ABSENCE

SENSORIUM

a poem
Other books by Tom Mandel and Daniel Davidson

by Tom Mandel

EncY 1978, Tuumba (Berkeley, CA)
Erat 1982, Burning Deck (Providence, RI)
Ready to Go 1982, Ithaca House (Ithaca, NY)
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by Daniel Davidson

Product 1991, e.g. (San Francisco, CA)
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An Account 1996, A. BACUS #95, Potes and Poets (CT)

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SENSORIUM
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Tom Mandel

Daniel Davidson

Potes & Poets Press
Elmwood, Connecticut 1997
In nerves within the borrowed
and find, powder making liniments, distance
covering difference, cut
of the apostrophic line
(entering with luck) confines and gambling
nothing, always searches more.
Knowledge of the tilt, the simplifying lack

is our known. And what else is?
Science fills and rules our life,
science in which human beings step before
us whole – an inner dream of
planned and twisted courses. Loss of spectacle
to an ordeal of sheer strength,
a short life to sketch in preliminaries.

Spectacle’s visionary circumstances
tosses light out with the rain water, not an
easy distance to trek when every instance
grasps onto the way. I leak
inside to out; I further my enemy’s
chances; I fumble with the momentary
parentage, a paregoric lost in sight.

Peace animates spectators
walking out this morning, no dry land in sight
what hard labors put in place
troubles the lowlands, oh yeah
things bringing to perfection
and no synthesis at night,
but love gone out, our perfect man took leave of.
Before hours, ours counted
more. Insert an ear of the unsustaining
shiver, theoretic soil covering
the humid loam, and what grows
grows deep and proud. Pass the isolating chip,
can you? This isn’t a request... the walking
ocean of buildings, the issuance of leaves.

Sinking heat among cicadas, dense alley
here where four more hold the chair
dampness. The dog’s tail hangs low
he is angry, he will bite.
Who are the students of time? Do they carry
through risk alertness, insistent in gender?
Not to boast who yet hanker,

you play all the instruments
the open umbrella in the tree tops, rain
read an edge of rust in internment village
but I will make it to you
dancing, groaning, familiar
tune of utterance, entrance
to pick a word, or to pick a listener

pick a history. Today we play, tomorrow
descends and exiles. The stories ask us
what to do, to work and love
the face, the hands, the eyes of benefiting
uselessness, a clock to wrist.
Here we came, or what bears us
listing to port, listening

all the more clearly since moths
beat against the wind, and nothing shields us.
Theaters collect seats, don’t they?
I read in the newspaper:
museums and libraries are the calling
cards of memory, though who
can tell the index from catalogue from line.

What do I have in my tent?
An eyelid closed in black plastic flap, a notebook
page, grass of torn ring binding
a soft polyhedron of reflected shapes screens
customer from memory.
To reach his room through back hallway’s narrow stairs
spiraling in the darkness

he climbed at night, touching at every landing
a button which briefly, dim-
ly lit the stairway, not for long though, not long
enough to reach the next floor.
Often he climbed in darkness
always groped for the button
blind along the curving sooty wall, and when

finally he was home, in
the small room with its single bulb, its mattress
table and chair, colorless
walls, single window, low ceiling, no water
he was covered with black dust
exhausted and drenched in tears
collapsed on a floor where thirty years ago
his father had lain silent
listening for the voices
of policemen in the hall.
Eventually he rose
made his way around the hall
to a cold water faucet, sink and toilet set
into a wall, atop the building’s waste stack.

From the dormer window, where he crouched on the
craper, a freezing night seemed
to lead upward cylindrically, not to
an exterior, neither past nor future
world, but into dust, perhaps
visible ducts of stars – a visitor
enduring their warrant of dim, distant light.

Each particle conducts it,
a tour fulfilling momentary comfort
promising eventual release. Trust will
pay the bills, and memory
accounts for agency and rest. Let’s test it:
in nineteen sixty-five the porch led into
night, the oaks and bays clutching

above the stream, invisibly pastoral
(Bar-bar-bar, Bar-bar-barann...)
made specific by the palace at my feet
folding into and out of a location
living where, in the flora
(There was a fair maid dwellin’)
a long shadow of belief excited the

shrubbery. Anthropomorphic, to be sure.
If anything was remembered, beneath the
naked bulb, it would toss the
greying sheets out like a preference for gore.
The day-to-day derives maxims, maximum
displacement making room for
a cup of soup, piece of bread.

Send a postcard from your location. Tell me
exactly what happens when
the moon derives its night-light,
and the rock pushes up into frozen sheets
of glass and steel. Stroke the warmth
at your breast, hold the nub of
flesh between your fingers, and return to me

finally. But in what ways can these windings
connect with thought? Beginning
not as modern but as here, or so says my
body leaning from this chair.
Embracing fiction, a functioning desire
makes for strange and wonderful ceremony,
like the salve of tongues and language in my ear

regulating law and thought.
For this, I’d walk back and forth
across the bridge, and descend
to the island itself. I’d think of an edge,
as if a prow once moored in
self merged. Scrappy grass leans into sandy soil
where flint rocks, sharp-edged pebbles
also gleam. Seeing these useful stones, perhaps, a traveler once put down her basket and camped by the river, to pare its stone edge. In such mental frame once I walked from Burbank airport through North Hollywood and reached the studio gate, smoking, inverted. Fire trucks rush towards the wreck and pull him from bed. To investigate what circling the island I saw buildings, dark as rotting teeth, begin to lean on each other, and a cloud tore at the moon. I continued to feel such pain, solemn nodding, but could gain no authority from what was read. Instead suppose no escape were possible, only one's own father, stolid, refusing to see what was obvious to all that sleep would be—was!—fatal to longing. No shadows now reach the edifice of day. Lacunae are in full swing, strong arguments which seem to transcribe it all, instruction, recitation. I wonder, something is missing; we are tense or else just poised on a swell of memory.

The collected event is preserved, ingrained in the cliff face, striven in the fluted rock alluvial, of an original piece. So personal a significance shatters beneath the weight of stories—in one ear and out, the kids know what to do (click)... I think I'll take a walk.

To safely fit within this memorizing register, check the door for automatic (autonomic?) happenstance. One covering of cloth can be removed, but when are clothes themselves entirely dismissed? I've often encountered the high-walled compounds of constructed abandon, fondling my eyes beneath the sunny shade. Less is more, yeah right, I'll buy that bridge now 'kay?

Polysemous reminders of semantic lapse lay dissected in the variable tunnels of her thirsty fame. Substitutions are allowed, spread-eagle upon wounded boundaries. I can fall for this any Tuesday night of your choosing. If I buckle too quickly, drink the one marked "hazard pay", I'll blink back on in a minute, sure. In our last conversation in the light-well, I told you how Paradise and I returned to fight back tears, and profit from our mistakes.
Years passed. Silhouettes traced the
lineaments of creased flesh.
Plasterers offered hands to
mirror pleasure and restraint.
I've coughed enough for this pleurisy of grief.
Beneath a hot, bright light the
tide-marked land slips away to plot its release.

What accord have I signed now?
A crucial meeting on the new revision
tandem wills, purple in disbanded sorrow,
knots in the cord signaling
heads still down. May no harm fall
to finch, wing, feather, mite nor
to your hand circling my face,

for mind resembles a new society
as an egg or is it sperm
simulates the new individual we're
no longer waiting for, whom we have become.
What is at stake in battles?
The vanquished mind prepares a victory meal.
Those who must make of enforced

loneliness their proud solitude also learn
to do without – not without you, but your friend
once was mine. Tension wanders.
I cannot harm my body.
For each voice that is not heard
the future is shaped like an antenna, some
super receiver to come

pay receptive recompense
in interpreting words that belong to a
realm of ends. Seated on a
barrel of goods, we await
our struggle with redemption. Saturated
in tone, the social order
of speech arm-wrestles our whistling persons.

We've been alive for hours now, more precious
infinities than the resembling needs
we have come to identify with ourselves.
A fragrant urgency wafts, the windows beam
and photographs of distance dissolve my eyes
in the shock that comes with sense.
Interest demolishes as the past resolves,

revolving here. Theaters in doorbells ring
and someone somewhere rises up to answer.
With this Unquestioning Belief, I thee wed;
the related categories that follow
have only a bowl, and a thin knife to trim
hair and nails. But life is fat,
and the wind continues to chime through the trees.

Perhaps we can plea-bargain our infractions
into a more serious offense, with
intent of offering a defense with teeth.
The moral mine of geologic time sinks
into the sea, more salty than her sweet sweat
breaking on the rumpled sheets.
Another bell rings. Time to
go, or wake, or speak within
the silences of utterance, bracketing
the ends to meet the meanings.
This device is an essential component
of a global apparatus currently
in operation, and it offers you its
full attention for a song.

I must not look in the glass
display case, for on the shelf
a lens stares up at me. It
is well to smile back without really knowing
who has right to your own vocabulary
of emotive cant, a moment
before darkness when there is that no-light we

often inhabit together. Oh, my friend
bends, slows, thickens but still smiles.
I do not care to know you
any better. I do not have to know you
to turn full force and sing upon your folly.
All monuments of habit
all houses, graves, faces I love

may be pictured as remembered instruments
wresting their moments, ardent and dismissive
from the arms of an age to come, to cradle
this dying one and ask it
where are the works we must read?
Will we find new friends, and where?
Seasons, known to change, seem to last forever.

The exposure of sky, the stop.
Return of great clouds in piles.
Details darken, and soon the railing’s fretwork
is just a hand at the balcony. It bars
your step, draws your step to it.
You cannot see the pattern of the sofa
the figure in the carpet’s a forgery
to save angled appearance.
Approach is easy, access indecisive.
The riverbed rises. The water obeys.
Plain speech, a still tangle
of arms is not elision, and no knowing
laughter winds them in their dance.
There is only the beat-beat of the tom-tom,
there is the ticking of a heart in its cage
and calling for disclosure, a bright of light
and pine. No one is seen setting the fire
but there is the fact of it
burning, tragically. I run door to door and
pound the alarm, the many
among many, rooms of pills and subsistence

and each value, each instance. Calendrical
in my futile tour, now I’ve
forgotten the hour and the place where you
and I had just missed meeting,
a slipped risk. Threads interweave
in the formulary, as directed and
received, imposes on them a division
from where letters chafe and flake
in among the fruited plains.
It is the long, paved highway
itself that now produces
the circumstance of wildness,
an inversion of the past
when city was defined by

the battened edge of conquer.
Fall leaves a dormant readiness, in closed eyes
resting on a line between multiple points.
Congratulate the surrendering hero,
reading the strong draught served up
and out as storms and shields
collide and cease to make sense.

This morning I flip on my screen and wander.
Seven million words a day splashed by fingers,
alt dot politics, bit dot listserv dot lit
et et et et cetera, consumptive fair
brief flashes and singed, singing
of irregular blues-frequencies, banded
as a bird’s narrowing width.

If, thematically, old age repeats youth
once I was martial, eager
why is it so much trouble
troublesome to remember
what happened to his admirable useless
frame, this I cannot answer.
Animals scurry around

his feet; surely this must be what he hears. It
is early, the musicians are setting up
on streetcorners. Shopkeepers put out their goods
in tense display. When the wind
instruments enter, tenor fallen silent,
he will be brought to trial for such desire,
heavy and boyish, as he still possesses

and shouts: “I see, I see.” This
means a flute shall sound inside
hollow trees. If, even while
class is about to begin, you will consent
to await your unmirrored expedition
restaurants unload on the opposite bank
the night sky storms over us

filling the river. Stout in
her black cape, she steps from the doorway and shakes
her hair. We imagine our
selves urging a string section
to enter, at first softly, and then she steps
away from the curb, flinching, hailing a cab
which arrives as a cloud of smoke and dancers.

One hour developing. By now music
in full swing, families of
foxes dance past us; froggy
on his wire teases passers-by, stuttering
“T” wasn’t m-m-me at all, but my granddad.
He t-told me all ’bout you. Look out, he said
f-for some gloomy gus in b-baseball cap!”
a reiterated phylogeny of practice, shade in the deep blue of sight. I am getting older, yes, I know. Pen and paper, like plate and spoon, belong here held in my hands, or the feet of rocks, the gesticulating meander nodding in slips and glides, water worn inside.

The pits are dug, the rocks are torn from their shelves, and I fall asleep in a great V, molded into U. Never mind the fool's goal, listening behind. It's the staggering climb back that makes return impossible, departure from going blind. Another year struts into the spandex town.

Today in the afternoon Express, I traced the outline of a sudden fault, split and carved like an amazingly recurring dream-score. Certainty, no, absurdly woeful, washed and beautiful becoming clear only in retrospect, like a trance.

Beneath these tracks the past doth lay. Remember to drink the sea, a freight of foam, sand and sun. The shadows are too quiet for their bounty. As not only the passenger's weight is lithe in the promise of recline. I've more than one set of nights awaiting me, listening in the distance. Upon this rock.

I was rescued after fourteen days and nights, and as the landscape slowly slipped away, I knocked my knees against all the too-frequent wall and wrapped the night across my shoulders, a shawl that was warmer than my fear. There is nothing to say when the dust settles, or the frost cracks. She makes uniformity impossible.

She asks me where have you gone I pose, chin pulled in, head high against dark furniture, TV balanced on my thigh, where a smallish guy points to the glow off a good car, a future body angled in release. Many posters, striated, worn off the side of the mailboxes artefacted modernism which no longer says I am traced against time. You are what is left when as much of you stares up from a puddle as stares down at ev'ry layer, the grain is fine. She pressed against the glass in impersonal longing, close and divided at once – satisfied, bereft.

What might be love elided. Perhaps in accident's decisive torment he was slumped in the phone booth details, gravel, cool fingers no, don't you dog me around. On that day in the busstop, dog me mama you'll be six feet underground.
Immense city, beautiful
and rich, saturated car wash denizens
and their trunks are full of tools,
the busses are empty, you have turned around
to take a picture, 1/60th-f4,
stainless hand-holds, luminous, unreflective
glow vertical in the frame.

One can always inquire, as often I have
painted a window frame white, not wiping off
the splatter. When she pressed her
thigh against me on the train
it was twenty below, but I responded
"Unconditional Money Back Guarantee"
years later in the bushes above the tracks.

