sunk in shallow clear just
Off an atoll. And everyone aboard was lost, adios,
Unusual or not unusual in these cases. But no one
Nobody could figure out how
The S.S. Whatshername had
Gotten all those great big gaping holes
Ripped, slashed, torn in her hull nor
What caused this deadfall rupture, the grievous eely capsizing.
Couldn't a been a iceberg
That
       far
```

# south.

Note:

The movie I made from this was rejected by all Festivals, cinepurists objected to its cross-fate wedding of two related genres, the shipboard romance and the shipwreck flick: the former ends in fornication which here brings on the latter's climax: each time Tab Hunter thrusts into Dorothy Malone's loins another great gaping hole is ripped in the ship's hull. Orgasm occurs when the ocean collapses together gasping above its regained void.

\*\*\*

have you ever tried to apply makeup to a teardrop under kliegwater

floodlit and the starlet you're trying to get fit

for the premiere is all fidget and praying her

tit-tape stays on and you have to keep saying stand still hon

or else'll it'll run

\*\*\*

# THE NEVE VILLANELLE

He was a Montague and she was a Capulet yet no feuding families threw them in thwart it wasn't that that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from Act Five Scene Fiving it on their first date: no, it was that Neve Campbell left them reft-heart— It was Neve Montague and Neve Capulet

they wrote on their carnal diaries' most intimate page: every time they tried to kiss they'd start to Neve-itate, and that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from making out further. Neve made them hot but not for each other. They'd just sit there in flirt gone faux at the Montague or the Capulet

manse and navigate some Neve-or-die site and ram Scream 1/2/3 up the DVD insert that comely Campbell stopped Romeo and Juliet

from consummating their teen-tragic fate: and even when she did indie roles for her art they'd still curse the Montague and Capulet

DNA that kept their lives so punked, so pre-set:
Why can't we be Neve? Why can't we clone her part?
Having to stay a human Montague/Capulet
stopped them from loving Romeo and Juliet.

\*\*\*

# TCM BLUES

I can't go far
I can't go free
although I am a star
everywhere I move is
right there (see me?)

on Turner Classic Movies

Mad scene cued for Oscar

my head looms closeup size
gosh I feel so lost there
trapped in celluloid
I collide inside with eyes

I can't escape them
on TCM

No one under 85
remembers my name
that's the forget-its the fuck-its of fame
the goodies and the groovies
why am I still alive
on Turner Classic Movies

I wish they'd forget me and let me rot in peace why the hell they have to show all the B's that Louis B made me get on my knees for I don't know

Silents mute me Garbo suits me Bogie shoots me

Bette boots me out the door

then comes the War Coop salutes me Film Noir convolutes me

I'm ready for more
but time and TV executes me

My birthday they unvault me popcorn butter and salt me

their experts all exalt me

for each posthumous premiere
of the pics I wish would disappear
once a year like Dracula I up and rear
from my mausoleum here
at lovely Forest Lawn
my death goes on and on and on
like boring Norma Shearer
even though I look so young

I just hate how they approve me

on Turner Classic Movies

I should have stayed on the Stage my Chekov Ibsen defined the Age I was the rage with Page One raves all Hollywood ever saw was my Beauty I told Jack Warner Go ahead Sue me I don't need the movies

screw you you studio enslavers I'm off to Hedda Gabler's

The gangsters and the crooners the roughies and the smoothies the dames who came from nowhere in their furs and rubies

it's Turner Classic Movies

Producers used me

The chippies from the chorus do their Queens and Madame Boovrys the hams who knew their Hamlet are clowns and falldown boobies the teens who grew up meanies the Garlands and the Rooneys come join the ingenues and juvies on Turner Classic Movies

directors abused me
my co-stars co-screwed me so
please don't behoove me
don't Catherine Deneuve me
all you SOB's just leave me let me go
all you Mickeys and you Goofys
you hasbeens and newbies
12-step friends and floozies
don't try to sob-and-soothe me
don't emote and quote you love me
you really really love to view me
on Turner Classic Movies

(fadeout:)
My flicks all used to slay em
in the big towns and the boonies
but now they only play em
on Turner Classic Movies

Britney passes and as she passes

\*\*\*

[to the tune (sort of) "The Girl from Ipanema"]

she smashes the paparazzi masses
and all their asses lie spunk across the sidewalk—
oh taste the gust of this gutter glass
with its bits its flecks of grit
with its golden rust
and then get scrunched
by that foot-horde of fans
until you're ground
like mica-mote grains, thin
as Britney was in those distant Disney days
beware if your hair is ugly
and stare when she puts in the jugglies
but what god creates a star
from smaller dust than this—

now you want to run your tongue along the pavement before it's gone like a thousand stabs of flashcam crammed into one—

against the street go scrape your shoe to scratch up some of that glitter grue which those collision divas in their dashes left just for you—

hear a thousand marquees crashing

see the thousand names in lights you'll gash in to your wrists if you can only pick up one slash of it to good-bloody your fingers on and unbody your skin till it's gone to get it ready for the steadiclone—

now Lindsay flashes her gorgeous gashes and then she sasses all the nasties that Britney hasn't oh greet her feet as they flop there meet your fate in her opera then smooth-a-rama like a trauma and move away from all the drama before the sun can render it real and you're gunk under her heel so junk you know how it feels—when your blood-scar congeals—

like a CSI sequel deal that stupid cop car squeal zoom-in the ambulance wheels k-lung! and your morgue-door seals—

\*\*\*

### **DEMISE**

Not enough moviestars.

Why not one for each of us.

Until then every film we attend mocks us with its excess of cuts and cameras, when we know what it lacks.

Until then their sparse disparity disconsolates us, we treasure down each glimpse of that rumored screencomer,

that cinemanque who roams the scenic wilds around this premiere

that lies dying here as it flashes flickers out its tiny faltering campfire of squeals and smiles.

\*\*\*

### REDCARPET STARLETS

All shadows dream of facing klieg—the urge—to sag magnificent in staged wattage—

that fire that squints all sight, see-dense hive-

eyes cubed to one would seethe like bees (only the moon can tongue such honeys,

or unisex models whose hair is being sucked into their navels for a rote secondum of time.

Barked at by dimples or loined by tanlines their taut skin tours the pound-sun (beadbrilliantined

down foreheads in a stream of them shines.

Touch Connors and Race Gentry attend them-

Where dustweevils fight the air they zoom sheepish desires or soughcomb for a kiss.

The Premiere can shine no more than this.

Note:

Touch Connors and Race Gentry: male starlets of the 1950s.

POEM NOIR

(Braille Balls)

Angry at my wife I drove out to our

Cottage by the lake. Around 1 AM a March shower

Began to fall and when I went out on the porch

To see it I saw a young man lurch

Into the lake with all his clothes on. There

Was nobody else around, the other cottages were Dark, as was mine. He kept walking straight out

And soon the water was over his head. I shout-

Ed but he obviously didn't hear. He was trying

To drown himself! So I swam out and grabbed him. Sighing, I resuscitated him. He lay on our bed

Smiling. Thanks a lot but no thanks, he said.

Then he convinced me that no matter what I did

He was going to commit suicide.

I had an idea: Does it make any difference how

You do it? I asked him. No, he replied,

What do you mean. Well, what about the electric

(I Want My Friends In Woody Lots, With French Toast Up Their Nostrils)

Chair? Would you care if it was that? No,

He said. Well I'll send ten thousand dollars To anyone you cite, if you'll kill my wife and

Go to the electric chair for it. Yes,

He said, I'll pretend to be a burglar, kill her, then get

Caught. Send the ten grand to N, who rejected me. She'll

Feel sorrier then when I'm dead. He grinned. I

Said, Great. The next night I slipped

My wife 2 sleeping-pills then drove to my brother's

To try to establish an alibi but he got drunk,

Passed out so that was no go-damn.

When I got home I went right to my wife's room where

I found her snoring. What the hell, I said. Then

The phone rang. It was my brother, He said someone had murdered our father. Father!

I said. A hectic day followed. Police, the tax

Lawyers, not to mention, my worthless alibi.

Finally that night I sat up late waiting for the guy

(Eel-tripled Eyes and Freezing Initials) Who was supposed to murder my wife. The phone rang. My

Brother had been killed! I was chief suspect

Since I inherited the family millions. Wake up, wake up,

I shook my wife, but the 3 sleeping-pills etcetera.

The police followed me all the next day

But I slipped them. They didn't know I was hitting all the joints

To try and find that young drown man. We Had a few things to discuss: That night Down by the deserted docks we fought.

I was slugged into the river and I drowned.

No-one ever saw him. When they found My body the coroner ruled suicide over remorse at my terrible crimes.

He had done the murders but I got the blame. My wife got all the money, and married him.

#### Note:

When I made the film of this poem I changed the ending: following Hitchcock's example in Vertigo, I added a flashback 2/3rds of the way through—in which the young drown man (Tab Hunter) reveals her husband's scheme to the wife (Dorothy Malone): they then plan the other murders; the conspiracy inspires them to sex of course. Later after the husband (Rex Reason) is arrested, rich soon-to-be-widow Dot jets off to Acapulco, up into a penthouse suite where Tab, who had earlier mysteriously vanished, welcomes her with open sheets and champagne to celebrate their successful plot . . . Next morning they breakfast on the sunny balcony overlooking a swimmingpool; she goes in to take a shower, she leaves him gazing down at 20 storeys: she comes back naked with a turban towel on but he's nowhere there: she hears distant screams which draw her to the balcony railing where she leans over zoomshot to see his dark-robed body sprawled dead on the bottom of the pool below. Then she hears knocks and voices at the door: "It's the police, Mrs Reason . . . We have some

