

Many Moons to Mythville

The Collected Road Poems of

Douglas McDaniel

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By Douglas McDaniel

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For Emily and Danica and all of the years I missed

Telluride Sang Rael

Pedestrian Blues

Three miles from Costdale
Half a mile from home
Got everything but the girl
I guess, and, of course,
that's not enough

I'm three miles from Costdale,
half a mile from home
Got a coat, a hat & vest,
Gonna test the West,
a road that's rough, I guess

Forty four on Indian School,
Forty six on Highway 101
All the while time's clicking
on my heels wondering:
What would running water do?

I'm fifteen-hundred miles
from Costdale, Arizona,
but a hundred miles of gas
will do. Gonna do what lasts,
the past is past: Ninety more
miles will do

Clipper Ship

Overlooking a seawall
cracked silly open by
a storm with ninety
mile per hour winds,
the fourth one in forty days,
eighty nights

I crawled on the floor
covered with newspaper
sports, scores and more,
scrambled for my glasses,
when the pressure dropped

I gasped for air, a coal mine
canary who could breathe
the bubbles of God's
invisible clipper ship,
colliding

Deadlines

And when you hear
the sucking sounds
And fear the rain
between your coats
Go on out, row your boats

The pirate of porn walks
the land, regretting, since
he can't see his spyglass
he's peering through,
can't see you, combing
your hair, back there

Don't worry:
You looked fine

Mormon Book of the Dead

People in hell
want ice water

People in heaven
want a cup of Joe

**Thoughts Written on a Canyon Map
During a Coffee, Bidi and Piece
of Some Kind of Prettily Made Bread
While Gazing at a Hummer-Covered Parking Lot
at a Gentrified Suburban Republican Bistro**

I charted this course
with a red string
on a map of black chalk

The roads are many,
the final choice, new
I climb up the cafe canyon
walls to get a better view,
to see over the trees
and see my way to you

Having returned like Prometheus
to my city in pretty chains of light,
the rains have stopped like Porches
braking in the sun, which burns,
big and bright, drying this coffee stop
tabletop with its eviscerating truth

Gathering force, moving toward
the majestic and mysterious,
the merely merrily whimsical
snowcapped peaks of Ouray,
just a day away, as Latin horns
are piped through soccer moms
in sweatpants and motors purr

Is this city immune to war?

This cream of violence
rises to the top
For what they eat and taste
and buy and like,
they will not stop

Mechanized sweet, sweet soap,

the umbilical sword of the clean,
is the last potable hope
of water for the healing
and giving peace a hearing

And while the danceworld cult is searing,
I advance across an asphalt clearing:
In my heart, the key is just the start,
this language of escape
is now my art

West Coast Storm Warning

The world's end wind
is just a frantic curtain call
of polarizing sun, oceans
rising before the fall

The world's end wind
is you, watching TV,
swearing me away
as if tea and Tiffany
were a mortal plug

I know I'm going mad
The world's end wind
is shaking sense into the house

The world's end wind
has blown me off the tracks
The world's end wind
puts the cat in heat asleep

The world's end wind
is you on a bucking final horse
breathing sweet acetyline

What Would Water Do?

The water would run to work,
but turn, gone amok at the work corner,
toward the One-O-One
to drink a red eye and puff a smoke
in the early morning Ra

The water would pick up
trash along the way
but wait for more force
to finish the job

The water would arrive
on time and unplanned,
feeling out each empty
bottomland space
since every handmade
space is disorganized
differently

The water would percolate
in the apocalyptic heat,
catch the wind
and go fly a kite

The water would commit
murderous rage and recede,
unpleased, unsatisfied,
moving on the moon

The Valley Floor War

They came down from Gold Hill in hang gliders. Dozens of them, sweeping winged eagles, spiralling in the light breeze toward the Valley Floor, moving in to capture the entrance to the box canyon. They landed and reformed into war parties, stopping traffic leading in and out of town and charging up the cliff sides toward the airport. They wanted to choke off all Federal Express deliveries, beer trucks, commuters from Norwood, Placerville, the happy charters loaded with tourists, the airliners heavy with glitterati in suede coats and their kids bearing backwards ballcaps, portable CD changers, headphones and snowboards. "The Uprising at Gold Hill" was, scribes would later write, a reversal of an age.