There is an essential thirdness, so said Pierce,
so that what is determined
is only acceleration. Space and time
are flat, like a body locked up in a hearse
and if not you and I, then who shall destroy
the arrogant empire, speedily and in
our days? And we say, "amen,"

and pass a hat between our hands, yours and mine.
And envelop encounters in sight, senseless
squandering disguised as gifts
(the men huddled, silent, in the horse's belly)
an advocacy of dripping scarcity
difficult to parse as this:
"the man raced past the wall fell"

an object of the transitive verb, to race
holding to our habit's course.
A willingness to compel
others to endure conditions that we find
offensive is the true power of the State
in our lives. Sooner to be
its own recipient, forgetting any

soothing or false connection, we quickly learn
to barely use words of praise
an uncertainty that comes with loss and pain.
At the other end of this line you sit
a rain of teeth in your mouth
vaporous breath visible in the chilled air
rapt as a bird of prey circling the ground.

There are tiny cracks in the sky above you,
always a sky above, and an earth below
always another place leaning inwardly
to make some sense out of acts
gaining a quick fist of hair
ordering the ordering
of a diminishing play.

I'd brake the spell of grammar
like a shell, a candling mirror burned deep
into the soft lens of skin.
Here we are, impossibly dressed among rows
and official gatherings.
CNN reports that the soldier's body
was dragged in the streets, but the damage was done.
Lone in polar privacy
still leaves clinging to the tree
in a small room, ill-furnished & comfortless,
ceaseless wording of the uneven Winter.
Worked five long years for one man.
It's as if each leg dances
not to see by but look at

souls admitted to their selves
had the nerve to put me out.
Upper and lower molars cooperate
to laugh. Lips meet in a kiss
shaking to microphone and accordion
upper lip kissing lower, left and right hand
have to agree, wherever intention find.

In gray, how you did, say, and where
you went then, and what you found –
years barely remembered seem so near, air-welds
shaded insignia sunless, ecstatic.
Bright flower head, and curb cut in behind
sprawled in the phone booth in the busstop basement
stripped from soda decorate

the proper tool you should use.
Once we have said that its straightforward surface
simple, seamless, always honest
invites us to portray its author ourselves
and that portrait cannot be of a modest
candid person, content just to work alone
sure he was doing his best

have we met his work then? And have we met him
in the shadow portrait cast
on its surface from within
the work, its signature of exile hidden?
Literal, hidden product of attention
not intention. But I'm being didactic
again, water mooring bridge.

Only now do I know what I wanted and when
the boat half vanished, I ran
astern to paint that tourist, her camera
scarred the unmeasured surf, and
now I have no prepared words
to remove from uniforms. I saw in es-

sentials burn hands that, once in time, would be mine.

The railing was low. He walked
frighteningly close to where he might fall if
I were to identify him. I knew his name
but not who he knew I was thinking he was.
His white shirt, open at the throat, to the air,
the determined aversion
of his gaze, straitened his name.

Why had I not spoken to him? The next day
I made out in the paper
that she had died, thrown herself
over that same railing. No matter how late
I walked the circumscribed city of streets
circling the river, I always found something
to eat, a warm place to write.
By day I'd read novels in the library.
Then night came, and I went to the streetcorner
where a passing carriage had
dotted his trousers with mud.
While one curtain rose, a more vivid one fell.
Only, I could never speak
his name. And still can't do it.

I wanted to use the sonorous vowels of
correspondence, through a saturated form,
to go deep into a hypersentient
marshland, and lose myself in the music of
vines. There is no other time...
I'd take this conversation to one of my
fathers, someone in line who would quickly hear

in the death of one, the death of another
implying a name, spoken, entered into
the ground, closed against our sight
to stand on the shoulder of freshly turned earth
that dilutes sensation far from the shrouded
form, though such insolence of effect
isn't what I came here for.

Words, music, vines. A walking tour of the west
uncovering varied lands in the lines of
your opened face. So now speech is something of
the body? or of the land?
taken and individual, found and shared.
I push this letter into your outstretched hand
hidden with me in your thoughts.

The damp sweetness of cedar swelled from the earth
not the incandescent luminance promised
at the horizon, but a
wisp of pure resemblance clinging to her palm.
Years in the past he'd met her
in the northwest, brought her to LA, and when
the streetcars departed so did she, taking

the child away. Nothing could console him, and
in recompense he shot his world full of
wooden figures, easing his death inside it.
When she fell limp to the floor,
consciousness evaporated before she'd
said a word, a final seduction failing
her breath and dropping away.

Should I forget about her ability
to persist, feeling safe to
spin and wreck upon whatever reef turns up?
I'd certainly surface inside the bubble
I already reside in, check the pressures
still as phosphorescence, limited to what
manifests, not what has past.

Such a couple it makes! Peace, at too much heat
to want it, and thinking, drafts of little meat
to share. It's a long way down
the rocky ghost at clock's speed,
graphite telling you to grasp
the bland riches, none too lush
to front a theater, swollen and fatted.
One minute I drafted the response, the next moment's glaze dotted my eyes, sleeping too much for the day. We have pleasure in the water, trained to swim at birth. I just can't separate the trailing, wounded turbulence from the sheets beneath your skin. I told you about my sleeping on the grass, waiting after dark for a sign that quiet had finally come. One extended stay among lakes of anger was enough to change my habits, as you might note while breaking through the door. Hearing your delicate arrival renewed my taste for sulfur and fire, smoke like memory lingering in the air. I shook the sleep from my hair until the river at our feet swelled above the table. So many cards placed on a table. Too much at stake for those not of blood and birth or hearth, friends along the way, left or lost in wind and rain, and never returned to. You do not want what you say you want, my friend, or would you have glanced away in any case, from so many chances to swim in the silver linings of beautiful cumuli tumbling among reflections to leave black-clouded songs of pride among us, we who remain on the short side of nothing? When invited to perform at the Sutherland Lounge and the Burning Spear, I saw you couldn't resist, being a boundary buster, and joined in. I said, "I'll sing for a sign." Past polysyllabic, we came in for grief in the land of quantitative futures, where esters off crumpled leaves at tunnel's end rose back of the yards. A storied irony like "Blue Jew & The Rockin' Rabbis." You reached for that quick enough, I'd say. So we prepared to quit mutual pastures. While I bared my waist, big legs at the borders, and always crossing guards smiled as their barriers lifting into our way brought peace to the world, at least you would have no part of it. Not peace, no, but science—source of all silence—you demanded. Time to sit back, order out, looking tough, an edge of distraction upon our concentration. Yet, I agreed to be older brother, youngest son, that whatever upset you would upset me; and wondered what you'd bet me. I had to find out, to know this for myself. So I wrote you a letter,
addressed to suite seven, where
a Place was always burning
to consume its foundations.
Knowing you'd be there, I ate
flowers and crowns off the book
literal literation
and turned around; you were sitting at my feet.

I had to make profession
of my claims, if you'd let me; obscurity,
with which, still, I was reproached
when, young brother, you confronted me: "What use
are these decorations? Aren't
words and letters enough?" "Turn around," I said
"you'll find, like clouds reflected on the river

that twelve words were not twelve years;
the same voice went there and back."
Poverty of spirit the nations call it
while they beat their time on our sanctified backs.
But, it's just holes in meaning,
like pauses in history
whose insignia still mire

an imagined voice, whose every comment
neutral, whether right or wrong,
does not really want to speak
of flame or of the sharpest thing flame had sent
or if its position's strong.
This they reproach us with - but, it's not a sin.
It's what we put our faith in.

Bopping up the pearl driveway in the rain,
the easiest of suburban reasoning
scratches to get in. God knows there's a cat door,
but no, not this one, with a
firm belief in comfort and
convenience. Don't bother me,
if I don't have to. "Today may be the first

for the rest of you, but me?
I've got 10% down and 90 to go!"
Cantilevering my origins with my
circumstances isn't nice.
The director's cut left out more than was shown
leaving me with the stunning observation
that perhaps I was better off in the dark.

Privately, something matters.
The way rain water drains from the sloping roof
prairies of companions drift by and smile
like the girl with the diamond
just a glint of light to blink
and cry out in. I've a way with beginnings,
and you see yourself in that.

The ghosts are afoot downstairs
"Who are they this time," I ask
(a rhetorical device).
117 years of transient
human motion, horse-drawn to carless. While
the mail falling into the house
sets me racing for the door
the meanest exponent of the harquebus
powers by on four round legs
screams corners, while waves of flesh raise the alarm:
Death Monster! It's Death Monster!
A small exaggeration.
Actually, nobody seems to notice it
though nearby there's a stenciled
rose to mark the place where a
man and his bike were nailed one afternoon.
But enough particulars.
Chomsky and Parenti, seldom given voice
on the build-boards of our Great And Noble Land,
take second place to the question of the day:
“What's the Frequency, Kenneth?"

Ah, the ignoble averages of our time.
Cold air and starlight seep through
a brittle roof, margins of entrance, the weak
spot proving to be the best place for hiding.
The legions prepare, and the enemies list
themselves alphabetically —
we're all law abiding folks after all, and

wouldn't want to offend or inconvenience.
Can't I talk this out of you?
Exorcise your freedom to choose, and take leave.
You may suddenly discover that part of
your “eye” is an ascent up an artifact,
draping the peak of what actually happens.
(The logic of the insane

is a fragrant rose.) Look around... can’t you see
what I mean? Reds and grays of mau-mau curses
and vain, fantastic weapons. It's only words,
The moment the creature awakes in the lab
its education begins.
Then virtues, hunting down every memory,
the knotted net that holds its

body to the frame. You see,
its experience are his,
being the shifts from handles
to machine to desire
a trivial massaging
of a loose tooth in the rain,
the landscape is so charming.

Each of us carries around a room, both phone
and call to make. Knowing this,
fall silent, there is nothing
deletes artists rubbing walls.
Footsteps on the way upstairs
they are out talking with book
and librarian alike.

Hurry though we must, gruffly,
ev’ry gnomic saying is not prophecy.
Not every word without surface sense hides
from what to say, shouts out loud.
Laughter burns, keeps us moving
footfalls dropped, each in contact with the others
across an ironwork bridge into town.
They won't be told to talk – across not above
a silence into which we have not fallen
cult of personality
in which I held my mother and now hold you
stretched outside heavenly shelter, at arm's length,
– bell rings, birds fly off, poet
makes notes, even to this length.

As if nearness, something not to get used to?
a distant figure pushed down on a plunger,
seemingly to no effect,
but after a moment the landscape blew up.
Leaning back to forget whatever he can
the young man resumed his study of a book
puzzled as the letters laughed.

A bystander mocks protestors as they march
arms raised in a false query:
"What about me" (so he seems to want to ask).
With no way to answer his
image, others will notice, joining us all
in legions of those whose touch,
hairy mask, coin and cancer, rhymes further words.

A magic called fiction, is that what saves them
in portraits, on contact sheets
wide arc of blacktop pathway.
Balzac's character, the one that gazing down
at the river, would have jumped.
Social portraits arise en route, beginning
with memories, as a kind of homecoming.

A neighbor smokes in his yard.
Another shifts his embarrassed mask, dropping
words, as at the corner of a tablecloth
fabric drops in small diamond
folds. Hands too are folded or else grip a chair.
Ev'ryone tense for capture,
so they are apparati in uniform.

A wide arc of blacktop path
swings away behind her. Her eyes exactly
at the horizon, left arm
bent and hand on right shoulder,
why do we concentrate on
spiritual victory,
all this that is out of reach.

Preoccupied with the kids, unsuspicious,
though nervous, quite uncertain
I see now what no perspective proves, he's bent
features warm – widely smiling
over paper, back to a warm October
morning sun. Pricetag on his wrist he preaches
to used refrigerators,
false consciousness, in off-white.
We get up, take our seats in the theater
they stay the same, huffing in a sly corner
not far from the isle of love... situations,
negotiations, penchants
formerly unavailed of habitat,
like a disposable thumb.
On the slick edge of migration, measurements of loose skin sink their vanity in my hand. Blood boils out in numbers synthetic combinations forge sinecures, and yesterday many more gathered for the plump betrayal. Mr. Smith, I mean Mr. and Mrs. Smith, went shopping in the dark – I’ll take that one, and the little brown ones too, they thought in a happy voice: who am I to complain... I’m not complaining! Their voice is a deictic sign, motion running vagrant on the silvered page. Popcorn honey, or a twist?

Summer drains down the backs of their necks, wet dreams of youth, ten years ’fore the air-conditioned mast. Mystery, it is. My own turn at bedlam wouldn’t explain the pull and tuck when I sailed in their yard, Mr. Smith like a giant clam in the rain. I’m being unkind?

It’s a hunting way of life; there’s all this meat here, and lookee, there we are something like a pastoral disaster spreads the pride we feel at the horizon, colors in all the finely veiled threats of nightfall. The disposable character grimaces. “Something’s got me!”, pulling him down to the sand a brush with greatness of a different sort. He is opening one eye, imbrication among the stars, the hasp of telephones, encumbrances in a past of tense and layered indexes. It’s beginning to expand, the purposeful, desiccate jell we call “home.”

But there is much to praise in the raised surface, running minds over brilliant and bell-driven spells that give and make and never fail to name, even if mistakenly. In the neglected preview, surface order can’t account for the variations in form impacting right in the middle of your past.

Tickets fire and recall an arrangement brought out on the morning tide, a handsome clutter hopeless and triumphant, razor between lines of act and circumstance. Tell me what you mean, what you tell, techniques then, and liars who rain the present in lies.
What you wrote on the large stone,
to survey dawn graying light,
your chisel was a trumpet
left lying in the square. I
learned that some of these letters
exploded, fastidious
and climbed out of narrow streets

the like of which you cannot see anymore.
I'd only been there once before
you pointed within the rubble at searchlights
where the low lake ripples, and
I saw their glowing concision, how open
tops started to cut, to spread
weary shapes, far from complete,

clouds before the cited dawn,
streets full of uniforms and fresh tar drying.
It's late to start such projects,
as if insisting that one's correspondent
stop knocking against another guy's hallway,
it is so insidious.
Rhymed exile expels song

the way singing voices bell.
Exhausted we watch buildings, see parking lots
where the gate swings up, and man and car drive out.
Dirt analyzes shovel
too. He blinked his almond eye,
tore time to a paper doll,
and walked out as the books tumbled from his desk.