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#### (MURAL) (MONDO) (NULFRESCO)

questions for you." The End.

In Shakespeare's Last Supper the disciples (you, me, all of us here) are depicted seated alongside where He stands at mid-table and grins down like an MC at our expressions are we shown, the goblets gleaming, gloating as they goad us on to toast the centrality of this spokesperson, the notional character whereby everyone has been sketched vis-à-vis the honoree we can only eulogize, dependent as we are on His moodswings. Astonished, confused by the ultra ups and downs of manic means, now we watch, we lean, we pout (the whole propitiatory repertoire) worried about our survival, inert (like a frozen rictus facing its fate) unless depression drafts and draws us forth the extempore pose, myth, puppetary projection, limned mobilary mosaic that apes some drab-escapist syndrome, imagination. Which is why each evening we pray for a chance to cross the ditch-penny distances between the footlights and the fear, vowing to allow each guise of role

to kill us, to raise us from the dust, to guide us like magi toward summons, obediently steered by the stock star the marquee, believing our needsuch faith could pass those deserts of farce to find this upper room. Sensing the inn beneath us seethe with indifference with doubt, we concentrate harder on His remarks and jokes, trying to make up for all the audiences who've failed this test. Never quite reassured by any overt wink of His assessing eyes into our ranks (are any of us missingwas castcall taken?), we keen forward, eager for our cues, nervous knowing that if there is error here, at a signal the maitre d' will find replacements for this testimonial "Eucha-Roast" from the rabble stabled downstairs where the tavern yawns into its beer. Life is rescue from such anonymity. Their situation is death, is subject those groundlings can never guess how much it crowns to end up here, costume-chosen, endowed by makeup with certitude, form, identity-Who wouldn't be jealous to know just how blessed we fictions are! And yet every member of our Dramatis Personae wonders if s/he got jotted into life as whimsically as Emperors choose sacrificial victims, as any Divine Ruler or Hollywood Player and whether with a fingerflick Hamlet Portia Timon erased, gone, again. This banquethow many have we attended like it? Daily we wait like napkins to get opened, held to the face like a mask, stained and used then tossed aside like paper towels, paper disposables, paper identities (similies/metaphors) like the paper whose headlines fade around our names/our fame. Our bits done, our pieces recited, oh it's bits alright, it's pieces it crumbles into, and yet how avowingly we cry, foils corrupted by one front-row cough. Exit as trash, as avid kleenex exiled in a breath to the canteen of lost turns, the greenroom of oblivion. Now if there were respite in such neglect, a grace period with no need to perform, but both in the wings and on one's caught, regardless of what's true. Far, near, (hall or gallery) that mendicant theater is pursuant always, lugging and luring its wares: wherever we are, wherever here is is also an entrance, a set of false steps, (bright-lit pratfall-pit) a trap for fools, a stooges' cage, every scrim and apron prinked with sham, props, champagne buckets doffing their caps in fealtyEven the proscenium's subservient arch bows and begs a platform for actors trumpeting loft-aired routines, voluminous effusions or, what's worse, kingly-haired creatures washing the feet of their inferiors, sudsy obsequious declamatory eruptions filled with the rehearsed lava of bold slaves, the bald brimmings of an improperly-public humility (unlike the servant who never spills his waiting master's entree except in the pantry when there is no-one to witness his extravagant remorse)-All these openly-imploring apertures, these theme-cut bubblings-up, paeans, (akin to lame critics' acclamations) would crack like a laughtrack at that imposture, that pastiche, applause: who'd pity these pathetic devotees, advocates haunted by nothingness, by that same humanhood to whom white placecards validate each plate. Who sat us here? (Athwart this portrait the descending order of our dinner ranks auditions more disdain, every hors d'oeuvre daubed with scorn)-In our state, our omnipresence, to which can we aspire? Sometimes we think: if only there were Someone somewhere, somehow, though of course that's impossible: Someone outside this frame—an absent self, a spectator vivid at duress, who can feel the real joy and pain we mimewho sees the sun setting out there now, the approach of a nighttime unlike our curtain: Someone who lacks the judas window wherein we acolytes recognize ourselves, the betrayal portal we have all portrayed so plausibly it has at last retained us, replaced us with stainedglass. (Through which, on rare occasions, that said Someone fills us with light, illuminates us.)—Overcome, undone, we feel ourselves vanish, we dwindle to a painted panel. We fade, we die. His stasis renders us too slenderly. Or is this endless attendance the promised purgation, the shedding of every emotion, every weight? Is it gain, this loss, this usurped, staged starving, this repast-of-reruns upon a menu whose full-promised delicacies remain a manna dream, backdrop glamour (milk-and-honey) a feastless Eden, a heaven hunger's expelled whole from. Why aren't we at home here, in this plenty, this supernal supper-why this finicky desire to avoid the silverware, the knife

paler (because it reflects us) than the poor fork that renews whose flesh and encores veins across each dish until its unction-urged tines impale spearlike and nail the cacodaemon that shall huzzah hail our Hostmaster . . . See: the chair He occupied is emptyexpecting the miracle or bloodcrime through which all of us must assume His part, the mummers-meal, the sealed communion. Bard bread, scene wine, unyield your transubstantiations: beyond that superceded throne lies the utter ubiquity of the known. And so, viva, bravo, boffo, olé, so each paraclete's performance moves us. Cheers! echoes the pledge, promiscuous each voice ID's the oath. The mic on the dais quivers, shook by our cry,

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# CONTINUOUS SHOWINGS

sole intercessor of this ceremony.

The days all drawn to December can't remember their own

though every shopwindow offers
24 hour plus. It is precisely this
excess of time, its hyperhoopla
extolled by even the smallest streets,
its torturous emporia, tedium
temples that fly their boxoffice flag
higher each weekend, or towers
with clocks that would love to stick
their hands like neckticktockties
down into the traffic, that's the stuff
that stabs me in stride. No wonder

of us who crouch in our pockets trying to conceal the serial killer zapcams we use to chop ourselves up for camouflage, face snaps and shots which hide us inside our wallets. How beamingly we blend in with our A-Z via the usual ID charade.

I run to take cover before the FX kick in, witness en masse to those

Isn't that me we quiz the sentry who scans our cards with laser razors while we bleed the answer, fearing that most bandages lack those panacea, those superpowers evinced most and emblemized by the youth-roles of film, the skilled portrayals of its hero-informal mold.

It is the movies have made me old. Looking up struck at the blankgaze screen I see that I too must suffer that knowledge which the brow burrows beneath its furrows to show the visible effort an idea creates if nothing else. All else is else.

Surface the mind repeats as pure, hear my TV mirrormode: I can always

remote a world's particulars, my closeups can quell-control the quick extinctions of your soul in oceanroll or twig miniscule; lens can always find a puddle to push around or a forest to erase from a woodcut, but Jan-to-Nov, now it's gone, no.

If I were part of a tableau viveaux

and I fell asleep or died

\*\*:

# HISTORICALE

none of the spectators would notice or else they haven't so farthey haven't realized yet that in essence I am absent from this artful scene when it freezes to depict the panorama where I tend various withered and storm-lit emergencies, though perhaps there is one in the audience who suspects, who fears that he or she will surely be hauled up on tiers to replace me soon, and who even now shrinks back in their seat and frowns at my perfect mimicry.

# TRAGEDIES

The time actors take to make up stalls the inevitable fall of the mask worn by the audience, though maybe

a throwaway gesture will do, like
goalposts with whips curled around
them, all lashings of wit await their
cue stage-rear where the one playing

this is only human, the halts in line, the queue with no A at its head. No solving of the riddle today, sufficer.

Romeo at age 8 or 9 kicking soccer doesn't know yet even in a vacuum

| ***                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| VISION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| moon of all means sun of all ends                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| this TV screens whatever day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| or night sends<br>me away                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| ***                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| HAIBUN: THE JUGGLER TO HIS AUDIENCE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| One must be able to juggle at least 3 things to be a juggler (2 is not enough). But whatever the 3 things are that one juggles—whether it's (for example) father, son and holy ghost; or mother, father, child; or id, ego, superego: whatever this minimal trinity consists of—the juggler must acknowledge that his audience is not external to the act; and the juggler must confess to that audience: |