Hostile acts began after midnight near Ophir, where Ute warrior gangs had been given a patch of ground by the local citizenry to commemorate their long lost happy hunting grounds. It was only supposed to be a memorial park and a campground, but due to a feigned mix up in the translation of the special event permit, the Ute chief, OOOOO AHHHH, initiated a more literal interpretation, based on an older, more aggressive tongue.

The war camp and uprising had been launched under the guise of an Native American reggae festival, which goes to explain why so many young white men and women from the town participated in the raid, but leaves the puzzling question about how supposed slackers could be led to riot.

The Utes had come in smoke-belching school busses from reservations in Colorado and Utah. They carried bundles of hang gliders, mobile phones, large pouches of competition-tested arrows with platinum tips, toy rubber war clubs. Such a cache was purchased at the Montrose Walmart with casino gaming earnings and numerous credit cards. An echo of their equine-savvy forefathers, the Utes mastered the tactics of marauding with the hang glider. The youngest warriors took to the hills first, dragging aluminum frames and satchels of supplies. The sky was filled with bright, whooping waves of descending hang gliders. In all directions, the canyon walls echoed with high-pitched yaps and cries, gunfire, sirens, car alarms and the gunning of engines. Smoke could be seen from the airport, sucking people out onto Main Street to get a view. Reaction in town was mixed. Quite naturally confused. It seemed to be a festival atmosphere. While many came out onto the streets to watch the winged Ute militia glide down from unseen suspects in the mountains, most just stared as if in a dream, or took photos. Some skirted down the avenue on roller skates, skateboards or mountain bikes to get a better view at the end of town. There was a convivial chatter on the street corners, that is, until scatter-shot skirmishes could be heard from the road leading into town. People ducked, scattered, or kept staring at the sky.

I was in the newspaper office when the first calls came in. "You've got to see this. Do something. Write a War editorial!" said one caller. I knew this was

pointless since, after all, the paper was printed out of town, and if these calls were to be believed, there would be no newspaper going out that night. I thought about how trees were already being saved by the attack. I tried to remember the typeface the Denver Post used one hundred years ago to shout "The Utes Must Go." I thought of Meeker. His spectacles. His New World idealism. I thought of how earnestly the Utes refused to farm. I thought of being staked to the ground and eaten by ants. I looked down the narrow hallway of the old dusty office catacomb and considered its defensive possibilities.

In my view, the best place to hold out was the front section our stone building, which once supported a profitable bar and whorehouse, and then, a less profitable newspaper. A suitable Alamo, it was agreed. The windows were small, and there was a basement beneath the old floorboards of the drafty place. We hunkered down in the basement's bunker with the ghosts of harlots until the situation had been resolved, or, at least, the shooting had stopped. We played cards, clutched our skis for weapons, and kept our ears to the radio, which was broadcasting renegade reports from special group of Commanches, ringers from west Texas who had commandeered the station's mountaintop translator. "Lay down your arms," said the deejay. "This is a peaceful revolution. T-cards and ski passes are available to all who convert."

E. Ned Beasley, the county's duly designated emergency services officer, called a meeting at the courthouse building. Beasley sought volunteers to fight the Utes, who had reportedly gathered approximately 500 braves and a loose-knit tail of young joiners on the Valley Floor. The Ute-a-farians had already managed light resistance at the Texaco and were moving in on the San Miguel Power Company station.

"Mountain Village has fallen like a house of cards," the camo-clad, Banana Republic dressed Beasley told the stunned and increasingly mutinous gathering. "We have attempted to notify the absentee residents. But they can't get their lawyers here because the airport has been destroyed. The Peaks has been looted and now it's being used as command post with excellent sighting to cover the Utes' rear. They are firing arrows at us from the Coonskin Ridge. Apparently the statues of the skier and the miner on the Mountain Village square have been toppled, and many of the Utes are luxuriating in confiscated condos.

"What's worse, they have set up for a morning raid from Gold Hill. More waves of anti-social savages in hang gliders are sure to come," he said as the crowd uniformly gasped. "We've got to set up barricades at Town Park and on the west side. If we let them land, we're toast."