Perhaps this word's redundant, a braid of glass,
so that eternity changed
him to himself at last, and
sand ran out beneath his song, but I hope not
for death triumphs in strange voice.
The centuries turn before
our efforts sustain them; they shorten our lives.

At least it's steady work, I'll say that for it,
the image we became when we stopped changing
and rallied you to our pause.
Or with too much in your view
absorbed in kiosks of bonbons, looking down,
your eyes fall out of focus;
you don't notice: what we've waited for is here.

A field of arrows inlined between the nations,
the sight and mind of all who pass, these plaques write
history on public walls.
If never we slow, their music still picks up.
Yet combatant, witness, victim disappear,
and stones too, thought to outlive participants,
erode, or else they are smashed.

Scars don't outlive a body.
Songs you were taught to erase
fought their wars here. Stubbed out tongues
doubled or forgotten; remember to touch
shadowed archives under sky;
their edge, unruly, flowing
away, you will not yearn to redeem. You must.
And compute rage. I wouldn't give two crooners for his book Bing & Time; too much frills a flea with pillows of hee! Prosa-
ically he drills his welt, rewriting his unwriting, fouling my si-
-lenced with what evers, he really mendt to kill. Still alive, I'm glad you're dead!

Yes, yes, one two three for five star, chauffeur, glad he's alive. Exiles write in reg'lar forms just like reg'lar worms under their reg'lar storms at least so my research shows and how-e'r my research goes I will follow its flows like swarms to the hive.

I never ran a conclusion of this ilk, that head's up and inferencing bullets pistol whipped into the padded air between I love you – your eyes – and my head, when you've killed me. Carpet knells your thin, oscine temper, valent between three or more varieties of fright not meditation but analysis, that cops once too many times at the corner story – Good Life! its experiences limited to vestment profundities, mankind speaks and when you que up in the freezing sheets of rain needs another length of rebar to complete, then pushes away, else I've completed the same.

Bouncing act, saccharin fills the shell of a “perfect” bilateral body, assembles loners at home, national-level competence thrusts inside. I know you thought it was progress, but after all, the instancy of history adds up, commands much more than a withering memory.

My fingers are on track, dipped and fetid in your deep peach the only thing between you and my body jasmine, another photosynthate, mirrored behind a heavy curtain throwing shoulders and rocking as I do to fall beneath you in the flood.

Memory, blinking to change information reaching greater radiance, manually elevated in stages then, I remember, background and punctuation, craving attachment, or understanding its decor. Too much paper! I crush in the swelling to speak to you, too much to say like the dark matter between some distant stars mountains of it, and my tunnellings, only now nowhere nothing sees me. This is the foundry, lightning sweeping dusts of history, many covers chiding those within not to take it so hard.
"Your death has been perfected."
"A zipper runs down my chest."
"My world is redirected."
"Cups fill and empty again."
"This column holds us inside."
"Does this trail lead to the ridge?"
"Morning emerges thinly."

Ideas represent imagery, drinking fires that spread from rubble to ancient town layers of debris, creates and dispenses within sight of the distant, birded land. Development from holes to wallet, trees to pallet, a taste for easy fixes, never mind the consequences now! The television memes my mind perfectly, exit this way,... no, above the volcano where we’ve built our nursery hammer to stone, the roadway of ash and fault spun into the Theme World we call home.

And part of it reaches inward, waves for fun flags of many messages tying the sky to a national desire unalloyed, periodic ruling out of line outcasts, identities, protected only by a reticence to speak their mind

from what back-tracked other thoughts. WHICH ones? A woman at a slanting severe style sense desk, what of the man next to her, CD spinning in silent CD player? He hears a trumpet, humming into her ears, scratching into prison walls.

He reads what prisoners drawl: “Old cagey Harry hit bee cones. Honey set—a sorry, tawdry, dull, curt thing—honey tall.” Still, when hid meaning ceases, “Occasionally it becomes unnecessary to draw the curtain on it all.” Such abortive gestures win reality, or suburban opprobrium “Parents should spend more time with their children,” the country novelist announced to applause. This trail leads right to the fridge. Bright, wet leaves still stick to trees. The weather’s wet, but not cold.

I wish to have met you before my decline; to have driven north into the glowing holes of the northern states of love, exchanging what we found for reprieve. Through southern states of love, when the weather was fine and modern verse on the CB had grieved us.
I don’t want to stop speech at silence, either to address scribbled margins interior to the redone cupola dome of word-crowned gesturing that moves laterally like an amoeba setting off again and again on what from here looks like adventure, but

in fact is my mechanical observing. Were Georges Perec and Paul Celan acquainted? Where would you have looked for love? Setting off on a walk, we’d arrive in town irritated by the friendless journey of temporary language, nightly stopovers in tame motels, prize chains and bedclothes of wards.

Still, I did set out each time to leave you, to tear open our rash darkness or lose it in vengefulness. Whatever may be the resulting patterns are languages with no names, only quantities and measured-out doses halting and repetitious:

Then can’t I help it, if I have no other. If I can’t help it, then I have no other. If no then, I can’t help it, I have other. Then, if I can’t have no help, no other I. If no other I, help can’t then I it have. Then no it I can’t have if I help other. Help! Can’t I have other? It if no then? I?

Performance of mockery, self-parody. It makes my hair stand on end. Eye held in camp, no other evidence for evidence. Don’t stop at that. A shadow cupped, whether in paper or glass – I am not mocking myself but these words; which are they – message or bottle?

Listen up, this is the first time I’ll talk on this subject. Do you believe these people? One end of the stick they burn for warmth; the other they carve into a cross to worship. One of ours they grab and murder then, hup!, we did it, and they make him their God.

When, in “Tenebrae,” Celan has their savior descend to drink dark blood, like Odysseus in our (under)world, he finds a mirror and his source, a knowing connection, productive betrayal, a trench of blood: You were of us, now kill us. The other’s ontology, not history.

Still, it rises to our gorge. I imagine them as friends captured in stances of rebellion. One looks over his shoulder, convinced of my benign intentions, but they are not, for I have reversed his stance; his mind is not on another but itself –
lamb upon stone. Invested
we are, cut of patterns as long as any
length of sight, filling and filled with just enough
providence to stand and split the succulence.
Copula! Here it is! between resistance
and as so, my's, perhaps just one at a time
illicit flickering sense to make it glow.

There's lots of excuses for what happens here,
at night, too wired to sleep
and in the day, staying awake props one arm
while the other one fixes,
doing the job it knows best
a tie, slap, a hit, in, pull back, in again
and you're off, between the harsh light and the wall

memory relishing its groin, dancing in
tune within it, one room of many mansions
cutting up the best, arranged
in composite entities
shunted between harnesses
and braced between guise. Here I
sit, stories of my silver-throated highway

sewn in revers. Tell me all
that sings. Let me siphon the
last, cool lick of life before
tracings erase the night air,
with the borders around us
(in tatters and all), grasping
onto the sweet breath that introduces love.

Carbon shaped into a form
unrecognizable at any distance
miasmas in the dark, huddled mass of flesh;
hell if I know what it is.
Remember how we'd sit on the lawn as kids
making callous, entertaining predictions
about the probable outcomes of people

passing by? "Will collect shoes and drink kool-aid."
But what if this never occurred? Are you tricked
into thinking that I was talking about
my childhood? I don't want
you to feel cheated. I'm writing about
this because something happen.
Did you not want to believe?

She sits behind an ornately carved wooden
table, bisecting our view by an empty
picture frame. Her hand touches her bowed head, brow
rests on a cut of fabric, perhaps of tears.
All of this is shown – an arm and stand holding
the frame before her, a prop, an extending
limb of realized semblance. And so she sits,

the picture of a picture of grief, with her
left hand just draped over the edge of the frame.
The shuttering of image, Castiglione,
Countess of Her Own Domain,
lifts more than her hooped skirts when she broached her legs.
And so do you, when you leaf through the mirrored
pastimes of extending youth
or haul in from a tantalizing insult,
come here, I'll recover what it is I fear
wetter than most anything
the naked thirst and swallow of a long walk
like following hand to thigh.
Which is it we must prefer...
*Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft*?

Ordination of results,
the plague-rats frolic in the afternoon sun
with everything else slipping between fingers
found by another, and so never denied.
So many letters, look at them. Decide which
shards are shifting through the inevitable
cracks, their fragments clutching the shape of the whole.

When I heard plane engine rev
saw a black hand wave at clouds
I hoped to walk again with you, my own love
find peace in train stations, and not wave goodbye
with memories or music.
So simple, too simple, I should have known then
where and when I was moving.

The slightest recollection of his seated
posture, as he aimed at the old corner house,
unceasing object of our speculation,
with slim fingers half-harborred inside thick sleeves,
beck'ning confidence of one too frail to live,
not hardy enough to die. "There," he pointed,
"shall we mix the metals of Arnaut Daniel."

But never take the No-doz that made you sleep
not again, or you will rise
until heart-shells, feeble in
their zones, spun in fibers fever gets to keep,
cranial pairs, skinned-shape eyes
thinking imagines as selves in aspect real,
heads hang down o'er falling hair.

You may call this string of pearls
its entrance marked "A" and "B."
Hers was a large soul; she had a soul to match.
What you have done or written
watches what you think, yanking the wheel rightward
to pull off the peripheral artery
on the small road that leads home.

As if the mental process
"you can't do that" knows you can
in a symbol before effort intervenes.
Even wind rises inside
something, only we never know what we point
out, a cubical scene of
love in the library, that gripping in dream

sluice, where water, not level,
is not formal. You see, there is no reason
to complete the statement, if behind a door
other forms complete it for you anyway.
Associated with gesture, with action
a schema has us moving,
In this sense I am here, and I reach for you.
Inside my kiosk, surrounded by its bars of candy and the bubble (but who put them there?) gum jars, I feel my chin, hair stubble removed from the damaged cars, and know I'll never leave another level, trapped in my kiosk – that my need to revel among the corporate stars, to be touched by balling fists as I begin my only constellation piecing enough luck to miss their hemicycled faces, though they're all darkness traces just lights the metro map next to my station.

If anyone can write rhyme without regard for networks, yet none connects, disconnects mellifluous cabledoms; drives and printers cross buildings like a gambler's fingers, and the big bet-jerk he is heartless. He will yet leave us insufficient time. Table legs, father, his legs. Never a moment alone. The dry stars don't fear speaking; if you are near her finally, then love her. Metaphor will not ravel, metonymy seals it off. Give you a flower: it's my life.

It? – But I know no objects.
My? – No one that foolish.
Life? – Skin dragged upon sand pit, no monument, no signs, even arrow points lacking, only a periphery of idiots rapt in pinioned opinion, reft of their wars, yet, when they find us, they will know how we loved, unknowing, a joint, a scab where it's only about time. Now, in each other's cubicle the windows radiate too little transportation. If morality is the curse that matters most I've always settled out for what it's worth for.

Are we not the recipients of glory? My friends gather, thanking gave 'round each other, a re dedication to our survival whether we’re in there or not. "Homeless With Children" may yet be a sitcom but it's dark... love in the dawn so full and scarce and fast of bounty as here.

Unchanging search for noise maintaining the routes I've seen to choose between an unmarked return, and lines the litter set to changing flailing in our whispering. What the music told us then, over bridges into sight, what's left of it
air informing November
her rain broadcasts sweetly across the plane, wet
something for everyone! The place to run
to get out of a gravestorm
(I offer this text, to watch)
a diameter, the size of a cut in
the fitful sleep of nearby civil unrest.

There's been a fire here, or thunder, rain, or
the sound of rain blanketing along in the
deep, dripping dark of burnt out buildings. Carry
on for good, the pace catches the survivors
of yesterday's fire, and tomorrow's too
as if speaking to you now
are you there before or after it happened?

The resulting grace note, so hard to see
and when it's seen, the most impressive event
stretched to reach an infinite trick — to steal
from you while you want to pay
all very righteous, but don't ask their children
(I think they've lost their children)
you may not get the answer they expected.

How much comfort must be left
before something catches, and you reach to fall
farther in the immediate world than
is possible even in your mind, saying
something, even unkind, or unfeasible
there is no pointless location, though damage
exists, brutal and persistent in our lines.

So will the spark, so does the laden imbue
and the second speak. So tell me about this:
"In 1988, 54 of us
were arrested for serving free food." Compare:
In 1988, 54 of us
were arrested for serving free food. What is
the difference between an explanation

and a cannon? — another significant
event in the passing discourse, knock knock knock
I can't come in, pouring back and forth between
a glass and wine and a glass
this is the dream, the one
you had over and over as a child,
a recurrence never again to return,

unlike the silence, unlike too many things
(I drank the juice of soil and survived)
fasted to the most detailed of histories
if they're bad because they're here
take a look: the whole body is connected
no minor effect, as execution weighs
somewhat farther than relief

action, thought, semblance, thought, to
knock again into sound, moving into air
they too want to be adored, and who'd blame them?
To adore, to spurn is easy for us all
hot or cold, enough demand
for balance that the very strength that's valued
turns to weakness in us when it isn't matched.
Sand on the way to being
stone, glass, slips through my fingers
or I dropped a glass and a splinter cut me.
Later when I tiptoed into the kitchen
carefully, I used a new broom to sweep up
but when I looked into the new dust pan, there
were no glass fragments, just dust.

I slipped from my seat, and hid
underneath the dining room table. Across
from me were your legs, your feet.
The next day the neighbors moved.
No matter you see through it, still a mirror.
Like the bird to its page, each
word was trimmed to fit its cage.

So, my fingers grew small scars
where they had touched metal, glass
and a whole sentence functioned as a word would
to indicate rejection, even disgust
vaunting dismal dances, taking positions.
To err is no political act. Give them
jobs, a chance to fall in line,
to compete. Where their foreheads plow gray-green earth
their lips are moving still, if
you just listened: decembrean field, bronze route.
They needed a sentence, because they lacked a
word for what and where they were.
“Gone to lay head on lonesome railroad iron,
til the 2:19 come crease my worried mind,”

and other industrial
verse versions on Experimental Row, dance
polished ebony wingtips.
Down the block, where birds suffer
still, insistent rage, syntax
insists I’ve studied black fate
charred in other apartments, but I have not.