| One in my hand,—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| one in the air—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| and one in you.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| ***                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| This edition: NOVEMBER 25. 2008                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| December 26, 2008                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| A SALT OF SEASONS: WINTER SPRING SUMMER FALL POEMS *                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| PLEASE NOTE: THIS BOOK CAN BE DOWNLOADED AS A PDF FOR FREE—OR BOUGHT AS A PERFECT-BOUND PAPERBACK FOR 5 DOLLARS AND 54 CENTS—AT LULU.COM (see sidebar right for link>>>>)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

one can easily stray out of bound.

BILL KNOTT

A SALT OF SEASONS: WINTER SPRING SUMMER FALL POEMS

The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

### Intro Notes

Seasonal poems . . . ? There are anthologies of winter poems and other seasonal olios, so obviously they exist as a discrete genre.

I thought of including for example "Christmas at the Orphanage" (which can be found in my Quatorzain collections) but is that poem really a winter piece? . . .

So what is a seasonal poem? Is it simply a "Nature" poem with time-circumscribed imagery; a presencing of phenomena whose meaning or verisimilitude has a built-in 3 month-limit? Is it "scenery and sentiment" as Eliot sneered the Georgians?

Think of the traditional haiku: beyond its syllabic requirements surely the most significant rule is that of the kigo, a word or phrase that indicates to the reader a season, thereby always situating its content within time, grounding even the most abstract thought in the grasp and glance of a human scale.

In any case, with my choices here I've tried to select poems in which the season and its attributes are intrinsic of the content, an essential condition of what I'm writing.

The order of the poems is indicated in the book's subtitle.

\*

#### WIDOW/WIDOWER'S WINTER

Outside, the snow is falling into its past . . . I do want this night to end. In the fireplace, a section of ash caves in.

The fall day you were buried, birds went over, south, thick enough to carry someone.

They took my gapes of breath.

-Their fuel?

We are together in some birds, who fail.

I didn't want to look down, to glimpse your grave, its heroic little mound

like the peck of dirt we hope to eat in our life.

#### Note:

Line 14 comes from a phrase I remember adults saying to me as a child when I dropped a piece of food on the floor: "Pick it up and brush it off—don't worry, you eat a peck of dirt in your life anyway." (Perhaps only the poor do this.)

\*

\*

#### SAVE AS: SALVATION

Somewhere is the software to ID all The snowflakes falling in this storm: but there Ain't enough RAM crammed in my brain to call Them forth by name, each crystal character Putered and programmed, made to have a soul—And even if I compelled the power To inscribe them here as equals, in whole Terms, I would not permit such an error.

But which is which, cries Ms. Ubiq-Unique. We're not formatted for whiteout. And when The screen of your vision freezes in flurries And the core of this word blizzard hurries To melt again, to find itself again, Won't mine be the sign these syllables seek?

.

\*

### **PILGRIMAGE**

". . . the murky path of the male." -Gottfried Benn

Immured in the snowforest, at the center of that center swirled absence, a hospital-bed waits: its white is linen's height, raised by the weight of daily flakes.

You approach this scene each evening, your footsteps stone the glaze— oh apathy, you surrender up to the ankles, knees.
From stretched branches X rays

sway forth a deeper self. It's faraway yet closer darker icicles drool, ripe to drop under your hand: their blitz would bury the path you thrash at.

Through a saberfanged crevasse, whacking a trail of snapped-off tusks, you'd plunge on to the wrong past, vast maze landscape like sculpture draped immaculate, endless.

Where hail fills high the prints behind and flurries flail the ways ahead, why try, how can you come by them to break the pillowcase frost lace, to take that last,

most blanket sleep. Superstitious, afraid to infringe its surface, emptier everytime you climb

in, what makes the covers crack and cake off over the rim—

Avalanche tucked, teddybear tight, you shiver. As ever the night-

stand drifts open, to show
a plate of burning grapes,
a strangled bird's falsetto—
yawning prescriptions of dream.

Ignore them, search for the cure which never seems so far as now here around you your eyelids thaw, sheer as bridal-veils that fall.

Is this where your parents strayed—and their parents, and theirs.
Have they wandered the once upon this bled blizzard, spun warm,

this bled blizzard, spun warm, this bed whiter than all their kind.

Northerners, arctic, heretic, you inherit their scorn (their fear) of Southern deities such as

of Southern deities such as
Ceres. Her grief (her grudge) against
her daughter loss brought winter—ugh,
those Mother Goddesses!
They underlie, supposedly
("Gaia" 's prior hierarchy)

our myths: their prelapsarian, pure, panacean pantheon

ruled that Golden Age when Queens honeycloned themselves and sat throned on the spines of drones

eunuch stricken to demonstrate
Woman's divine right: Her ancient
aegis status was gospel
back then, its testaments ripped

from nature—harmony—holism—healthsynch: earth worshipped Earth, that eco, that matri-archal

matrix . . .: And some exclaim this sweetest reign resumes when human throats converge to roar organic evoes for those primal

Paragons whose restoration

and full unctuous salvation one's urged to summon in syrup,

ripped lism—
pped Earth,
al

in slush tones said to heal any cough, damn them, phlegm hymned womb zombies from hell. Who invokes

/you shall not harken unto/
/shall not beseech these regimen/
/you shall not bear wounds they could mend/
/real Aryan skin can not shield/
/one tongue that prays to them/

Spasms sprawl you, supine symptoms unbleach every resolve to be the bald hero, the Damocles who head first hung must butt

their old rollcall skeleton, chokes-

birth, time's trepanned exile.

Slough him, ban from these folds his caul, skull carved blond beyond reach—false twin you feel the steel breach, both constrained to suffer

of childhood's crib. Uncaptured world: nightly you cross its guard bars (she's lost, her trespass trace gone cold)

more year armor's vernal rupture— When your mother died you cried curled

for days, fetus, you split the ribs

bound still to that chill, that pall fever no nurse hovers over till mumped thermometers burst— Always her tracks are smothered there

you roam mercurial among, pilgrims whose rigor you admire, fathers whom you, a male, failed to mourn of course.

by a storm of frigid phantoms

For years those held in tears froze mammoth this moan-shrine, fused this unknown heart, core, coronary you've grown toward. It creaks and carries down like a cloud your own death near.

When between squalls the sky clears, your lungs lay tablets before you—polar scrolls, vapor paper on which you will never scrawl Her names.
Crystal ritual, zero quest.

Again you see each word you breathe erase its space, its air.

Beneath their descent (their withdraw) what frail erratum shrouds, what sheet repeats that quietest flaw?

# Note:

Epigraph: final phrase of the poem "Vor Einem Kornfeld" (as translated by Francis Golffing). Those familiar with

Dr. Benn's symbology—not just in his poetry, but in his essays as well (particularly "Pallas")—will recognize some of the themes and conflicts here.

\*

#### WINTER REGRETS

The snow on my ladder's rungs seems to be stepping upward, returning to that cloud which hangs framed in the faded cardboard

of an old calendar landscape whose dust holds the days I desire to live in, fixing to climb up past that summer sun and hammer

the scene in whole. I didn't haul my ladder in and now it's too late— I turn from the window and stare

lost at a vista of August air tacked, half-peeled from the kitchen wall. All the undone chores must wait.

\*

## (WINTERSHADE)

\*

The candle's blue fingers trace a window skyline. Its ice an archery of needles. I seek the sign, the making known to me of now. We live in a land we can see to disappear.

\*

The wither-gathered wind rivering through a grove of non-leaved nouns: these are the months one must cling hard to his habits, that mean horde.

\*

Winter. We must lean closer now to see in each other's eyes the cleft of witness gape itself to give.

\*

Closer. Closer. At times we must even haven this our place.

\*

\*

# SNOWS AND SNATCHES

Hurry for heaven's favorite paperweight descends to press the verses down that long to lift us off within their endless draft, away before its story ends.

Go bind in blind that white sheet-write or let its stray-sleet countercloud stay the fables that come to light unfastening their thrust on. There

are no drifts a man of it might survive unless he melts every less word that seams our pupilpane in streams dividing day's span with what its windownight withstands.

Now dawn strands his snows and snatches in fall from all he's lost unless that book once caught his page wedged in both its hands.

\*

# WINTER SUN

Full-stop, period, dot, erased at times by birds.

Or asterisk, whose footnote clouds our breath with words.

\*

# INTHREADABLE

each snowflake's
a maze
whose center
no other flake can find
the ways
to enter

\*

# WINTERSCAPE

If a lifetime of papercuts on one's tongue
Is one's name. The scar-fitted shirt, prepare it;
The seed-sandal, the wreckers' sex. Oh ego intercom.
Come, weigh my palms upon the scale of my hands.

Enter: a colonnade of conifers who vote
For death as the most economical
Sin. See a tuningfork has been to highnote

Their monotony jammed atop each tree—

Now amorously by groans, by psalms I grow. Licking a moonfob fat, my egg-dyed navel Eager to inherit what. Pane-thrust apertures;

Figures pearled in games of sculpture maybe; Purer minutiae. Thistles? Thorn icicles Drop by drop will knit it, Knott-slits in the snow.

\*

\*

#### FLAKE TAKES

Snow, echo of lightyears, your time it appears to reach the ground is never now.

Like truth the snowflakes peek from behind a veil.

Sunset: the snowfall lacks (altitude vs. attitude) the hauteur (condensation vs. condescension) of the skyfall.