The morning Fred Hampton died, murdered by the
Chicago Police Force, I
toured his apartment. Boards placed
on the floor crossed pools of blood.
For some reason, the police hadn’t sealed the place.
Black Panther party members
asked for people to come and witness the scene.

A straight score crossed the window
between the alley and his basement room
where the pane had been quietly removed. His
mattress, soaked in blood, twisted off its box spring.
Interior walls of the rooms were pocked with
bullet holes, trajected inward. No outward
facing holes – the dead don’t fire.

It was then I decided to move away
from Chicago, a cowardly act, no doubt
and not the response the Panthers had hoped to
inspire in someone like me, potential friend
or at least ally. But their struggle scared me
as much as the police did. Virtue had been
to be their cannon fodder,
but I'd had a gun drawn on me once by a plainclothesman at a demonstration, and fired into the air, then been maced; I turned and ran. Those were mad days of autobiography. There might still be a fire in every stone water rolls over, rocks uncut by presence if the stone surface is gone, or nothing sealed.

Our obsessive thematic. The room was crowded. I could not understand the discourse, an air punctuated by yells or muttering, raised right fists, what were barely words yet lived on their own, each person’s expression touching the other’s in air alive, was not dying.

A night cut in two; is it you speaking now writing grass, dirt, red leaves, rain refreshing, hungry as ever silent schools are hungry. New stone in my pocket today rolls down library alley. Books. Like nights the books come too closing in on other words.

I'm noticing a chamber of events, gone too far to wrest the rain from clouds pushing up the adiabatic slide. Together we watched the live television sight of a passing torch; where it would be touched would bury lives and deaths. The 60s were here, a new generation to plow the same land

the French had bet and lost on, incidently a solution to Hampton’s ilk: In Country, out of sight in Vietnam. I was knee-high to an ironing board, and she was ironing, splendid and beautiful in a white dress, the echoing of Kennedy’s inaugural speech a backdrop to silence.

I won’t argue with her now... we can’t talk about something she’d never see. I can barely entertain the present case, the friends I have to console resulting hack and grind of limitless force applied to people who are limited in their capacity to endure violence.

The police still practice random assault, a very effective way to inspire fear in populations difficult to control. It takes too little saved to save your own skin, but sometimes that’s the best that needs to be done. Long will the demand of sacrifice be felt, while life itself is fragile

there is no response sufficient to the act translating pleasure and pain in candle wax, sealed and stamped with the necessary needs of life. We can count our time withdrawing, an eventual sovereign in hand, then WHACK! but I won’t degrade the many brutal deaths by refusing life to live.
Another mound perhaps, and winter's descent
like a frozen beach of bones
pursues some more than others.
I listen to your breathing, the flesh of breasts
set against the cool night air.
You hold me; I count the stars
below the hand that holds us.

Two satellites slip across the morning sky.
In the grass below, their valuable prey
breathing and calculated
a previously unknown variety
of consumer conceives what's necessary,
imagining something that in retrospect
seems entirely obvious and right.

You can't eat your Earth and have it too, they thought
hidden in the grass. Now bet that two more'll
make a market, thought the satellites above.
We've imported the land from Argentina,
the perennial bunch grasses were replaced
with scotch broom, from sea to sea...
Let's head'em off at the pass –

they'll barely notice the same!
There is a contradiction
in approach, between alien reptiles
released and freezing in 50 degree air,
and what it feels like to lie on this hill.
There's just nothing else to do with it except
maybe doing it again.

To affirm is to unburden that which lives
something easier to do again than do.
I curse. Will you sing along?
apparently absorption can't swallow it
all, so we lie, profitless and fallow, here
between the cracks.
Stories trickle down to us

or around, tied like a string
through the furtive, quiet streets
entirely flying, but low enough to
descend through fear and private apprehension
into my eyes. There I sit,
absorbed into something familiar, in the
drifting of a red balloon.

Yes, this is a mean old world
where I cry to remember
calling up again the things we used to do
ropes stretch along windy streets of mid-winter.
To live by yourself or live with someone else
I say I pity the fool
makes his nest on cold, cold ground.

The trees they climbed were surrounded by law grass
—that's law grass, not low grass—heded
by protective procedures.
No-one would put them down, drive them out of town.
When one among them fell, whereas a pagan
knew how to settle down, cookin' slow gravy,
solid, that tzadik ought not have been wasted
by his Shield of protected dutifulness. So it was we fell to apostasy, our two souls walking side to side, mine and I mean my cousin’s henceforth known to all as the other, “Aher,” my name was Elisha ben Avuyah. My student Meir still visits me, excommunicated though I am; he reads to me. “Whoever studies Torah for its own sake... one may say the world is found deserving for his sake – he is called Beloved Companion, and gladdens the Divine Presence, as he gladdens all creatures.” Such are his words.

Study robes him in humility and fear. He is an overflowing fountain and a torrent of ideas above creation. Meir learned young; I wrote of him, “One who learns when young is like ink written on new paper. One who learns when old is like ink blotted on erased paper.”

Or so says one tradition. The voice of Otis Rush says, trying to live by yourself cannot get you one you love, the smallest operation mind undertakes is judgment. Empty doorway. Like it, form fills again with flute-music in a bottle corked in oxygen ocean. Context spurs expression, certainly you hear that, can you really hear that? Repeat, repeat; read, reread until your feet find a road? Sunk, the bottle returns, turned back into sand.

And so the wilderness where he finds himself affords two advantages at least among word-wary, myth-entrapped nomadic tribes, to my effort to understand big voices I ever see confront me. What are these advantages?

First off, heroes and their gods repeat themselves braid axioms learned in school. Secondly, what speech I hear is not expressed in language I claim to know. It is foreign, not hidden, evident hour motionless, true reflected light emerging from within a stone image, aspect real closing before your eyes merge heart-shells. Feeble in their zone, night fibers, fever places hand in hand’s cranial pair. Shadow’s skinned shape of thinking has made its way out your mouth.
Clone calls “Boss!” he wants to know
can a poor boy come back home?
Part no partner, you’ve been gone
way too long. That sand through hourglass, those sealed suns,
will not turn to glass again.
Ladders climb, stutter akimbo; mine your way
out of the south and begone.

It’s a world old means, yes
along capillary hills and the valleys
of a night’s shift. Hemistich
still, mixed words; you crack a shell on the carpet
drag a dime, a line winnows
the mortal immortality of judgement.
I see: you’ve come to murmur

lines in the back room; we’ve come
to merge our separate ways
and features. Nests are ground for
some... is that a judgement or a prescription?
Trellis, without knowledge, just another ground?
The floor swells, and has emotional value
categories to symbol.

To commit is to predict.
Pleasure and panic commits,
a theater of marques
finds comfort in this. Maps running in reverse:
“To unpaper a sleeve, hold
the top firmly, and with care not to resist,
remove the arm from the ridge.”

A commons of meaning exists along the
avenues, where dialogue offers order.
“It’s free because it’s yours,” our simulation
mulched with newspaper and the tops of tables
crops of greens and potatoes
inscribed headlong, political, and all that
eating, sleeping, staying dry.

Air is only free when you inhale it.
Swimming across the river
in late afternoon for launch
developing facial ticks
retrospective brush with death
business-suited giddiness
“I’m a safe, and so happy”

that returning the favor,
the pleasure of dominion
the arctic frieze of a wall,
looming over warp and wrap
mind over imbrication,
limits itself to reflect
a perpetual heir, inherency,

where to satisfy remains.
Who did you think was coming?
Oh Daddy, you whore, you fucking gigolo
who you have made into what.
The woman is perfected,
imitación de Cristo, perfected
no serve para nada.
Tell me, haven’t you the vocabulary
to speak, living where you are?
Subjects of discussion show
how acquired everything is, a lack of
ability, immune to the distances
distanced from deficiency
death recalling a syndrome

of the familiar and the unfamiliar.
Certain compromises will have to be made;
adjustments in distribution, masked by a
disassociation, allows acceptance
of what would, in more personalized contexts,
be seen as too inadequate, or unfair.
But then, no one is immune.

We gather in the kitchen
as late as the hour gets
and how cold, the temperature of the ground
a handful of windless thoughts
of violence, the morning
nothing is more, that is sure
finishing the long hours.

Tame shudders and persistence,
limitless performance, depth predictive of
calm expatriate. Listen to the long line...
involvement, in cascading observation
distillate smuggling and
everything you could say in fifteen seconds
between the clocks, between spans.

Say or sing, so our song goes – “Evil, lovely,
lovely, dark.” What you see, it is the object
festival of mental minds.
Water refracts the rusty drain to beauty
a jewellic oxide, but when it empties
ugly all over again
which I don’t mind, looking down
real time, real experience?
Then you may look back at me, lovely singer.
Your gaze and you will die first,
one hand forward, one in retreat, I’ve been there
and back, like you, before you,
so my speech already gleams
with seduction’s push and pull
in adequate relation
to a world wherein our hands
investigate pleasure to sing into form-
describing shape, laborless,
but where is this honesty?
To recommend one’s own spirit will not do –
tricks we strain to get beyond.

No achievement reports, please.
Without looking back, I have returned alone.
I strum my lyre and listen,
drumming voicebox, one arm raised, one eye lowered.
Yet, I have been unable
to uncover or shovel,
turn or shoulder, hand to hand upon this path.
Amateur botanist, a poor one at that,  
still, I follow yellow blooms  
that lead me to your doorway.  
Carved out, empty, lots of room  
for the head (yours) I set there  
and others gape. Unceasing, it prophesies:  
"Eurydice, black jewess, island dropper  

you are the hole in my sock,  
in my pocket, in my shoe."  
"Bye-bye pagan past, swarming  
stale myths of handled objects  
are only more applejack, hearth of male stills  
way up in unraveled hills."  
I prefer what I'm part of yet will not name.  

Did I send you that message I now get back  
in a form of frenzy, mouth  
set, though fullest ever love  
elsewhere, voices not in air  
of those who departed I hope to visit  
or will visit me. Exiled  
terms of thought; they don't let go.  

A doorway, no a stairway  
cut through a ravine. Welcome, warm welcome  
upon your return home from your wide world trip.  
What trace underlies this view?  
A false grandeur stolen from ideas of God  
and loaded on the back of old history?  
In this way, something priceless  

has been lost, a people themselves as themselves  
no a stairway, a doorway.  
The walls lined with political documents  
constitutions of intercultural states  
and obscure artworks, poems  
in quatrains of a dreadful isolation  
find your friend fully herself.  

A stairwell the present. Flights  
lead away, tempo andante, pacing off  
a dormant space of perception in concern.  
No I cannot reach the distant space thought of  
but am in it anyhow,  
like a barking dog whom we know does not bite:  
does the dog also know this?  

Ice darkens the deck around the new mat, as  
above the door icicles melt then refreeze.  
Most beloved most respected addressee,  
this letter is not for you, so you may think.  
But if you wait a moment – the briefest one –  
everything will go away. You'll be left to  
peer through bottle glass at your own urgent words.  

You addresses the one you know, and so you,  
to someone else, no one not previously  
mentioned, grab a seat inside  
out of this nasty weather, no sense being  
uncomfortable, never argue with you.  
It's we that makes assumptions  
that old excuse: Your letter's in the mail
pigeon holding in the folds of its wing
not quite the opening you expected through.
Rain sluices down the gutters,
gutters of rain sluice down the glass, rivulet
cycles of ice, radiant, telegenic
the most perfect alumnus
cobalt blue, draped in the very finest type

umm... excuse me would you please
remove your needle from my arm?
Trust me; you won't feel a thing, just a pinch...
Done! Now wasn't that easy?
The world drips down the glass
as it's raining in the rain.
I am writing a letter

at the neighborhood cafe, baggy 30s
atmospherics, permanent adolescence
growing in the soup-kitchen
arcade of 90s culture.
So abandoned, the need for artistic grief
cast in high school silhouette.
Unwilling to isolate the life/art field

everything's changing, the dissolution of
arbitrary rifts between
performance and production
has a fuzzed over Dali
describing his cure for the freezing garret,
capital increasing enterprizes perched
twixt his greatly waxed mustache.
entered without descending
to the mud below our feet, habitat of
squatters avoiding squander
fundamentally offensive, and never
quite encountered in polite conversation
hand mirrors and collisions
down along the water line,

where water won’t draw the line
through pavement into slow collusive dread cracks
of mica-like chunks – traffic for holding down
a trash can lid; arms round pipe
I slid down from garage roof
to alley, blood clotting hair
having too much fun to run.

Waist deep in what already
once in a while wants to burst
always the replacement order is simpler
has not been enough for us
like McCarthyism – it just came and went
not that effects had been what we’d’ve wanted
blushing, purple, breathless – I mean unable
to breathe, wrapt in re-election – I don’t think
of that at all, it was over before us
the warm night, flat streets lit by
passing cars, the el above,
in the record store I bought
from the red-blazered clerk “Something Else” a great
session, and he recalled me

from the Modern Jazz Room, where we agreed on
the pewter of Silver’s tone
how easily – I’d have been the only white
fifteen year old in the place
that for sure – who cared! Just to be remembered
dancing a shuffle by the piano bench
or Miles in pigskin overcoat makes a call

on the public phone next to
the restroom, while the band plays Avid Restraint
and already sick, I drink more bourbon, mind
lost in a focus recalled
the stain as vivid now as then, fifty seven.
By then german philosophy’s lost its way
truth of language. A glass in Rimbaud’s honor!

No use but I can’t drop it
thinking I’ll need memory
even more later, when there’s less now than now.
Then too we dug and we dug
bad pun, the air full of smoke and full of graves.
No use to me I mean – sure
but, could it be otherwise?

Habitual laughter, errands and shopping,
grinding gears as whoever drives still counts time.
They have taken the towns of Switzerland, Greece
for their conferences and their congresses
on how perfect cows will smoke you with their bells.
They walk on sand, talk through glass,
stalk your hand, then waste your ass!
Who remembers Sidney Hook? No one, I hope.
Adorno soon to follow,
who begrudged Benjamin’s evident requests.
Worse, who would have been happy
to accommodate himself to Hitler, had
only the Nazis allowed him: after all
he notes – he is only half

Jewish (the smaller half). A rumor? perhaps,
but I choose to believe it, do as you will.
My instructions are illegible, global
competitiveness plays taps
in halls without their old walls.
Still, inclined to listen as the dead’s behests
are voiced, a phalanx hollows

the gone men, climed in their hearse.
They have surrounded the old town, the largest
in our province. Villages very like hands
mapping mid-level abstractions to higher
ones in judgment. This is called humanism,
where even evidence is abstraction, as
Spinoza places the spider in its web

and laughs to banish all but our attention.
Trading eights with Philly Joe
an unknotted skein trails across the lounge floor.
She was called Beverly, he McKee. We watched
Sugar Ray Robinson unravel against
some Boston mediocrity.
Outside pavement crackled. We were drunk again.

So welcome to the farm. Strayed where they found us,
we’d an easy picture sleeping, having twice
forgotten half the later.
Our wires must be tapped, splicing connections
rather than "getting to know"
anything. At present I reject the past,
at least for the moment. Could

anything be half as true?
Innocence, and the struggles of memory
atmospheric ideals
the sound of writing among
language and necessity...
except that it’s not possible. If it were,
it would be anyway. So where has it been?

Villages like rain, the stars
were fewer than their fires.
I mourn them like a mother.
Amid moments of glory
within contentment, reading
and being read by landscapes
much too near to be unknown

passed, imagined difficult
it is and does, so no lens
requires packaging to raise its boundary.
What went further is the familiar rate of
coexistence, once innate
but now the domain of myths and disasters
persisting here, in the aisles
skylines and the beautiful signs of deceit. Productive avoidance is interpretive not justified, absorbing the most difficult fields, those establishing verity through slander context driving the occupying constant looking through the rear view mirror and seeing that we are not separate. A walk through winter, belief a smile, wave, attraction and heat, passing reaction restoring my memory. The literal view is almost useless, really. Exteriors are shallow. In the planeless meeting between matter and effect, totalizing states build and destroy in blind eternal instants BOOM – Hey man, what's happening? gravity creating intimate pastimes communication in an infinitesimal leap wrapped in individual circumstances among stranger's experience, memory, thought developing arenas of significant events, imposing worlds whose entire focus of attention is on the integrated whole become "real." We continue the excitation, only with successive replacements, as every story taps and drains its store of the unresolved, the misshapen, the scared. Either a happy or semi-sweet ending, or just throw up your hands and say "Well, that's life!" giving the impression of "concern," "headway". The pace of signification and meaning of page-confirming material rapid intervals of information threatening the continued comfortable survival of suburban lawns. Now there'll be action, focused on the smallest possible units. Radicals conspire, plot, sowing ideas expressly designed to manufacture discontent. "Executives, real estate speculators and corporate boards function without forethought, barring the necessary planning needed to secure and guarantee the continued protection of the public good, whose needs are paramount." Fools who calculate memory to escape the sting all thoughts lilt, freezing field, open throat to the integral. Knif blade alley released between imaginations of identity's comfort. To sleep with the dead? No, I don't mean like that! I can imagine no truer friend than you
and your name is, or has been, unspoken here. Heavy, warm wind remembered liturgy and history without retort, stick hurled, held by wooden hinge which when it returns does not through air both bright and breathed, clasped upon black stones; when we open they are white.

You, I, these – see rhymes ourselves, power grown out of placement pauperizing research, funding smudged bulbs cartoons of urban out-placement, deported from within and lacking any shelter in mind’s own replacement, but these are not whom we imagine we could have been.

Imaginary playmates have been replaced by one way mirrors whose cracked silence passing through speech authenticates it. If dead lion speaks, the dead will not understand its absent roars as words, but only pain (“Lo pianto stesso li pianger no lascis”) not present, nor absent in its displacement.

Pain itself prevents complaint enveloping aromas the area globally, climatically wrapped in social snow, red ice children holding microphones brew storm-bound connectivity gluts before ma-goddess myths of one-no-time origin listed on splintered chalkboards. They were waiting for me, coming apart while for years a certain self-sufficiency marked with circumspection and also circumscribed in the small, numbered hill town the long arm muscles slackening environs it would be senseless to scribe.

Out of the eggshell a human head retracts the lonely individual make-up man incorrect but justified by simulacra of fire, an ordered world’s painted surfaces. What will replace thought? A dog’s head, a concept? Light on one side of your face, light of permission, loyalty and labor.

Library facade, simple likeness to child. Begin again and again, washing dishes then copying trigonometric tables on slate. The no-myth of beginning, the myth of mortality. We found we could come and go as we pleased, but were content always to hide.

The screen fills with mild weather, a rambling lakeshore cottage. Propped against its closed door is a worn volume of addresses. Within, son and mother are in conflict about the girl, the future. In another room, the young daughter falls on
her sword and explodes in hideous laughter. The horizon transects her at the height of her fallen bike. She's running among arrondissements, taking the metro; a casual alignment of willowy arm to a fellow passenger's sinewed one, lips speculate. They cling to the shining pole as the car lurches. Meanwhile mother and son leave off complaining to walk a shard and styrofoam shore, gazing downwards, each distracted yet pleased too by the other's presence. That is how it goes, finding a way to the heart of the witness who squeezes his fist through holes in time's pocket.

Leaving here, listening to the TV on the radio, trading gold for teeth, nacreous expression, gist pulling them forward, even you, even last. Given time to choose, choose swaying, to stay this little world of clocks. I didn't know you were speaking about time like that, as if we were hanging here in space just faces in the rectilinear fog. Your television bugs me its certitude, its restraint um... uh... ah... huh... wait a min... to be content, just absorbing the buffer a precipitate forming in the exchange

of response-like ticks, the mind forges its own signature drop-kicking perceptions of theology and belief preservation in the vaults. Knowing machines don't know, our desire for infinite growth must measure the absence of infinite space, infinite material. Violence is golden, your link to the market of an ever-shrinking past. Remedy for the present, the finite pronounces a sound of breathing refuge of the commensal that it makes good sense to breath.

You mightn't remake yourself keeping all the possible opportunities to press the portable flesh, midnight in the afternoon, shades drawn in our eyes. I never thought of these things until later or have I experienced another event at all? Here we began and ended like telephones and sleet tangled between the pages of a rectangle, reason sweeps its way through to the end.
And so I went to the movies, finding in the dialogue an unspoken idiom something about singularity, before differentiation, a radiating substance not having time to sort itself out in the cold, the only floor to be known.

You couldn’t identify these particles from within, with forces of interest operating as emblems of remorse. Wade in the water children, motherless and bright eyes searching in vital animation circling modest horizons for signs of approaching life. Isn’t this the necessity you wished for? While beautiful trees of fruit were pulled up by your roots, an interesting condition of involvement, rara avis, the perfect thing you bring me sounds green voice, sounds narrateur.

Three months before spring, the snows of inscription lay heavy in the mountains. We hone the freezing blanket a bed of rime and splinter, cascading through distraction ice like fog, vague difference smothering the most difficult of seasons.

I want to remember what happens to you instinctively trace events in all of the directions bared to interpretation. Then I will know the naming every street will be renamed the crowds, the angle of light.

In the throwaway sensor staring out at the frozen pier, curious passage onto a white lake of ice, an indistinct passage, reflected atop the discarded lens, train shaken into station, sees me write these words to you.

After a while, once all the ships have landed, sad, said Johnny, slow and slow how a home to desperate nations must grow and head this way – it must be little ones weeping for days, empty pots on cold, cold coals, turns off the sensor, gets up and walks away.

A chord ties end to entrance doubling, troubling hand to self, its long line leaves well alone, new or old, shadow, mouth, word or name, a syndicator stood at my back door today while I whispered, “stay, go ’way.”
Do not look at the wineskin, but what is in it. A new wineskin may be cold, eye, heart full of well-aged stone, nightwine, whereas another hand has poured none at all. Would you say "a fragment is our whole" about Sarajevo's old Jewish cemetery without asking "what's been smashed by whom?" Like smoke above old gravestones, a virtual community "rises from the ground" to side with war. At a sward where many hovered, every social stone must think: what letters defended, what words ignored.

Urban graveyards, battle scenes, broken pencil points of history stick out like stained fumes and street snow smells. One eye weeps for the other, or else what advantage has this world from what we witness, who do not sleep but listen as if we were placed to see words, not just listen to them, to claim what our fragment only represents: Monday morning, laying in bed and thinking itself to know what it wakes? Or else Tuesday, nighttime, raining where we are, or Wednesday, devoted to biography, tracing ten journeys taken of which part I wrote my book in which, friend, you read; it's yours. Because in tears new literary form swims we feel like crying out: "It serves you right to suffer, write to be alone," O generation poured onto these pages.

From overflowing fountain into pitcher full, full pitcher to empty page, your word sounds like snapped cords silver, gold bowl shattered. Flow waters, flow to vespers, all your light, a deck of cards cut in slivers, mother and child drowned in the sand. Not in shadow, nor in light I want to foretell all that happened to you. Sweet reason isolate, crying as you walk, pour out both glasses and drink. Color of a deck of cards. Fingers snap until night's cord draws its blue track around us, but where shadow and light meet for example, under ground trod, someone walks with your name, a tale told from the teller. My father and uncle ploughed. Once life has approached and left, its emblematic particles stalk midday.
The white smoke of occasion
lifts itself over the air
and history traces back
through reasonable displays
of great affliction, holding
keys on a hook, knowing where
what he knows is served best, but

that isn’t what was said, which is the point, right?
The wet smoke of persuasion
deadpans a stock response, saws
the richly smoldering walls
where living in small towns with
great libraries opposes the backhanded
curse of “May you live in interesting times.”

I know, you’d rather live forever. Me too,
without misgiving, reinvigorated
in all the customs of air
that plague us in our nerve. Interpretation
inhabiting the long crest of location
in moments of ending that only come once,
attended by extension some other one

no one other came to meet.
Balancing between a sky full of emblems
and the ground, all hear all, the song’s remembered
of this present present’s past.
I’m not talking about you,
though no one else illuminates theaters
like us, whoever we are.

It was a unique moment,
one of an infinite stock.
“In each of sixteen markets
that we serve, Digital Direct can provide
over 100,000 different films,
direct to your Home Information Centre.” I plugged in the TV but nothing happened.

The last of June Cleaver’s kids?
Hey, they hit the ground running
smack dab into the brick wall of the 90s.
But at last summer’s Job Fair
there was talk about careers.
I distinctly remember!
Can you play “Temporary”? 

Sensations of self-recognition filter
through the sifting field of personalities
called “here.” Beneath the chatter
we are, after all, owners of argument
the peculiar distinction
for news and analysis
some, like many others, have
to know is have to be there.
But without looking, again
what happened to the details?
Product talks about product
is what they never call it.
Hit direct and indirect,
a message to the soldiers.
There are many stops between
dissimilar histories
where episodes have not bled similarly
so very many there are
but in sum adding up to
a common experience
people everywhere have had

shared between an awareness of memory
and an uneasy dream of a fretful sleep.
Experience includes you,
which is why it's hard to leave.
Themes of preferred relevance
manufacture marketing schemes, illusion
the most intangible influence of all

bargaining between retakes
of 10, 15 and 35 second spots.
I know what it feels like
looking closely at the grain
shorelines awash in the rain.
I have all the desire
that little money can buy.

An accurate picture of the inner world
finely sifted over seven hundred years
of plasticity, invention and pleasure
fell to nothing in a day.
As if every few minutes dreams began
again, sleep with its fall, its
sudden shudder unloosing.

Neither to turn away nor
endless to confront what pain
one eye weeps for the other
eye - all eyes repeat, organs
run hands against redundant
grain. Plain clashes in the brain
shake off mental chaff, dolor

of rites, gradually, the details of time.
Repetition equals change,
alternation of voice emerged as silence
flint glinting in the pavement
as, head down, she walks past the courtyards, buildings
where ice tore concrete stairways.
With gentleness, violence

peeling back a colorless layer of ash
and necessity, children
dig dimes from the melting ice
beneath the awkward parkbench
posture, comfortless Winter
cast of open pockets, halting resting where
we await out weather's change.

Hungry, unconquerable
I remember setting out
the moment my burdens came awake in me
dragging my gold watch along
the bottom of an ocean
rubbing my palm on cloud breasts
smiling as I leapt down elevator steps
into an atmosphere of trembling seconds
balanced like scissors on points
which human lips, bitten to blood, withholding
a carpet of torture spread
by captive sutures across
cities where elated we
ran, would have some day to make

in powerful animal grunts
citing names inside a song
and speaking another's words
in that person's own name. Remember tooth marks
not just tongue marks. The tongue marks
have changed, the way fingers change
in years of writing written,

enlarged in romantic grasp.
The self, same, that certainty
dissolves - with the same certainty -
into decontracted trembling, all matters
heading in all directions.
Work cannot be allowed to
vanish, for work measures time,

takes time expended and pours
into its hole unwritten
equations: Russian/English, Hebrew/Polish.
Steel and ice of sufficient
height to sketch in self-portrait's
meter mental being, whose
hands touch mountain, and politics - hands on throat.

Rolled out unknown in the hole, Kiki, eighteen
what if not human example, what if not tradition? what if now you
YOU move upstate and start having a good time
in the seasons, for all reasons?
Of course, should not life go on?
Is that life, complete? Eighteen?

Eighteen, no thirty million abandoned kids
in Brazil? Are we helpless?
It had been, it was, it is.
Is our social poem/condition a response?
Jasmine, jasper, water's paradisiac
sunken climb over darkened
heady, polysemic walls

filling up our seams as the
20th century gnaws itself in half,
a comic book of requisite consumption
frantically maintaining "civilization,"
speed and the shrinkage of lines.
We are the only ones here,
us and everybody else

on this imported lamp shade
distance, scales, seepage making
a full range of expression
forever more difficult
having reduced abundance
the limits of duration
irrelevant much longer
at an ever-changing rate
to uncover our footsteps. When the time came
to distinguish ourselves, we surpassed the view
that came with our mss, clearly nothing
before us was closing interpretation
serving as a mithridate
to protect us from relief.

Light has become a fixture here, impressions
of newsprint and sound, profile
gathering just enough visits to feel warmth
and then fixing on the rail
music, glaze and telephones
the clatter of rhythmic speech
far more comfortable the easier it is.