All this missive whitefold is franked by a pattern its own; stamped unique: 'Return to Sender'-? No: Deceased.

\*

\*

### [UNTITLED]

The snowman's luggage is always enroute.

\*

\*

# [UNTITLED]

mirror smashed in a snowfall the flakes will find each face like themselves to be unique as long as it remains lost in the blizzard of shards

\*

\*

#### **THAWDROPS**

Icicle:

the long

l'c

descending

end in

dot

planet

dot

period

dot splot

dot

puddle

dot

sun

dot

cycle

dot

I

not

١.

\*

•

# FIRST WARM DAY

When the world belongs to toss-up.

Balloons whose footprints sting the air with soft occasion; clouds, whose streamers strain for the horizons denied them now by these new slow winds.

Even children relinquish the stoicism that kept us safe from the cold, even they succumb to a sudden cuddleness, weak as the first spindly crocus. Seneca is sent once more to silence.

Two plus two begins to crack before the picnic logic of Summer.

The reign of the same. Difference is banished here; outside and inside are made equal in temperament, doors left open declare armistice.

Winter's wars wane. Vintners verse their vines.

\*

\*

# APRIL AFTERNOON

From barberpoles the white could be stripped to bandage

the bypassers' wounds. Their clothing seems to consist of tickets brandished to the theater; every kiosk's counter is bare. These shapes are assumed out of fidelity to the mask that covers them with less and less. And yet there is always the danger of excess. Naked, the street might lie prey to a merchant's deliberating broom: birds and categorical pushcarts might tie cherrystems to our eyelashes. Spring imposes its pomp, its priorities. In the middle of this effortless palace an orgy takes off its socks. HAIKU The sweat on my forehead shines brighter when it's in my eyes. SUMMER DAYS a butterfly with a sandwich bite out of one wing flies away from the inhabitoads of our shadow or tries to VISION OF THE GODDESS IN A CITY SUMMER (to Carolyn Kizer) And yet what if the sweat that breaks Even from Her feet as they pass Can never rain these pavements back

To a mud- a milk-cud grass

Is it quicker than them quote

Oh mirage oh haze of hydrants Go Isis-proud across crosswalks

Not in this goadless heat

Time that diamond instant dew dulls

That strode presence those fading puddles

Leave brief seas without a halt

Till all my doubts dissolve at once And down I'll follow cowed to lick Your soleprints for my salt

# **HUMIDITY'S TONES**

Four AM, nothing moving, no hurry, dawn still has time to be choosy selecting its pinks. But now a breeze brushes across me-the way my skin is cooled off by the evaporation of sweat, this artistry, this system sombers me: when I am blown from the body of life will it be refreshed? I dread the color of the answer Yes.

# **BEACHED**

Thaw, summer, melt from pastel to pastillea fruit's sweetness warning the greatness of death to back off: hornbeeps, skidmarks so new, so fresh.

Where drowned armpits flower toward the word. Where even the sun refuses to be an icon. In my room stand two razorpoles. I rub

Cars, go and surround each beach.

back and forth between them. I vacillate love, hate: it's exhausting continually

wiping the spittle off your face, though the spitting itself is of course quite effortless. Simile for waves.

#### **HARVEST**

clouds which stand still to pose downward their event

in the church a cookie is wedged up the Virgin's plaster skirt

now days attend the sun and all the other futures before they crop our feasts and wither

the four points of a pitchfork become harder to define eyes measuring to means the distance dust plants along the sill

chasing each other the children combine the wisdom of freckles and fire-engines

in the end we flow like thirst above stones like hunger above air

\*

\*

### **SPACE**

From the trees the leaves came down until we joined hands with a wand and that act enabled them somehow then to reach the ground

where they scuttered round our feet urging the latter to unite with a baton as if that act together with the hands can clasp

a dowsing-stick cut from the same branch from which we launched converging on gravity's purge-point

at which point we merged to remove all consonants from our star-maps. The infinite consists of vowels alone.

The leaves fall, but not far enough for me,

so I take one up to the top of my favorite highrise,

\*

#### **OCTOBER**

the one whose TV-transmitters watch farmers. Out over the roof-edge I drop it, but my eye swerves to the hemline of a nearby tourist. I wonder if anyone will notice it. The wind is certain to vacillate its journey; a vacillation is a vagueness with intent, and my leaf is light. -And has her camera caught me in the act, prolonging it even further-Her blouse blows but now I prefer most how she caresses the camera, fondly, a personal touch placed on what is after all a mere automaton winking a robot eye . . . hmm, are mechanisms, like, say, money, or credit-cards, are they harder to put one's traits on than a flower for instance, or an ear of corn . . . For example I know someone who has a five-dollar-bill taped up on their wall with the name "Frank Sinatra" scribbled across it, an autograph, according to them, but is writing (or forging)

your name on money or on a machine, -?! does a signature make it more human, natural, leafier somehow . . . hell, money is not a good example, it's not mechanic, I'm sorry. Damn. Back on the track: the leaf falls, the farmers farm and the tourist films till her camera's involuntary functions are exhausted . . . we head back down. The elevator control-panel blinks like a flightdeck or Star Tech or something, then I notice buttons on her skirtfront-I punch all the buttons on my shirtfront, not knowing what direction that will get me, yet suspecting that it too will not be far enough. **POEM** As I walk into town I notice on the sidewalk the leaves have fallen mostly bright side down, the colorful-wonderful side, i.e. the dying-decaying, hides below the still-greenish half which hunches over as if to protect its fairer twin, to save the frail waste of loveliness from our pending feet. This upward face is the obverse, the unloved: yet on the tree it was obviously the underpart, untoasted by the sun, tree-slice half-done. If I step on one

it flattens and perhaps some of the color crumbles up through to dye the skyward-displayed

sheaf-shield, something bleeds into the drained mask it offers to the world's uncurious shoed

glance. Virgil cites a myth that false dreams cling beneath each leaf, numberless: that's why the under

stays rare, unmarred by hecticity its unstained purity portrays a lottery win, a moviestar kiss.

Its perfection is a fantasy rays have not darkened to day. It stays asleep in its top-sheet of hope.

I love this unlived side of the leaf, it is in turn my life, pale-safe and fraught with no urge to wake,

to exert its own naif enough my raw state resists sophistudy, (anterior antibody of beauty)

its rootless evil nice beneath the garish one's reign of dare and flare, he who exalts the warmth

on his skin, Mister surface, Herr hero. I am the lesser here, the low. Yes: but after the fall I will show

my face toward any sole, no longer subferior to tanned specimans of transcendized TV glory, riper

hunks who now sprawl shrivel and hug the pavement while their earlier cursed teencarnations bare

out to be me, me, the bove-boy— So what if I'm the false, the dream none can depend on or look to

for their vacuous autumn viewing, foolishly believing those goldshed scarlets are a sight extolled, a sign.

They ignore my sap hue, my true expression of the void that lies

expression of the void that lies so splendid-blazed before their eyes.

# AUTUMNAL

The tree lowers its anchor
Of foliage, mooring the one
Life I forgot to not
Reincarnate.

Now from scenes of former harrow Burst free, playing tag With Yorick's skull.

Since barefoot beats childhood In the race to be alone, Brush departure from your path.

A leaf must fall to complete Its stem's intent, but I wonder If my branch meant to end in this Sum of nothing equals one.

AFTER RILKE

As the year falls in autumn to repeat the tree's chaos

again on the ground, to reiterate its meaningless

in a sequence called status: so dissimilar clouds already multiformulate themselves from previous contraband—

traffic of leaves redundant, instinct-migrant heaven: every day I rip from my nipples

a calendar's cleavage, I lie clinging to lays. Lord the summer was mostly waste.

,

# SALON POEM IN LEAFGRAVURE

Cemetery statuary

ought to be deciduous: wings that fall from angels every year, all the cherubs losing their curls, the harps their strings—

Or imagine graveyards in autumn

minus those high carved out figures:
and not just the sculptures,
but names, dates, epitaphs. Each tomb
turned into a bare limb—

Each stone branch of the 'ceme-tree'

would stand once more a slab the better to weather tragically another Dec-Jan-Feb. Come springtime gallery by gallery etched letter-buds could open

that blankest bark
where new-limned numerals will mark
those old lives' span,
and spranked up there above them

let crosses blossom, the tall crosses regain their nailed arms. Now all the chisel foliage should follow until the whole museum from within is risen.

\*

(FACE) (AUTUMN) (EN FACE) (to NSL)

I lay your face along my palm and make To trace its shape there a profile Then I see the lifeline heartline break Overlengthened by one leaf's fall The plow it rests on a horror now In the distance an ogre pulls in vain To open a nailed shut window Whose reverberancy is thunder rain

Begins its rheumatization of
The world we shared so spare-much of that
This sans season's hands' veins portray our love

The no two alike are kissing yet
I lie down alone not knowing a tongue
Can taste every flavor but its own

9

#### **OCTNOV AGAIN**

The year's wrapping comes undone: foliage tied By sun-strung cords is cut and cast aside

To present the godsends, the great last gifts Time donates to its ingrates, sad thankthrifts

Who throughout their dotage-dole still forget

The parcelly-priceless rose of regret

Never stemmed them against one bestowed weed—

(Why can't our greed grant instead of our need:

Each field and tree stripped packing, boneward bare, Was nowhere on our wish-list: we'd prefer