Elsewhere – in perspective – memory becomes
a preferred anterior, the leap of place
where one rooms or roams, leaving
unfortunate tenancy in the cities
to the shadows at your feet
asphalt road spreading, reeling
above ground far underneath
eyes, filament, discussion.
What we want when we wanted
something more than lip service
the heady systems that passion passes on
or being an interstitial company
against all persistent help.
Hands are patient, and will reinvent themselves
in the most spectacular ways, antipode
to antipode, 'till a slow slide to fashion
redefines what's left unmarked
and the useful conditions
lost or hidden in the grass
are prizes of no value
bringing fear and attraction
to left and right hand in turn
“kul wathad wadiamiro”
and through them to your own skin
or to a friend next to you, someone you love
who has been patient with your patience with her
“to each his own song of heart”
lined up oval extra large like unmarked eggs.

You shed splendor all at once
misery of horizons over the days
write it down, what happened died
while you spoke from memory
near the fire. From your notebooks,
convolute, inside weakness of memory
tell me something, convolute my own mind too–

We who have come to measure want things precise.
Waters rush through pebbles, encircled by friends
in public space. Fences are
even than its denizens
more run-down. Children lightly jump to their feet
unaffected by their games.
Great dome, fill with light, amuse us on and on.

What we remember seems authentic. What we
forget... well, that's forgotten.
Peace won't come with dull knifeblade
to absorb your eye, to cause
you to cease asking who you were when you were.
The state has armed these generations for peace.
Their desks circle our chambers.

Remember winter sunlight, harmless? Two birds
late, indistinct gripped the ledge
milky through the plastic sheet
taped o'er window to insulate my back porch.
Because they dig they find worms,
downy birds in Winter brush,
Eurydice captured in such singer's mouth

unto her death: good morning blues, I know what
you come for and what you say.
I saw you in the window
and I saw you down the way
in the alley, on the highway yesterday
your split lips spit gravel, hands grabbed for the curb
'til I took you in my arms

f’your new book I wrote the blurb
and, fool for wounded charms, ate your bloody glow.
What a funny way to talk.
One more such word & I’ll turn upon your world
chaos, void, scrambled letters, chairs in circles,
people all alone to tear
monotonous periscopes.
From a desk facing me, a man looks up. 
Give me your glass skin to use.
"Why have you ascended here?"
"To dot the i, dance on it
too—cross the t and twirl it!"
His thoughts, I see, make him grin.
"Long ago my house burned down
while my eyes were shut, and I couldn’t see it
so I no longer go home
at day’s end. Instead I simply shut my eyes
wherever I am. This act of removal
seems to do the trick. I sleep
in the house, on the hand, at sea, on the land.
Oh no, this is not enough."

Do you live in a house for pleasure only?
My house houses others too.
Do you tell me to build yet another house?
No one can build more than one.
I’ve known none, built even one.
Would I then command you two?
Deliver yourself to it.

It’s like this; if I’m to weep
I’ll do it in a place you cannot visit.
To weep before you would only confirm your
arrogance, your heedlessness.
It would confirm in your mind my needlessness.
Come with me, visit my house, my burned-down house.
I built it for you, and you died inside it.

In Hebron, patriarchs and matriarchs wake
and see their children slaughtered.
Stand at this riverbank of words. Say your name.
Exhort yourself to rise, rise!
Did you triumph in youth to fail in old age?
In Sarajevo, it’s hard to sleep. They shell
my graves, mortars lay all up and down my breast.

There’s little solace in the raising of hands
necessary as it is
the privilege to look away
may be the bitter ticket
I’m waiting for the train now
I’m scanning the horizon
for the perfect place to see.

Here are the fragments as I found them, among
enthusiastic features
are qualities of children and the condemned
whose attending morphemic alliances
and romantic attachments to detail
stand occupying focus
return these scraps to places
well known to them, the owning owners in an
integral cascade of years
my country is beautiful
we lived and lived, here always.
Our mothers did not birth us to fill the earth
early with the early dead
to regard all things as straw.
A continuing awareness of gunfire
though we never noticed it
or never seemed to notice
the bridge, now free of snipers
the language we are tracing
here where there's no risk of death
speech continues, and the ways we have remain.

Millenarianism
and in the distance, a dream.
In the thousandth year the sun shone all day
and all night. Wherever martyrs had died, or
saints prayed, angels would appear.
Birds gathered in the sky, and animals spoke.
It's common knowledge, I know it to be true.

To be standing in line, with the lime of lists
stilled in conversation, we are not consumed
understanding usefulness
in articulate manifest scarcity
as though we are consuming
in cork, floating on the earth
perfect among individuality

an orrery, and the world
the night's last night, admission
indulgence, and a blushing of the extreme
release you feel with the entrance slipping
past the arbor of your sight.
Theaters, then, and the calm
order that wraps us in arms

children breaking the surface
breathing inwardly, and carried in the stream.
I followed this far, but they'll be no further
complicity, or spoon-fed resettlement
with mounds of earth underfoot.
There is no one observing this fete, standing
in welcome at the door, calling out the names.

Autonomous, I've left out identity
areas smoldering in columns of chalk
afterhours radio
playing clarinet in a watery gloom.
What Chanel are you on? 5?
I have a photograph, a sequence of seas
falling headlong into the perfect waves of

a long desired method.
It's what your thought does to drive
the zone shouldering flowers
past their very own breath in the air.
The threads covering us were
made distanced, halfway between obscurity
and velocity, breaking rocks to sandstone

these building's airy soil.
The cities have embraced us
growing live among themselves
while policy rages in everyone else
I lock and bolt the doorway-bearing entrance
walk out at home into an
unheroic pedestrian vocation
transport, and occupying symbols for the
elegant detailing of necessary
reflections, teaming our biology with
valuable systems, in charge of all hungers
vending rackets with conceptions describing
the distant history of our conduits
for postage and delivery of relief.

Quickly I lick envelope, post this message
through closed door, open window
dotted rainy vector day
then slide my membranous pseudo-pod along
its limits awaiting injection’s knocking
at the door. Suburbs slide by
beneath my weight, and I fall.

I have had so little time
to consider your request
which at first I did not note
enthusiastically
or so the answer unrolled
falling from the brick wall recently painted
from which sighing turned away.

As if stepping out of doors
again everything spoke
as well you and I would talk
amid budded spikes – spring branch-
tracery of subcode stripped –
we’d have fell into easy side-by-side stride
who could not bear your loss now

would not now live without you
such words one reads not knowing
what they mean. I walked up from the beach to town
to our shared office. I began
to write down what I heard you say about me
the list grows long. The pages
fill and fall. For days I sat

on the sofa, remote control in my hand,
and turned our media to dust.
There was a red that meant to alert notice
another merely indicated the de-
vice was turned on, a third rose
or fell, slightly trailing a musical peak
or hush. And my pen was red

my pen was in pursuit of a heedless man
in whose hurried wake a swamp
had risen edging the town.
Muddy paths, weedy and scar-
et-edged, shapelessly mirrored
puddles, maplike yet placeless
each concealing him or else his cousin, or

he will not contest with you
his place (is) at the margin
looking onto depraved central concav’ties
and the columns, pediments
putti that had such meanings
as he supplements with such other meanings
as are forced on him to wish
uncertainties he has known
in preference wobbling into the pivot
as a slim woman or a slenderer man
whose elegant curvature
maintains the painted dome where
‘neath an image of angelic disarray
– Recoiling Fearful Woman,

Palms Pressed Against Your Temples,
Whose Hands Seem To Hide You From
Some Unwelcome New Presence, Rampant, Rapist
And The Scroll Slips From Your Lap,
Capital Overturned, Tumbles At Your Feet –
whose label reads “Judea”
he sits, rereading Midrash: *Lamentations*.

But there is no center no margin you say
as you spread to cover it,
beginning your description
by characterizing her position in
society and her large and gracious form
detailing her friends, her lover the dentist,
who “knew how not to appear,”

only then turning to speak
of individual things her character
affirms, and these too reveal,
in exception and in rule the strange half-light
half-life, shade edging across
features, as its line travels
the length of her living room

staining her long leg and the man’s mid-section
threatening to embarrass
his costume which, however finely made
and of whatever quality cut, must have
fit the young man he had been
the day it was basted to his mirrored form
better than the middle-aged man he now was.

Not that she cared for all that.
She did not. To be near him
in what was left of their lives
sufficed, as it did him too.
He found his books in her attic, rememb’ring
the evening he thought: “Tomorrow too late,
start earning your memories.”

It’s reached past a keen veil
and loosed with anvil and twine
the sweeping, bereft seconds
seam’s unspoken consequence
shearing the ticking sound of
counsels in battens and sheets
filling a late fever with a puzzling clue.

The mereness of irony doesn’t weight, much
dependent on what you mean,
or did you, here…. We went back to the hotel,
I followed her into a dream, the drama
which we’d enunciated without thought, other
than everything entailed
in everything else we’d won, peopled by ghosts.
spectacles in alleys, besides
living inside, motion of the residue
astride in likely buildings, handles a warm
prisoner, engineer after the design.
You can't put your hand through nothing
I breathed the cool, white air
(in places out of practice)

is everything I can't hold
and all that's left without it
or have I said that before?
The sum, declared at borders
perhaps what's fully cogent
unfamiliar-remembered, doing what I
think I know, doing what

you and together, close between the fine lines
in her small shadows, drifted and rekindled.
I've done with what I'm doing
as any craft can, I can
and varieties to go on, to take it
a sudden leap from the cold
emersion couldn't loose such a precious thing

a persistent gain in the fostered passion.
But I've too many to plan
now, too many to repeat
any lack of luster because of a brow,
or unhinged Übermensch flapping the breeze.
"You're almost there," the character said. "There where?"
which I suppose is the right answer, though.

The visitors came and stayed, then went away
straying hours in the clover. In a few days
disarming in their sounding
shouldering the hurt (too easy,
really). There's no point to it, a shell
dropped from the barest mold of realism.
Sometimes the contract has its way with you, eyes

the splintering, rapidly reduced background
you'll never be the same, continue on
unaffected. Well, it's just a mystery
something we can imagine
like fossil invertebrates
pull up some beach my lover, and together
we'll squander our life in sand.

Unfocusing the risks, and other than this
our heretical flag the day was married,
completing one flame between
you, swerving past a candle.
Ever else, collapsed in the right
situation to aspire, what happens
what's missing, tell me how it is you don't know

(with a turn, a kit of gloves)
it's a prior condition
clearly, where else could it be?
Climbing a cynical ridge
the letters always add up
(a different sort of scrabble)
falling, drinking in the air
wherever you desire
we belong, wherever you
belong, wherever desire belongs to
you. The present is the perfect rebuttal
and is the easiest to apply. The past
is completed before the plaster has dried;
paddle up to the analogy and go

participant, expatriate, retreating
unconditional, express
how beautiful the shade is
and the wall, how beautiful
drawn on the agenda in declination
touching palms, psalms, the lasting
content of the finest plumbs

each vine leaf, cupping immensity of light
explosion of display, locating children
in band music, colonial officials
giggling, resilient sadness,
retired sailors, prostitutes,
thumbs-up people of vast enthusiasm’s
cruelty cut stone-rope style.

With this thought in mind she falls
easily to her haunches, opens her hand.
Three fossil shells tumble out
onto the thin cloth weighted
to the sidewalk with stones. The cloth’s corners turn
under the stones. Where are you from?
she asks me; sand, a few grains, clinging to her palms.

From a hotel room where curtained life borrows
a few pennies, each namesake
trying as the drama of the trauma dream
from where aging men, slight through
shoulders and hands, slackly thick
at hip and foot, knock’em back
to cover lunch and shoe shine,

from where he’ll wait out brightness
’til dusk covers squares with shadows & people.
From where she sits, slim, stylish,
sensuous, old. Hand on leg, eyes omnivore,
fingers ringless, her shadowed agenda still
untended, she remembers:
days, years, decades pass – lifetimes.

When the poet died, in nineteen thirty five
she’d have been no more than ten.
All the same, they might have met,
having both been born into good families.
She’d have held her breath, drinking
her glass of summer juice, as
he, at her side, inhaled her spirit essence,
really pretended that what was real was real,
painted on us by a hand
in hiding, something we feel
may be expressed, but no, we only expressed
your feeling, the square empty,
the light wind lifting yesterday’s newspapers.
Thinking we were alone while
pretending reality,
you surrounded us. I am happy enough
seated in the very spot
where jagged swath, broken glass,
chair legs spread to hold my weight.
The waiter pauses, smiling
at the patrons’ odd requests.

In these still pictures that lead me through your life
I follow my own as well,
pale and obsessed mad drawings
you’ve returned; however slightly I knew you
gave me such satisfaction
very like the fellowship one senses with
the unknown, the dead, the past –

silent stentors, perfect standards bent to be
linear, available
to guide you into quantities: root and rose
waiting for wit to replace logic with luck,
sweet time and light and stillness bubbling with work
as if to dance on it, as if it’s pavement
so much at least we expect from a mirror,

a semblance of thought, again the waiter paused;
a troupe of players impersonating twins,
large-grown children fall’n in love,
what used to be said of him: he had no heart,
his sinew was really bone.
No one knew what to tell him.
In darkness his room enlarged.

Volunteers, and one conscripted to the earth,
“wherever it is you stand,
between shadows, remote, dreamed on by someone,”
your answering voice is of
a master who appeared in me suddenly,
as if a plant, admiring the too-turned earth,
had begun to grow from it.

No ray, no water, no outline, no desire
slowly pulls road from shoulders
but a yellow line, big stones.
Accidents uncaptured in their distant speed
chorus and chorus; we lean over the plant
to listen, to heed. “Unfurl,”
flower says. And its root dives.

A periodic codex
a parcel of air, partial
divides, divers alley ways
for whom the moon’s woo, wounds for
substitution. I’ve fallen, seeing you; this,
mistress, and how you treat me so bawdily...
the holding of a foreground

in the lap of luxury
tangential cradle rocking
the mocking of respective
grief, just as long as its hands pass through into
meaning. Something, anything.
Outside, another invasion mounts the sea.
The cooling world, necrose
making this an effort of necromancy, collaboration... a sense of betrayal? cholera of the ascending century's vague, incremental wasting. One day her shaved head, one day the day you must give her up a single hour, one companion, one chance.