Ribbon-prinked paper/a crepe-plush pinkbow Glitzing forth their vulgar veneer: and now

Mocked by how little of its kitsch remains, We crave our carton, not what it contains.)

\*

#### OVERNIGHT FREEZE (heptasyllabics)

Window-glints of ice glaze fast what last night flashed the mudflats,

down in which dawn has found pressed small animal tracks: inch-niched

skylights affix these quick paths— Each step is trapped beneath slats

of translucency attached rime to rim: they sit there ditched,

puttied into glare hatches— All around the ground looks patched

and spattered with puddle-thatch, but note rather this etched stretch where a late trotter's tread's latched with pondgild on its ledge trench: how glitter-together cached; incandescently encased. Not bins or barns' coiled harvest, glozen molds hold placed this trace, bold encroachments caught across: each hoof-, paw-, claw- mark's embossed by its lunge run: each rut crests

to extend its range, end-launched-

it must hate these lit nimbus lids, must wince beneath such frost-

yet some after-image haunts: Lands on every side lie creased

sun has tamed them flame of squints

with spoor that mars their hard crust and floorflares most summer's waste

not worth pittance, that thin purse

clutching what breast abundance of flurry foliage tossed, prize

imagination, that pinch

profligate with years' penance

whose cease has summoned what peacetarp white winter's carapace

tries to hide that mislaid dust carrion in graneries

and bury deeper what grace war's jarrior deifies-

what Troy, what toy's sacrifice

leaks justification, beast whose Homered oathwraths can't match

this farmstead's secular crafts-

Beyond the coop's chickenhatch pieces of a greenhouse burst

up from the clays as ghosts pass to implant sole-sills for what's

still clear to me-I approach each glimpsy-glaziered gapgulch

afraid my galoshes squelch break their skittery sketches

or skidheel slide a childprance

| puncturing every damn sash                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I can smash, whatever blanched and specious glow my outstanced      |
| kick can dislodge idolfest<br>haloes those pit-portholes hoist      |
| from lamb-trample slaughterous<br>gods displayed bad raptor hosts—  |
| herds of ape they pasture-traipse<br>bestial cattlecats who scratch |
| paved prowess in the dirt splotch like border-dots on mapwatch      |
| or liens miser ledgers clutch<br>feral figures for our debts        |
| predator prey pays poets<br>that panther pads our wallets           |
| Ted Hughes' cunning hawk-pastiche plugs its parrot author rich      |
| this savage extravagance animates each TV pitch                     |
| your Energizer Rabbits<br>breakfast lions and leopets               |
| like easter eggs and christ creche exist to rake in the cash        |
| as you sit and clicker switch<br>from Tiger Attack stabsites        |
| to Martyred Bible Prophets<br>can you diff any difference           |
| in sanguinary scams which verse-ho's popes and other shits          |
| exchange/exploit for lootsplits getcher *guts* getcher *spirits*    |
| festering fetish lame wish<br>goldgash wildpack "religious"         |
| imperious dazzlements<br>its screen between me unleashed            |
| shall I plain idealize<br>the sight. Pitter pattered glitz          |
| the poorest field-rat can task: "Trance entombed, my forage-struts? |
| strangely crowned with iciclets,<br>thaw-askance in silver nets     |

| that snag some Nixnaut banished from huge spook-lakes diminished                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| to these mini: spangle-splashed and scaly his mermarsh face                         |
| is damming yours to a drowse: your powers sod, your earth cursed,                   |
| bear null this lair's fatal laze— bide its nether-tide enclosed,                    |
| its potent emptiness poised to bolt free, vain, hopeless wish:                      |
| train of hymen's bridal dress,<br>heil flower drowned mire and mess                 |
| in this fecal foul recess— delusional any parse                                     |
| that aspires to soar from smutch or scat escape its burnished                       |
| prison-urned prism-units<br>lathed and locked, crystal cubits                       |
| where spot-carpeted carets— pools, flood-scummed with gem, facets                   |
| unstrung-flung diamond pendants it strangles you, chain necklaced.                  |
| Immured your murder-led bents that followed friendly bloodscents                    |
| till fangs throat-fonts firmly drenched and feast fell, anticlimax—                 |
| till cycle lay established again. Eternal matrix,                                   |
| your game's destined accidents choreograph each pounce once                         |
| but here they're preserved in twice: cryocrypts halt their advance,                 |
| vaults for phantom enpassants— stabatjammed their rhythm dance.                     |
| Here stands this clearing's essence, filmed upon fillspace distance—                |
| oh hear its car-crash score-scants:<br>sharkshrieks stilled, prowl-growls silenced. |
| Look: its slope grows near scar grazed with overtook's veer. Steer-squished         |
| leap-lopes laned below this sluice<br>this rapacious avalanche—                     |

this meander labyrinth's constellated those hunt-sprints.

Star-quenched in lurid casements what vent revives these vagrants.

Plunged in pent, your harms unhitched. Sprawled for sleep's random ambush—

hibernate, die! sink finished along this blank fishtank maze

or wake, with mindblink ablaze—see your scintillant depths catch

magic from the mimic glance

of this mirror while it lasts-

how soon noon will melt to mush your hoar hour which Eskimos

have more words for than I, mouse Michigander, verminous

mite of this sheer terminus the Knott brat teetertoes his

and careless proceed he must toward the devouring bless

trespass at. He has spare choice

this coldsnap moment's incised

ankled. Pale autumn's glozes

in his own flesh. Oedipus

grail incarnations of slush frail trail we fugitives mashed

in the wet soil till chill lashed it tight with glacier paces

palls in the mornings' stale mess of luminescence. Sunrise

et al. Against its bright best (nature's norm-channel brilliance

versus some thumbed thesaurus) this polar-stamped dirt contrasts

my feet in a fret of froze silly syllabic sets of rows

extinguished glimmer glimpses shattered all their gleams I guess—"

Stoic, lone, those shine-lines cast to show no magnificence

or quests quixotic-thrust, just

folk stalked by their hungriness, critters croaked, varmints vanished species extinct or deathwish-Theirs is not an innocence chosen, their hands are not clenched on church-prayers' lack-response. Their trek unlike ours abounds. Under gait-grates it waits wise in its ways portrayed saycheese-Carnivore, killer-corps seized; poacher captured, frozenchase. Mid-stride taken, frigid paste haste-hail jails this trodden caste. Roadcage for an arctic race; shod-zoo stocked with dull dreambrates. Before the snow's blind expanse blunders every further fence a walk may stop precipice top this fierce fenestrate lens but what happens then depends on some lost, glossed over sense. One might pause to muse that post or else forget, astonished. Or kneel to urge weathers worse come seal his brr-brief life's course-(Let elf and unicorn dash climate at its timeliest congeals their furtive crevasse strayhorde stayed for a nor' rest.) It all seems so colorless. The past and everything since. But our chameleon's footprintshave they been paned with stained glass? OCT-NOV (MICHIGAN MEMORY #4) The bacon of the ankles crackles, and the sky Perks up birds this coldsnap morning-every Breath sheds a breath-effect, brief-bloomed steam-sheaf . . . Puddles huddle in frost. Past the barn the path Shoots hill-pastures which rose to winter early And sun-shucked clouds blast-off from: migrants that fly

South—mouths that wet-nurse icicles—hatch forth A form, a furious precision I sloughed

At birth, preferring life. And like the wind Can reduce anything to description—
Running to finish my chores, beneath my scarf

I'll feel my chinbone seek my collarbone, As if the flesh has ceded and the skeleton Now must precipice itself against all warmth.

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### OCTNOV

Stickum leaves fluttering down Pin unpin each path's compass

The season on our sleeve has shown Another course for us

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#### **NOVEMBERNEW**

Scoldingly, the way a nurse waves a thermometer at a corpse, branches thrash above us.

I've read the instructions how a compass should always go consulted beneath a Maypole.

If space orientates with time alone, our position fixed by Newton may now be nearing Einstein.

Quickly I place a teakettle atop a dead volcano and learn to wait for its whistle.

North lost, the needle pierces my wrist. The mist is in the forest. Our sighs are in the farthest.

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This edition: DECEMBER 26, 2008

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POEMS OF YOUTH AND AGE: GROWING UP AND GROWING OLD PLEASE NOTE: THIS BOOK CAN BE DOWNLOADED AS A PDF FOR FREE-OR BOUGHT AS A PERFECT-BOUND PAPERBACK FOR 5 DOLLARS AND 62 CENTS-AT LULU.COM (see sidebar right for link>>>>) SMOKE FROM A PAPER HOUSE poems of youth and age: growing up and growing old Bill Knott Copyright 2008 Bill Knott The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. Intro notes A selection of my poems about "growing up and growing old"-Poems in which youth is the relevant content, and poems in which age provides the matter, or the awareness of its approachMuch verse is about the passage of time in some way, isn't it, but I have tried to keep this book's focus solely on childhood/youth and its opposite, old age—

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The book's title comes from one of the "old" poems, but also applies to a frequent presence in children's art.

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### PART ONE: POEMS OF YOUTH

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#### **BABBLEGATE**

In early childhood an act consists of another act, a multiplying chain of this and that. Cat, windowsill,