It's there in the morning. It's very quiet. Something is hurting someone, an inscription an overwhelming shudder when too much is not enough a profiting, void, a dance AIDS, a plague also of the politic in heaving over again

the midden smell of profit. Earning, making a way within a lattice, a sea of green comforting, suturing, surfing on the risks self-replicating sanctions of criminality makes it easier exempting life, well, you know

what it is to be persuaded to participate, endure, reflect and pleasantly resolve to feel less fear under any circumstances, at any expense. Julio y Septiembre whose months these are, to that does this year belong in its heavy, oiled rags.

I'm in love with a woman who holds the night between two pale fingers fixing the most exact of retributions like the loss of a first born or another early death it happens every day, happens only once setting out only to arrive, like the face

that she fails to describe as difficult as nacre, as varied and beautiful. It is here, at this point, that we set to work cabling ahead to the next town, sketching out an itinerant destination of distraction, understood habit, preference

for sharpness, delight, release. See, the shadows that fall through the cracks below. Falling, drinking, falling, in the space between us, them, the crowded grasses the art of witnessing, after all we've done this is the tail of a trail, and so the trail of a trellis.

The recent drug-sweeps in Berkeley, rounding up many dozens of people, is something not opposed by the Left of the Bay Area. Happening within People's Park, where for years the police have routinely told street dealers “take it to the Park, or else we'll bust your ass” giving, then, good reason for drug sweeps and, then,
an incremental increase in the martial command of society.
Anything for the War on (some) Drugs, anything at all.
A piece of poison, and then a piece of pie.
It sounds like I'm saying *martial command*, huh...
and maybe that's more to the point, aliens.

But I can't excise specific samples of human behavior on a whim, no matter how good an argument could be made for it.
It sounds like a nursery rhyme.
First a Piece of Poison, and
Then a Piece of Pie! First a Piece of Poison, and Then a Piece of Pie-ie!

The king of chance walked uphill heading for my residence.
I stood, his eye upon me, amid a thousand shadows of days better than a thousand other days
a stranger in my pursuit, asking, ready to receive.

What did we consider? What leaves us unthought?
Buildings cut against a sky, their fanciful, plastic-light-filled, red-lettered signs call for action, call for response, a circuit backed up,
an ungrounded transformer lightly buzzing, this we have left for undone

throwing its slight heat over
the knot of people gathered in a basement around a shellac-odorred warm spot, alternately silent and absorbed a point where, unavailing, public boundaries prevail over silent partners that give to rebound.

"At the long desk's shapely arch he sits in his hopeless march.
He looks out the window; he sees in the park what thought's mirror shaped as dark bushes, in their final lurch dislodging a pair at lark.
Such wings do, to make their mark."

"The edge of the platform glows just before a train arrives. We range behind lighted dots, single-routed, silent, many destinationed, riding in its one track as purposeful paralyzed as a person filled up with artificial light & questions."

Hours you spend writing such words will return as years in heaven, every year a stranger come to dominate, afflict subjugate you. Yet, the hours you spend writing these words will return as years in heaven where a pinpoint sky of stars will melt your glass.
an incremental increase in the martial command of society. Anything for the War on (some) Drugs, anything at all. A piece of poison, and then a piece of pie. It sounds like I’m saying martian command, huh... and maybe that’s more to the point, aliens.

But I can’t excise specific samples of human behavior on a whim, no matter how good an argument could be made for it. It sounds like a nursery rhyme. First a Piece of Poison, and Then a Piece of Pie! First a Piece of Poison, and Then a Piece of Pie-ie!

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What did we consider? What leaves us unthought? Buildings cut against a sky, their fanciful, plastic-light-filled, red-lettered signs call for action, call for response, a circuit backed up, an ungrounded transformer lightly buzzing, this we have left for undone

throwing its slight heat over the knot of people gathered in a basement around a shellac-odied warm spot, alternately silent and absorbed a point where, unavailing, public boundaries prevail over silent partners that give to rebound.

“At the long desk’s shapely arch he sits in his hopeless march. He looks out the window; he sees in the park what thought’s mirror shaped as dark bushes, in their final lurch dislodging a pair at lark. Such wings do, to make their mark.”

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Hours you spend writing such words will return as years in heaven, every year a stranger come to dominate, afflict subjugate you. Yet, the hours you spend writing these words will return as years in heaven where a pinpoint sky of stars will melt your glass.
If the year you were born, surrounded by fire and blood and death, sent you on to this one, to this friendship with the sky you understand like a child beneath the dining room table who sees the table legs and his parents' legs, who are supporting it all,

then you wear the outer edge of our exile, where state and space merge as one hundred twenty cycle hum in a basement transformer, where time strums in disjunct sign, and you look out the small window at these few spirits clothed in the bodies of your dead friends.

"Those who are left must keep all we left to achieve same ends in borrowed light looking out small windows at small stars they borrow from space around them, like an army marching in sequence, not en masse, whose glory is a rented aureole," one stops to say.

"Wrapped the stash in camel packs buried it near mailboxes with vid-dots and ray alarms to clue me in when the porous reed will sing like a human snail, lips sneaking up on me no, on you, like a verb ending sneakily changing to fit round my neck," he continues.

"Gladly they kill family with poverty
serial ignorance works a minim wage
the mind makes its menu like squid is deep-fried
all these bluff folks out to lunch
on each other do not require forces of authority to sing past their borders. Under arrest, they lay dreaming."

"Sinew too must intention
be," I reply to that friend, for I loved him while alive, and no less now he's left our shade for heav'n-sun's, malleable timelong home.
"Remember your mechanics, sinew to bone," he laughs at me; "tense your muscles, lift and give."

I'll look and find, then and there my thoughts, and on my cassock with a furthering of sight, is this what it is?, revers in the fading, growing light.
The concern demanded, deep as the mountains where you look up and out, rises seeming so diffident, but the rock at your feet, each one there beneath you in the dust, in the mountain's stare in the longing you've satisfied, breaking the streams of catastrophe by building them.
I know what's troubling you.
What you see is what you got.
Or not. Either way you're screwed.
Many people obsess about their status, a habitat of smiling, facile graces and alliances, servitude and assets that are called upon, and then provided for. But this is ordinary; it’s the effect’s scale that’s critical. Do I owe you, say, a share of my dinner or shares in the interest accruing on Latin America’s zillion dollar debt? Machine gun fire is so very final, that it pays to be alert. But here’s how to ace the con: refuse to look where you are expected to. No adjustment of your set is possible.

You enter, and this integrates distinctions shifting and agreeable beneath a dome, a crowned hall the air rising about you awakening without memory, lucid absorption of irreconcilable states multiple but unique singletons assuring the duration of fleeting continuance. So I walked back to the truck, put my hand on the chromed handle catapulting me into the next town, past the afternoon, then the humming in my eyes and another screen door slams asleep, in the paradox.

Here in country, action is the other’s job, to sit and stare without direction being the height of fancy. No more vicious club joins us with our sisters and sons. What’s it about us ‘merkins? Do we have oat straw in our veins, easily swept in whatever direction the wind blows?

I walked over the Golden Gate late last night, from San Francisco to Marin, over the deep gorge cut in the rock of Nova Albion by the erosion of the Sacramento river long before the oceans rose to fill the bay. The moon was bright, the cliffs were bright, and the sky...

A close look at Haiti, and you’ll find a poignant history of the real results of Imperial Attentions, a country whose original population was crushed, now blood-drained and beyond hope anything, even a US invasion, is better. First a piece of poison, and then.

Either the invasion is morally just, or the US has strategic interests; the invasions will come, and the grateful people will be liberated, to resume their work as slave labor for transnational companies, death to death to death to death, Clinton’s status will be raised...
“Oh, do not forsake me, my indolent friends
hear my song of imperative, and the
absurd, uncriticised rightness of brute force,
used because the power of brute force destroys.”
Lenny Bruce and Phill Ochs were hounded to their
graves for saying these things. Now? No problem, write
whatever the fuck you want.

They’re not afraid of words, not words. Rather, it’s
effectiveness which bridles their ire. So,
write whatever you want. You’re safe as long as
what you write has no effect. ’Tis true. Spicer
is right. No one listens to poetry.
Well, not no one exactly…
I’m here, I guess. Or is it you? I don’t know.

Walk no freedom only daze to turn within?
Climbing whiter in heads, but they don’t see you
akimbo my courtyard wall
oh lovely friend to all world
my beloved friendly world
I walk arm in arm with your animal self
thru wall and window, both square.

Must be breath, made to wander,
that don’t want to save the world.
Yet when a hot breath of mime
left it strayed among us, heard
“please don’t squeeze me; I don’t want to be no pearl!”
your voice, as if still here you’d
come to calculate the end: kiss all the girls,
look down grimly at your book.
In a possible geometry our gazes
still meet though we look apart,
where leaves fall into unnoticed embraces
animate facts of hair, skinned
symphony of European rights of man
mouth closed, glumly chewing gum.

What if it were different,
square with edges trimmed away?
A tracery of indications falling
from your ears, decorated
intentions, chamber music
gone to silence. Courtyard from a shadowed room
colonnades too white to see.

The servant speaks for the masses, his father
too bore only slaves. Just slaves.
The poet notes a gauzy imperium
love’s narcissism, bookshelves in lit alcove
indicted in each and every volume
abandoned in scenes she writes, even those where
the god ascends our senses.

Taking and striking, she is bent to her notes.
Like patient minds, they descend,
they listen to fruit tree trunk
strain to balance laden head.
Earlier, we’d salted the sea with our tears
now we chalk out our ritual of virtue
squatting on the pavement, eyelids falling closed.
The election is a room.  
The candidate a glaring lamp, dollar watts.  
Closed door, the public is trapped.  
A revolution is a switch on a wall  
that must be there before e'er  
it can be thrown. An air of welcome darkness  
a magic touch do not touch.

Human brilliance flooding me from each his word  
I hear my friend say "I must be lost somewhere"  
he cannot find solitude, always alone  
ever welcome, something he has inside him  
an epoxy drilled, a shaft  
a head, a grip, gravity  
at center, the work you do.

The larger the desk, the smaller the circle  
of whom I will say, these lives  
show me how community and person fit.  
Are a few such friends (ex-friends?)  
sufficient, for whom form is a human right  
and not just a metaphor?  
An abandonment memory will prevent?

Who is the character of the present:  
the tall, bullet-headed security guard  
at the metal detector in the hallway  
of the darkened national library floor  
swearing that he's used to it?  
Dreaming of table saw models, which to buy?  
Or I? Is it you and I?

How hopeful the new entrant  
scanned the room to find his place.  
How thoughtful the new desks sat  
each a shackled sphere of spheres.  
Oh he feels himself in decline now, no doubt.  
Can't think of his words, can't find  
streetcorner crossings no more.

A body of water looks like a cupped hand.  
A hand flat down is the dust.  
In my heart I still hear Jackie Wilson sing  
"The ocean is the ocean; a tree's a tree.  
'I' wants 'you' to be with 'we.'"  
Inside of his fervid thoughts,  
one more icon dies each day.

If so, teach me how to guard  
our silence from an alien ear, how keep  
silent in moan and shout: "Maybe you are blue,  
but you don't mind, 'cause you know way down the line  
you'll talk out time's ineluctable decrease  
sow the seed, your days will cease."

Which is "We," not "Jackie," see?

The personal is an interpretation,  
and interpretations are inherently  
enriched by their horizons  
limited by their reliefs  
lines of pockets at the borders, cadences  
of the past lived in its presentary state.  
I only now know what I knew then, this place,
occupied entirely by attention. Ignore alien orders. Which shouldn’t be so hard, considering we’re among a self-created taxonomy we of the great metal rose that sings birds, only we forgot they are birds that grasp, and never knowing the weight of it

or on the page, as certain as the colors of the sky that will touch you in a handful of water. So why refuse the face of another’s dream, why conflate the sated, full in every world while moving through the traffic (here’s your hat what’s your hurry?!)

The finest designs are the most obvious the coupled ladder, the armor that greets us relatively elevated, and muttered. What are you waiting for, anyway? Your mind? I’m not familiar with who you refer to, who listens. I’m not yet sure where to go, but it’s a great place to visit.

All day and all night the river flows through the valley, never growing tired of its course. Is this considered failure? Gaols and chattel, the fetid trains through wheat fields past which there can be no poem written, again and again the final reasons, the final discourse, the final final last and only chance to ride to the top of the spheres only knowbody told you, you were expected to know, relied upon given credit for the native faculties necessary for success, the all-shiny looming glittery above. While summer fits in the cracks and the places underfoot above flicker with brief vacations from their own perfect worlds, sunning the blue-sky waters with threads of imagination, also more visceral circumstances, a cultural Ebola, a level four crash and bleed out, the social equivalence of exsanguination Kitum cave and the migration of Marburg first contact, and libraries of libraries filled with reasonable doubt. We who must suffer beg your forgiveness, for having the need to bleed when you cut us.

We who must suffer ask your indulgence, for breathing the air which we need to sustain us. Where else should we begin? If it’s not broken, you’re not trying hard enough the binary test of all possible worlds the countervailing balance.
Cute trick: freed of all responsibility,
while obtaining maximum benefit from
a sinecure aura of concern, leave the
debri behind for the foreigners, the frail
who're free then to pursue whatever they want.
Survival's where there's so much to wish for, on
the level playing field

of 21st century economics.
It's not my fault that you're empty inside. You'll
just have to live with it. Which, if recognized
has the effect of reinventing the field
reentering the world at cross-purposes
through the whole of material and content
even if only to just stand there, rolling

a needle down a silk thread
gonna leave this, lonesome place....
It's the afternoon charge, to lead your way back
to the steps, and watch the sun
filter through the trees, collegiality
is all the pay off you'll need
but you're not aware of that.

Perhaps if I take your hand you'll understand
and guide the point of your pen-flow, its rapt inattention
- even empty space - resounds with a way out.
So I would enarm you, friend
with uncertain attentions, and my ladder
seek ramparts to lean against, your wall to climb.

The birds' racketing shout in the flaming trees;
working out for their imminent take-off south,
unending experiments,
patterns to match, patterns create,
while you gaze upwards, watching
from within your Schubertian sun-glassed eyes,
eager shudders fill your touch.