sunlight, they're all events instead of sights, but eventually they too give way to the eye. Time distances the other senses

until one becomes intent instead of intrinsicate. That's why dimensionally I can only

try to run toward the place I've already passed, squealing ba ba ba ba ba buh!

\*

BOY AT THE MIRROR

A child emulates what he can't know is true, a murderous dew that appears every morning to be his face, but already it evaporates at

a touch: the lurking effects of the unity granted by night are never enough to maintain this ripeness called time, this waking up to a cherub-scope

that looks back at him in the glass growth like hammerblows a devil checks off a list—the routine begins so early

and even the wattage of the womb behind him is too bright, too ready to hale an unsought self into sight.

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(CRIBSONG)

can the dandled infant sense when time's tall animal will maladroitly spill his frons of innocence

shall butterfingers shun the fall whose one mistake makes that baby brain break its meek fontanel eden

was god the klutz that let me land headfirst splatborn splayed today's adult once prayed beastlike on his fat knees

what clumsy bungling rage as Rilke trained beware in his poem Der Panther runs evolution's cage

which creature cuddly come makes parents lose their grip and every cradle's urge to tip rockabye your cranium

so try to be like Rilke the lucky little bastard the kid who oops was daily dropped not down but upward

\*

#### FIRST THING

"The first thing I can remember at all was a dead dog at the bottom of my pram." —Graham Greene, Journey without Maps

A dead dog at the bottom of my pram Seems to be my earliest memory, Unless I am part of an implant program To stock Earth with mock-human irony—

In which case I must have been abducted By ETs and beamed up into the sky Where I was undone then reconstructed Out of bytes and obits from the diary

Of Graham Greene: that gruesome deceased dog I mean: before Mother or the Mothership Popped that pug in my pram my time was mine

Alone, unknown, a page torn from the log— Until that moment died I had no script No guide: no word undeified my sign.

.

#### THE UNSUBSCRIBER

Like all children, you were a de facto Member of the Flat Earth Society, Believing nothing but what you could see Or touch or whatever sense led act to

Fruition: mudpies made summer beneath
A tree whose measured shade endowed decrees
Between light and dark: such hierarchies
Gave you implicit, a sophistic faith—

(Fallacious fellowship!)— Youth's adherents Ignore the fact that most factions reject Their lyric league (which only fools have stayed

Striplings of) and none condone its nonsense: No-one loves that vain solipsistic sect You'd never join, whose dues you've always paid.

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#### **ELEMENTARY LESSON**

Even if the mountain I climbed Proved to be a duncecap really, It was only on gaining its peak That that knowledge reached me.

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### SLUM SCENE

poor children sharing back and forth their one set of Dracula's teeth here even the dead live hand to mouth

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# PARABLE FROM CHILDHOOD

Something about a pond, and on the pond a paper boat; something about a child's act, dropping a pebble upon that boat to study the effect: but then to let other pebbles fall to see if it holds, to kneel there spilling them one after one

until, until finally . . . If I weigh

this poem down with much more, it too will sink—

Writing my poems of a boy on the brink has shown how ripples horizoned by sky remain the only real cargo aboard whatever that craft that unmoored us was, and yet why he treasured such passages.

Saying they be lost we would launch each word.

\*

MINOR POEM

The only response to a child's grave is to lie down before it and play dead

\*

# **FINALS**

wrote the answers on my skin in invisible ink then during the Test set fire to me

My classmates

They passed I passed away

### THE DAY AFTER MY FATHER'S DEATH

It's too complex to explain but I was already in

the orphanage when dad died and so that day when I cried to keep the other children safe from my infectious grief they left me in lockdown in some office where I found piles of comicbooks hid which they had confiscated from us kids through the years and so through wiped tears I pored quickly knowing

this was a one-time thing
this quarantine would soon end
I'd never see them again
I'd regret each missed issue
and worse than that I knew
that if a day ever did come
when I could obtain them
gee I'd be too old to read
them then I'd be him dad.

The one boy who died of polio

\*

# GOING MY WAY

in our orphanage in the early 1950s was such an important icon that even now I remember his favorite movie since that's what we do with the famous. retain some anomalous fact that guiets them in our mind. We, I say, but was it everyonedid all of us shed that kid: did a thousand child incarcerates replace his face-and-name with an actor's mask and cast it as star of the waste disease whose cause was always doubt, germ caught perhaps from local lakes prohibited. Who thought of him those summers we could not swim until a vaccine came, too late to amend lackwarm days, to change our fate/our film to his. That movie-"Going My Way" featuring Bing Crosby as a young priest, kindly, loveable, unreal-Tommy, Jimmy, whatever he was called, he probably knows still by still now every camera angle and closeup, every cut we living are allowed to forget.

# DIRECTIONS

A kite in the shape of a map floats over the land it depicts,

but at night no-one sees its roads at the end of which a child feels

his hand tugged upward, disappearing in salutations. \*

STORM: FARMBOY DREAMING TO REACH THE SEA

I skiffed up rivers and creeks of lightning till thunder split my covers

and down I drowned lung by lung to a stone of salt the cows licked.

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# OCT-NOV (MICHIGAN MEMORY #4)

The bacon of the ankles crackles, and the sky
Perks up birds this coldsnap morning—every
Breath sheds a breath-effect, brief-bloomed steam-sheaf . . .
Puddles huddle in frost. Past the barn the path

Shoots hill-pastures which rose to winter early
And sun-shucked clouds blast-off from: migrants that fly
South—mouths that wet-nurse icicles—hatch forth
A form, a furious precision I sloughed

At birth, preferring life. And like the wind Can reduce anything to description—
Running to finish my chores, beneath my scarf

I'll feel my chinbone seek my collarbone, As if the flesh has ceded and the skeleton Now must precipice itself against all warmth.

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### MY MOTHER'S LIST OF NAMES

My mother's list of names today I take it in my hand And I read the places she underlined William and Ann The others are my brothers and sisters I know I'm going to see them when I'm fully grown

Yes they're waiting for me to join em and I will Just over the top of that great big hill Lies a green valley where their shouts of joy are fellowing Save all but one can be seen there next a kin

And a link is missing from their ringarosey dance Think of the names she wrote down not just by chance When she learned that a baby inside her was growing small She placed that list inside the family Bible

Then I was born and she died soon after
And I grew up sinful of questions I could not ask her

I did'not know that she had left me the answer Pressed between the holy pages with the happy laughter Of John, Rudolph, Frank, Arthur, Paul, Pauline, Martha, Ann, Doris, Susan, you all,

I did not even know you were alive
Till I read the Bible today for the first time in my life
And I found this list of names that might have been my own
You other me's on the bright side of my moon

Mother and Daddy too have joined you in play
And I am coming to complete the circle of your day
I was a lonely child I never understood that you
Were waiting for me to find the truth and know

And I'll make this one promise you want me to: I'm goin to continue my Bible study Till I'm back inside the Body With you

CHRISTMAS AT THE ORPHANAGE

But if they'd give us toys and twice the stuff most parents splurge on the average kid, orphans, I submit, need more than enough; in fact, stacks wrapped with our names nearly hid the tree where sparkling allotments yearly guaranteed a lack of—what?—family?—

I knew exactly what it was I missed:
(did each boy there feel the same denials?)
to share my pals' tearing open their piles
meant sealing the self, the child that wanted
to scream at all You stole those gifts from me;
whose birthday is worth such words? The wish-lists
they'd made us write out in May lay granted
against starred branches. I said I'm sorry.

1946

The year noir was born; the year Nazis hid In monasteries to restore their force; Peace, but peace that made some things even worse

Hard at play, cap pistols, hooky, apples
Filched through a farm fence: then my mother dies,
Killed illegal abortion style by guys
Quoting God, his badboy lies, his bibles.

Pope Vandal burnt the last Complete Sappho Publicly, my mother was butchered in A secret site; their results much the same,

Than they were pre-war: I was just a kid,

So I blame him and him and him and him, All of them from Adam onwards are men, Meaning me, meaning the worst thing I know. Note: In 1073, Pope Gregory VII ordered the public burning of all books containing the poetry of Sappho.

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# THE HUNGER (enneasyllabics)

If a path to the Gingerbread House could be established by breaking crumbs off its edifice and sprinkling them so as to find what lies behind us

across the featureless fairytale void of childhood: yet how very quick that trick wears out when the story's track takes hold, takes toll, a far-older trail

prevails, we're forced to give up this lost cause; and the fact is that every last morsel was gone long before the you

or I might totter our way back here to try to dissuade all these other Hansel-Gretels hollering in queue.

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# MICHIGAN MEMORY #3

Are you the only one here, Year-man? Is yours the unforgiving sermon sung by children who hoop their eyes across this greensward ground ground-swallows

fly round and round. Their focus carves a ring sparkling with the loot of someday—every lawn-sprinkler yields a chalice, through whose rubies puppies commune.

Oh hurry after the kids, wishing the glaciers would return from their exile in frostee-cones, in flinty marbles.

There is one marble they call the Pure. We scratch endless circles around it, we set our gods on icicle pedestals.

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# HEGEMONY (prosepoem)

In school kids would stand in back of me and stick two fingers up behind my head to make the class laugh. Or so I was told. I took their word for what had occurred and that it was universal. Due to its process, I could not witness what had really happened or what it meant, what made it funny. And I still don't know today: but I can feel them back there, forefinger, middlefinger, ready to poke their putdown up for the world to jeer me. That V looms always, that rabbit-ears or peace-sign or

whatever scourge stigmata I pledge it to represent; but what hurts most is, I know that victorious viciousness only by inference, only by report: I can never spin fast enough to catch a glimpse of it. I've never been able not once to see this joke my entire life has suffered the hands of. That's the worst part of this humiliation: that I have to take it on trust, that I have to believe in it blindly.

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### MRS. FRYE AND THE PENCILSHARPENER

I'll remember how in 8th-grade English class, always bending toward the desk I would try to avert my eyes from the mysterious ways Mrs. Frye's hair displaced the blackboard's space with its black coils, to the paper my penciltip raced across, certain to pass each test: and if these gaze shifts got too switcheroo I'd retreat (daily, it seems) to the back of the packed classroom

where, leaning forward on my toes, I could push with my left hand the nubile tube of wood into the mouth of the pencilsharpener which hung there like some natural protrusion of the wall, an indigenous Deity, the mask of a Goddess, erosion-endowed, rockformed—then feel my righthand fingers and thumb slowly turn the oiled wheel while knowing I would have to face

close to that sac-shaped sharpener, have to inhale the high smell of its depths, earthy, ripe, pubic: to see in my mind the parings inside, those musky dark curls whose incense was increased of course like mold-mildew by the subtle saliva we kids might use to lick the lead's point, though nearly none of our tongues could unblunt the conundrums grownups posed, in my case Mrs. Frye

especially: so if I lingered back there, grinding away, it was not to gloat, not to play the saintly A-student snickering from behind at the others' heads bent intent as penitents, because I too, I sinned at times, whenas, no matter how proud I was of my proper grammar or propounded syntax, stuffing my text thick with fetish parsemarks, I myself went taunted, teased by the urge

to erase the very prodigy evidence my page revealed—all the knots and quirks of those perfectly traced letters—to restore the blankness I spoiled with each sentence—to castrate every phrase before its errors rose by rote to make my cthonic-greatest mistake grow and grow erectile, inherent, that habit hateful male participle I always was unable to shear the nib the stub off of—

(But how could I flub and flunk such a crucial ordeal?—Forgive me: I was lost pondering, musing about a poem memorized from the boys' bathroom, tongued fluent but not understood: yet how truthshod its lines ran to my anxiety—their meaning escaped the precocious, the goldstar me—so if I stalled—if I stayed chewed over and left a stammering dimwit by their immallarméan

import, which paired its print alongside a syllabus of pornocoiled stick figures whose mouths were pierced

by the sharpened ends of toonballoons—verses verse alone can't explicate in systematic prosaic terms that forced and torsoed my head shy—if I was stuck on their sphinxian simplicity—unable to decipher any of the prodigal doggerel lessons gesticulated down

our school's scribbly corridors, snicked and snatched at across its game fields, a whole curriculum of secret lore, a litany of my-big-brother-told-me's, my-uncle-said's, a rumor primer which claimed complete mastery of the only discipline inpenetrable to my inquisitive quests never mind the autodidact airs I had to affect during discussions of this topic, the nods and knowing

grins I wore to pass, to show my mastery of its arcana, to prove what a pored nerd drill-diligent pupil I was of those endless piss-walls, those scrawled rhymes and confident lectures by croneys and guys who made sense of the insane instructions re the sole subject I mark zero on: all the dunno-dumb ideas I dunned then drove core to me, carved their myths into me—and one in

particular goes to this poem, from the gendergabble that gorged my brain: it hissed that She/the unknown reared an inward toothly sheathdeath essence geared to vagina dentata whatever pedant-pendant I'd proffer, I, alma-matered to cram every exam with phallocratic tits and sexist tripe psuedotype scionbabble, the entire wisdom of my mentors' art-patriarch, old gobbledy-tropes—)

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All gradeschool the fear of failing hovered in overstudy as children riddled fears never to be learned, but could I have continued to hone my fate, could I have stood there for years and still the pencilsharpener wait like a patient questioner, a warm, smiling teacher, filled with such dense scents, shavings, shorn graphite, its soil rich with words no-one would ever have to write.

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# ELEMENTARY LESSON

Sometimes even in Math class a downpour Would rise against the windows and render The normal decorum hard to restore—Fittingly we'd split a grin when lightning Stuck out its multiple tongue at teacher.

Smartlike fling our arms in the air, crying
To be called on, smug, eye-bright, cheek-aware
When thunder drowns our correctest answer.
A failsafe secret form of defying.
(Not like spitballing the hall monitor.)

These quickstorms were at last the world's Recess, Whose games toss random nebu-numerals In play impromptu streams and teams across Unmarked-off endless fields or else more schools Reluctant-ruled, would-be truants like us— We welcomed those rebellious showers then And remember them now. Of course we know, As grownups—these afteryears—their brilliant Fractiousness scores less than quantic fractions. Most of childhood's coups come to sum zero.

Despite which some delinquencies linger—
Take our instinctive counting by finger—
(All other tallies seem cramped in compare)—
Since age equals memory times failure—
Though mentor modes slam such bad behavior:

Our worst, they swear, is using metaphor To avoid the quiz/to solve the problem. Leaners from lecterns omniforum warn That effing mistake is what makes us dumb. Minusminds, try to amend your error.

Those tutors tell us still—they always will—Go suffer fools what all erasers learn
To rain down blah blah—they talk and talk!
But in the meanwhile: cloud loud as a chalk
Rattling back in place on the blackboard's sill.

\*

# POEM

don't scold the kids who hold lollipops up for the raindrops to lick at on their way down

what a waste but imagine the taste of rainbow thunder if you could get your tongue up under it

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PART TWO: POEMS OF AGE

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# [UNTITLED]

Age retracts me, filling my hands with shirtcuffs as I shrink, reduced to secondchild. My skin is smoke from a paper house, my hair.

Prepare a needle sea for me to walk on.

(Prepare me. Make sure my cries are wrapped up in a leaf.)

\*

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#### 31 SYLLABLES

even the wisest (even the esteemed poets who when I was young acclaimed me as promising) have at times been proven wrong

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\*

## **TRANSIT**

my hand feels odd without its wrist which ticked itself away other parts of my body are similarly running out of time and one by one are vanishing my left foot is gone and my right eye and the list grows dailyif they are departed from here have they started to appear elsewhere weighing down its sill a tick more each second ectoplasmically emerging there from the nowhere of this life this nonexistence I feel in every pore ever since childhood revealed a gap in the text or an amputation of the hand from its gesture a separation of act from intent a limb from limb interstice ever since childhood began to feel the intrusion of that split that portal that doorway place which little by little piece by piece I am entering now

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WAS

Age 20 to 40

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each day I cried
"I wish I was alive!"
65 to whenever
daily I'll whisper
"Wish I was either."
[UNTITLED]
so here I am
if truth be told
feeble and lame
either febrile or cold
senile-years-old
RELICS WITH OLD BLUE MEDICINE-TYPE BOTTLE: TO X
This old blue medicine-type bottle, unburied
From your garden last year's the perfect centerpiece
To suit our supper-the totem-trope we need
Across this kitchen table, to show how dangerous
It is where we sit (knees near touching at times)
Dawdling and playing with our silverware,
Tapping teacups, tired and satisfied and prime
From a stint in that garden: in a few hours
We'll find ourselves in bed, but we don't know that now,
Do we-we're still exchanging histories,
(It's only my something visit to your house)
Just sorting out the portions of who, when, how-
Numbering the decades and the romances
That went bad, the faces that faded on us,
Though nothing too personal at first, just pain;
Divorces, liaisons, estrangements, fixations-
Of course our brows hurry away from hurt:
Anecdotes begun in wince end in wrinkly;
Our woeful tales go told through a mode that's mostly
A kind of moue, comic attitude, which flirts
With grimace-smiles, jokes, the mocking of those choices,
Those great mismatings: funny how it seems of late
Both of us have been alone, celibate . . .
Collating, getting our dates right, our voices
```