Clouds have a jerky waltzing edge-move today
immortal revolutions
say, whose unfading enthusiasm for change
moving in admiration
even one who lived after death; Victor Serge
obliquely curving, as arms move to embrace
love of red, love of shadow

tear at flesh: this is not interpretation.
My hand slides behind the page
and turns, leans on the table,
hands in pockets, wearing a green jacket zipped
to the top, his jeans turned in large folded cuffs
jaw muscles flexing unconscious I believe
he grasps his worn-in-out briefcase full of notes

quitting the library for other front lines.
Must we have both careless and careful models
a helpless shaking hammer
ethnicity rejected
in favor of an elective adventure
deep into the (concept of) wilderness-
extruded freezed food-foam, and
write till earth is but a name,  
as John Clare put it? In a  
path that can be changed, the past  
chained to evident unspeakable versions  
of a better world we carry 'til we drop,  
dissatisfied with others’ efforts, our own  
allowed to drop from their bough.

Perhaps in an emblem of preparation,  
when visitors arrive, vague, dense as shadows,  
I set my household to preparing their meal.  
This shows me ready for them.  
But I, your brother, am uncovenanted;  
when they visit me, it’s all I can do to  
bake a few unleavened cakes.

Ebony, silver, reed, tongue, *a capella*  
flangeless, bored through, engineered  
with no entering angles,  
and when I hand it to you  
and there is nothing for you to do with it  
is this considered success?  
We must find reason again.

How many streams have flowed into my cupped palms  
refreshing dark sky lights clouds  
if any one has known such turned circuits  
empty kettle drum resounding in the field  
who has set up to strike it?  
Prismatic, refractive smudge  
happy, if only empty.

“Enslaved to your treasury,  
marked return once again to unknown sender,  
we contrived to grow long a single blue hair.  
From all our mastered studies  
this only did we retain:  
reach forward with your hand, and bend at the waist.  
Flex knees a lot or little – it all depends.”

Surely, what has been lost can also be found.  
Can be made never yet to appear  
expatriate or exile?  
Both outer and inner style  
merge but not until emerged  
a weighed down swaying as of autumn bird/branch  
can one equate one’s difficulty with pain.

There we lie dreaming in trees  
clear our throats repeatedly  
while the mail, wrapped in vinyl  
sings low, a song of discards  
rising in an instant crush  
to claim our inattention.  
We wonder when to take off.

Whatever else the returns,  
arriving pointblank and shredded in the mud  
a watery field can’t help  
but foster regret, at least  
in those who tear the blue-green  
riparian ribbons from  
the rapidly descended, warm steel shell.
Here we are and shall remain
after a time, for awhile.
Everything survives its end:
TV shows, cigarette filters, passionate
features bumping against the wet breath of morn,
an old cracked tea pot, some cabbage leaves, and the
odd tin of jam that’s long ago been emptied

these detachments of silence
bringing us to our senses.
Don’t take it so seriously, the way to
ruin a moment. Countlessly,
our ears will do the measuring even when
our fingers can’t. Pattern, coherence, design
struggle to violate the lack of control

talismans, antivirals, and fetishes
work as well as anything, but differently.
You can’t fight a virus like the evil eye,
and the skills needed to survive and sustain
a slow role in a Carolinian lake
haven’t yet been discovered. How easy the
antigen. An imaginary black man

is a current favorite.
Irish, Jew, Gay, Socialist
will do in other contexts.
Caution: may cause drowsiness.
Use only as directed.
If you still scream out after you know that there’s
nothing to fear, does the stick become a snake?

Does the snake become a tear?
As music deploys itself, running into
the airless air, the sterile ground, a dark night
carves a ditch in the earth, and
in a rush of confidence
poors down the blood of a ram,
shades in the form of mirrors
mirrors in the form of fears
trying to cure a hangnail
by cutting off someone’s hand
stop the tide from advancing
absolute certainty, like
the unrecognized belief
in an impossible world.

It’s quaint, I suppose, until they drop by
to inform you that you don’t ... quite ... have it ... right.
A solution to the problem: policies.
Section 1, Paragraph 5:
“Thes clemly dimpt resam, arl musen aps grends.”
You’ll want to cede... good for country... lots’a cash...
preborn family values ... more guns ... lock ‘em up.

Ritually kissed on both cheeks,
resistance, the painted lips
falling away from the faces
the multi-lingual screams, like a flag that waves
the frightened, decaying splendor around us
where we still, somehow, construct
the fragrant, fertile streams of language and youth
never forgetting, in the new century
who is the hunter, and who is the hunted;
where the fear is drawn, and whose picture it is;
who are spoken with, and who are spoken to;
whose life rises, and whose life falls to the floor;
what is acceptable, and who accepts it;
who can hear, and who listens as though speaking.

And there’s the insurmountable irony...
after taking everything
to never have it, empty as a cracked shell
try and figure that one, huh.
The cracks become avenues, the avenues
become worlds, whose impact can be surmised
from the distant echoes of carpet bombing
and explosive denials
the natural born illegal aliens
designed to destroy vision,
memory, understanding, history, and
any other context-driven antidote.
Well, we know what we want, right?
And we know how to get it.

One day written, next day sealed.
Eventually I turn my face away
while history rolls up and over my heels
like fictional hands closing
on a victim who’s found marginal escape,
lies crushed, progeny and mate
in tears. Under blue light, laughs.

Only a few weeks before he disappeared
he spent time classifying
beautiful morning of erect denial
evening paw licks the sky.
In an hour I’ll do something
to disturb, even overturn, every
quotidian density.

In which case, to what place will he be removed?
There are four themes in our work
pieces relentlessly moved from the puzzle
that looking up from one’s desk
are what we see: each other
there to describe as oneself
startlingly come upon, helplessly welded
to insight, banality and strict habits
of research undertaken without knowing
how each would arrive, constant
faithful to the point that must
be made, while not tripping on
footprints that were our previous present tense.
Avoidance too do we clasp.

Many and wonderful are her thoughts of us,
painting on canvas distance
walking through the room where we sit together
to break our Nikons into
symbolism to flirt with
fake icons, hardened as if
pain nameless in needed joints.
The time she came from all things
were allowed, that are not now.
Wars fought in chilly retrospect or mental
time's alien devotion.
Standing by my window on a cloudy day
I see a self shout aloud.
I wonder where she is, where is she going?

her arms full of blues stanzas,
propelled enclosures, collected not dispersed?
Is this what we have become,
our products visible, next to each other
in some meaningless way? Do
you sense yourself fall toward
the footnotes, where iconoclasts meet again?

Fingers press a leave in Rome
and in Jerusalem teeth fall out, flowers
wither, a great debt is built,
a snake feels outdone again
and man and woman lean outward, maintaining
their arch in space, as it leads
to an open silent place

where you and I get results,
get to know each other. Cigarettes vanish
from the ashtray, sucked down by
righteousness. Like physical
memory or a mirror
common sense forces reach you
as facts from which you must fly.

What is there to perfect other than yourself,
arranging the objects on
your desk or in your room — yet,
they vanish, new ones appear
to be dusted between more pressing projects.
Look, the book slides into a spot on the shelf.
Or must I find you instead

fallen among my intentions like rubble
or an hourglass that keeps asking to be turned,
a mental geometry
where ev'ry location is a border too?
Between one person and another figures
a third witness approaching
to remind us when the future arrives as

words spoken by someone else
what sympathies ruled the hunt
what we heard in confidence, and soon forgot
whose tongue turned then, or was stopped,
words slurred, gait canted, spirit spinning awry,
that it's not our life to rise
nor ours to fall. Not to listen. Not to speak.

Estrin's right: Rome is a Mobile Home, touring
the centuries. Go ask the Taínos, who
greeted Columbo that fine and fettle day.
But what were you thinking of?
Did you think I'd just disappear?
No, my correspondent. Is is what it is,
and I wouldn't deny that.
I'm just resting, hoping to remember it. It's raining again. I guess it's been a year.
It's so cold here, hard and hungry, thin, bitter no bounty too perfect to go unnoticed.
We only survive by the thinnest of threads. "Oh, I want to live so bad," he said, with the mountain exploding behind.

Then after the fire, sweet the rain washes it away. Simple, isn't it? Seeing you, the glimmer washed inside, the rain enveloping me cannot reflect it at all.
To give, things we are given are never separated. So how can we fear to fear? Or misplace what we've been living? So after the fire love, warm ourselves in the hollows the ashes that we have filled after time, and the pleasures here, alight where we are now.

Each loss is an object, like Coastanoan basket craft. For eons renowned for their skill and beauty, only three examples remain the art gone with the people. I have so many questions. When we broke in exhaustion he toasted "To Renewal!"

holding his hand above him.
Where do mosquito fish go in the winter? What evidence exists, of things which no one alive knows anything of? If I own a basket, what do I possess? I heard you read in a store filled with dead things, but that's ok, not your fault.

I can't exempt myself from my own critique, anymore than I can free myself from the corporate spinning sweatshops and starvation assembly units. I mean, I shop in that Supermarket to the World write with power supplied by PG & E pay taxes for death squads in Guatemala.

I can offer no adequate exclusions; we all live with the same lie, breathe in the same atmosphere. So it becomes a question of participation and resistance, or simply participation. I most heartily recommend the former.

I needn't explain why, yes? Disaffection is a most terrible act. It warms the arthropodan gels of the cool, chilled monster inside us all. Scissors, paper, rock... measuring the castles where we build sand, infernos fired the heat of fire
scarcity built with style
built to last, separating out the lumpen.
At night, when we dream, what time do we dream in?
The future? The past is still here, the present
is always getting away.
Maybe we dream in all three,
coming together in sleep.

It’s all part, even the antithetical
though what’s not has to play too,
making it and being there.
Never, I couldn’t or wouldn’t regret it
immense, white nights by the lakes
mesmerizing stream, speaking
about something to be dreamed.

Is the world still glowing?
Is the night still making rounds?
Is something still pushing up ahead of us,
whittling out the unimaginable?
I sit here and sip my tea
the most ordinary act I can think of,
moon spinning ‘round my body.

Although what’s not must play too
(flipping pages of urgent warnings & dire
predictions – excellent advice that arrives
too late to be of use), the
waves crashing around our feet will not let us
stand at any shore, beyond where dead things suck
watered bubbles through the sand.

Turn and turn it; everything is in it.
Bridge made of cracked glass whose edge
defies you to cross. Winter,
copying in your notebook
the recipe for a color long unseen
amid objects glinting on your desk. Yet, know:
its color may still appear.

Like participation, perhaps resistance
has been forced upon us too.
A double imperial eagle, painted
on the synagogue ceiling
at Hodorov in seventeen sixty four,
nods to power. The hare caught
in its talons pictures power’s consequence.

Germans burnt down Hodorov’s
old synagogue to the ground;
did the hare escape? A hare
draped o’er the hunter’s shoulder, yet Esau was
denied his patrimony,
slumped before the fire and died.
Hare and hunting dog alike, eaten by hawks.

Strange instruments have pieced us
together in an arduous, cursory
course – absent sensoria
that listen in on an unending escape.
Blood in ears, we hear a sound,
we pause. Bounding through grass, we
perfect our misplaced bounty.
It's been heard so many times, so many ways... ok we'll say it then in this way. Its only been a hundred and fifty years or so ago a period of time that will in fact pass again I'm sure, in some manner of speaking. Somebody will be reading something somewhere and that's saying something, no?

Here, things continue to slip back together though in a different configuration. I want to be like a TV character, though I haven't given it a lot of thought. I fall in love in my sleep with women I know, but know I'll never meet.

With a sound intelligence, and the right environment you can survive anything yeah right, bub. Wanna buy a bridge, between here and there perhaps? I wonder what the fare is in probabilities, one's capacity of survival, in the mind.

I found an empty bag at my door, a gift of myself, an accident a movement of my body picking it up, finding what I'd never lost. It seems reasonable to wonder about the speaker, if you ask me present thought, future hearer somewhere a thought between them.

Absence Sensorium

We still drink our wine here, and for good reason or drank it, I can't keep it straight anymore who is speaking what to whom. I'm not coppping out; I'd really like some mail through the pulsating gasses of this screen, or maybe we already are.

“There” was exile; air was cool, but lay outside the walls, an instant revived not by, nor in, memory, not certainty but plain luck that lets us speak. An aberrant warmth has fooled the buds, teased them out onto tree branches; now they must die. Crocus that pushed through last week’s softened ground this week’s cold withers. We too, constant enough to say our goodbyes without knowing whom we touch or what future, uprooted and broken, will calm the greedy arrogance of our gene pool, we pull tree from ground and put pencil to page. We crush the arrogant kingdom in our days,

a shopping cart world, beneath a duct tape sky. Hopelessly in love forever and always we’ve never had much resistance to crushing except in aggregate, already between the two of them, soft and hard and then in uninterrupted whispering displacing the binary, or including
them. We’ve given our goodbyes.
At some point, the screen goes blank
absence waxing a discussion, the new moon
here, patiently somewhere else, or just waiting.
I take a breath by my own intervention,
and then forget, continue.
I didn’t know where that was

until, handing it to you,
I decided to tell the simple truth
& instantly fell silent,
a voice swelling in broken regular song.
Do you think “something went wrong”
or right? Just one way to write,
in ink powdered of pounded or borrowed bones.

Daniel Davidson died September 7 1996.

Absence Sensorium is dedicated to his memory.
Potes & Poets Press also publishes A.BACUS, a single-author newsletter, eight times a year; a series of Limited Editions, called Extras; and, has some back issues of its earlier chapbook series.

Please write to us at:
Potes & Poets Press Inc
181 Edgemont Avenue
Elmwood CT 06110-1005
for a complete catalogue and ordering information.
In an e-mail ether Absence Sensorium passed between its 3000-mile-apart progenitors. Its renaissance silvas, 7-line stanzas whose lines are 7 or 11 syllables, enjamb a quantitative imperfect paradise of attention, deeply traditional but wearing the indelible emblem of the damaged human present.

From the authors' distance and from the silent range of the medium, the poem gained its scope. No subject is foreign to AS; it does not disdain to hold the world in judgement.

— David Thomas Son-El

Tom Mandel and Daniel Davidson have done what two poets are not supposed to be able to do: they have jointly written a great long poem that is seamless, where you cannot tell where one leaves off and the other takes up. The whole is much more than the sum of the parts. Two enormous poetic talents and two richly imaginative perspectives on two lives combine to make a single magnificent poem, one that "holds the night between two pale fingers."

— George Lakoff