Shed their list of affairs, entanglements, crises: So we accord the past its poisons, and theorize That even this old blue bottle here stored poisons Before we were born:—followed by suggestions

everyday I said
"I wish I was dead."

40 to 65

That the toxin of those heartbreaks is gone After this long, their vitriol has fizzed out, And we could, given an occasion, again Consume the spirit that killed us once, if not

The letter: confessions used as cue-cards to prompt Mutual responses of empathy or hope:

No former hemlock can harm us now—we're immune By now—don't you agree—because what happens

Ripens in retrospect; each sour memory
Blossoming like the flowers you sometimes spruce
This bottle's corroded throat with. We certainly
Are not eating much, are we, but we don't notice—

Can't we see how our fingers will likewise bloom From off these knives and forks and force their field, Interlocking like tugged-at roots . . . Untombed Of its venom, this blue vial vigils our held

Glances. Sieved in its acid, its distilled mirror, Would we (almost as soiled as it by time) appear A beauty, a scarred heirloom any collector Might stuff high on a shelf amid simulacra—

Somber still, it approbates that emptiness We must be preparing to fill with each other— It foretells the coiled taste, the bite unearthed In the antiquity of a sudden, wild kiss

Whose disclosure will surprise us, as if We have not been wholly inured by the years, The stories we bare here across the rice, the life Stories bittersweet, neutered, too well-rehearsed.

Will deadlier words then surface—their potency Dis-elixired, drawn; decanted so often That by our courteous age they've turned as grimy And bunged with dust as this blue glass was when

Your shovel showed it that summer morning, and My phrases here are (surely) just as corrupt—What matter its sharpness, no metaphor can Pare the ground from us as hard as we try to dig up,

To excavate feelings a bottomless need for Soars as we toss the salad greens and pour Dressing dripping down their fineleaved freshness Starting to wilt already around the edges,

To rot back to that mulch they burst from. Such decay Preserves some artifacts, if not us: they lie in Graves contrived to obviate the skeleton They survive beside, they strive to deny

The obvious, the crepitude fate-of-flesh bleak
Facts of our demise, obdurate bricabrac knickknacks
Laid by ancients in the coffin to propitiate
Ancestors, to aid, via these vain trinkets,

(Are we the 'subjective correlatives' of these

Objects, this chthonic junk the tomb-robbers missed, Tools and talismans, amulets, a corpse-cache Gear for ghosts, props to assist the posthumous)

Some afterworld sojourn of the soul entering Itself, self dying to carpe diem one more day. Refocus us on this figure, this table-centering Blue bottle. Whose future dye indigos our day.

Dulled, we ignore these darker, gnawing warnings— Our own skull-and-crossbone labels long since skinned— We poke at our plates, we pat our napkins. What antidote waits, withering, within

Against that great granulate upheaval of
Fields whose depths have grown archeological—
Filled by fucked relics and by that above-all
Most subterranean of discoveries, love?

\*

# AGING INTO THE AVANTGARDE

When the mirror paints itself,

how true to life

the results seem—
But when it paints others, well,
take me, I who have posed so long
my patience has earned
the most flattering
exactitude: so why
(as the years go by)
is there this blurring

appearing where my face is; is expressionism occurring?

When it comes to its own

likeness, it's photorealism no less—
the mirror paints itself
perfectly, whereas
the one it does of me
(I can see now as I lean closer)
in the end turns out to be
nothing but a sort of art brut:
the brushstrokes grow
more fauve, more cobra
each time I look.

\*

# TWO EPIGRAMS FROM A NOTEBOOK DATED 1984

# 1. [The ageing epigrammatarian]

Youth's engine of thumbs revs and purrs—

Oh: I an

I am all fingers now.

## 2. [Plus ça change . . . ]

When young
I was attracted to what they call
Older women.

Older now
I am attracted to what they call
Old women.

\*

\*

#### POEM IN THE CARDIAC UNIT

Time-charted, nursed, I let the meds dictate this verse: roomriver rounds take my pulse down stairwaves of stairs scan my aches in chairbanks of chairs and wake me on bedbeds of beds.

Multiplicities, pre-scripted; metaphors bled, already dead: what wouldn't be a cliche here paranoid mirror, bathroom sink, flowing over with normal fear

as I squint at what I might mean if I poeticized this scene: age LSDs my chin; my once-lean profile spills profilefiles, page upon page rippling to see

even their prolific output data can never sate the spate pathoscopes that hardrecord spot surveillance of what vital signs remain in these veins, clotted lines

whose parse usurps my sleep. (Forget how literate you hate this surge, absurd, heartbeat creation; your necknoun must stet its tide-edit now, to quiververbs, wattlewords.)

What would my peergroup say, could they modify this hypergaud gush, advise my florid veinflushed flesh stop pouring forth such images, euphony beyond me. Sweet excess.

Is that not the gist this critic monitor that beeps down its sic keeps vying to brightly display while I lie here less than what, what, watched all night, till more's the day.

#### ANOTHER FIRST KISS: TO -

A first kiss can occur anywhere: two pairs
Of lips might meet as ingredients for
A cannibal's chowder; or on the shore of
A nightclub at ebb. Preferably the latter—

Though there are no more nightclubs, or cannibals, As such: I mean the first kiss is passé, Archaic, obsolete. Pre-Global Village, It rests in wrinkles, in blinking memories . . .

Ours came in bed, but after we'd undressed; Preceded by hugs. And so the question Of using the tongue—that old hesitation—Didn't apply. We plunged right in. At

Our age you get naked and then you neck, The opposite of how it was done young. But the hunger is still there. The thirst Is like in a bar, when they yell out Last Round.

#### Note:

Line 13: "Our age"—the lovers are 53 and 61.

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# MALE MENOPAUSE POEM

How as to lean my non-eon on autumn's roan Undoing, to smile while the stymies crawl All over me and the prismatic blindfold Around my testicles squeaks: guess this house

No longer knows which door I am. The window We were, does it remember its view? You-or-I Saw so little out there; what future only Catches, catnap glimpses, of nightmares to come.

Doorknobs worn to doornubs—grey stubble on Gaunt armpits—lists like that litter this earth. A lattice of graves greets me or is kind to me;

My hair plowed with parents, their protracted Smoothings of some poor, tuckablanket bed. As said each road I find in your face is fled.

\*

k.

#### **EXTINGUISHABLE**

birthdays you bend and blow out a candle in a skull

it's always just one candle but each year one more

which by now is plus full and that makes this ritual more impossible each year each year as you approach that crowd of past selves somewhere down there in all those bone sockets the annual candle waiting glares and dares you to find it POEM FOR NOW I live bent over now like pages folded down in books, the ones I meant to get back to but won't. These are my dog-ear years. What I write now will never be read again. [UNTITLED] perhaps I still wake up I still live perhaps but I hope I hope I do it for sloppiness sake SOME QUESTIONS taking into account all the poems I wrote about death when I was young shouldn't my tote sheet show a surplus of life no it doesn't balance out did I figure this right

skull is added to the table

I guess the one never pays for the other does it

but I didn't write more of death then so

there would be less of it now did I

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### **OVERLIFER-BAG**

Age is a case of aches you try to strap closed with your own arms but even they can't hold shut what this tote crams like hotel-soaps stole when it pops open.

No clasp will fasten.

Packed up and parked on the curb where a cab brakes impatient to leave cheap valise spilling out undies each time we breathe.

#### WINTER REGRETS

The snow on my ladder's rungs seems to be stepping upward, returning to that cloud which hangs framed in the faded cardboard

of an old calendar landscape whose dust holds the days I desire to live in, fixing to climb up past that summer sun and hammer

the scene in whole. I didn't haul my ladder in and now it's too late— I turn from the window and stare

lost at a vista of August air tacked, half-peeled from the kitchen wall. All the undone chores must wait.

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# THERE'S THE RUB

Envying young poets the rage

You wish you could reverse your night And blaze out born on every page As old as them, as debut-bright.

Child of that prodigal spotlight
Whose wattage now is theirs to wage—
What gold star rite you wish you might
Raise revised to its first prize stage.

But listen to my wizened sage: He claims there's one disadvantage Should time renew you neophyte—

There'd be one catch you'd hate, one spite: Remember if you were their age You'd have to write the way they write.

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#### **EVICTIVE**

If the body is a house, eventually that house pushes us from its rooms out onto its ledges.

Age must live on a ledge.

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## **EVERY RIFT WITH ORE**

How fiercely foilsome the facial knife shivs its two blades up to where the forehead ends as wound-deep-wedged widow's-peaks: how weakly the old hero hair-line fights back and fends, each pass of day fewer gray strands save me—how deadly dull's the duel our sword lives.

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