It was then that an injured Gondola employee, his green jacket tattered and a broken arrow protruding from his bloody shoulder, stumbled into the meeting room. "The Gondola has been spliced!" he said, he sputtered and tried to mess with the buttons of his tattered jacket. "We are entirely cut off."

"See," cried Beasley, "We gave them the high ground. This is going to cost us. I assure you."

People scurried from the meeting in a hushed fast forward to their homes, thinking about their hitting their bank machines, about packing their bags, about the inherent risks of late Autumn mountain passages to Ouray. That night we stayed indoors as arrows and tomahawk clubs clattered on the sidewalks and streets. We drank and carved our skis, made phone calls to friends, love as if it were our last night on earth.

In the Last Dollar Saloon, a captured Ute was being tortured for information. Tonic water was poured down his throat and he choked and wept. His wet "I (Heart) New York" T-shirt clung to a solid, strong rib cage. Tears ran across the cheek and down his neck. "Wait a minute fellas," he spit. "I'm just here for the beer ... like you." And then they let him go and the lights went out, the stereo system stopped. With the electricity gone, beer was given away. When the beer was gone, there was talk of surrender. The captive Ute was pushed into the streets.

By dawn the battle lines had been drawn. The gunwale was manned by a concerned group of property owners, real estate agents and ski company loyalists donning their green and red company uniforms. On the west end, a barricade of Volkswagon vans, Jaguars and Sport Utes had been built from one side of the canyon to the other. There was some debate about setting up defenses on a wetland, but such considerations were quickly thrown out the door. Especially considering the excellence of the natural sightline against the hordes provided by the buildings overlooking the automobile barrier. The streets were empty, save for the stray dogs who had become intelligent bands of marauders in themselves. Apparently, during the night, vast numbers of local rastas and snowboarders had abandoned their pets and crossed over the barricade. Many painted their faces to join the Utes for battle. Historians would note how the underclass drifted quickly to the other side, in terms town leaders would later decry as "The day the Trustafarians turned."

That left only hardcore band of Realtors to man the barricades. Though their number was still in the hundreds, the Pearl, Shandoka, and the River Trail could only be sparsely defended after a series of probing raids by the Utes. The rumor was that Beasley had been wounded. That his Maginot line had been breached down by the river. It was decided to withdraw to the commercial core, setting up a latticework of crossfire around the T-shirt shops and bars and offices stacked with deeds, water rights and future boffo development plans. Such documentation would be needed after the chaos cleared, everyone was assured. When the order was given to withdraw, the giddy Utes moved onto the West End barricade, turning the Sport Utes and Mercedes and VW busses back on their wheels, driving them away. They hooped. They hollered. They gunned the engines and roared.

When the final attack came, I was in the basement of the newspaper, coughing on dust as the floorboards shook and writing my personal peace treaty. My intention was to hand it over to the first Ute I met. It happened to be the guy they interrogated in the Buck, a Ute, for sure, but certainly not part of the raid. A

nice guy, actually. He had just been taking his time off from classes at Harvard. It was this first-available renegade who I handed my unconditional apology. It did little good. Despite the Harvard connections. Fortunately, the Realtors couldn't hit much with their rifles, and deaths were kept to a minimum, save for Beasley, who had been finally mowed down in a gust of friendly fire in front of the County Courthouse. The Utes were also more magnanimous in victory than we had been a century ago. Only a few real estate agents, those who had threatened to bring in lawyers, were "re-educated." A chilling term, at least to all who saw it first-hand. The rest of us were herded on the now famous "Long Birkenstock Walk" to our new reservation at Dennehotso, where the desert winds blow fiercely this time of year and there are a lot of spooks out here.

These days I look forward to my weekly check from the government and tend to eat less red meat. I'm learning to deal cards, the white casino mafia seeing some talent in my sly hand and jaded ways. I spend my days looking northward to San Juans, knowing that somewhere out there are magnificent peaks as a fortress against the world that I once called my hometown. Someday, it is said, the ski bums will return.

The
Kachina's
Son

Book of the Hopi

My soul wears moccasins.
Birds beat the ground,
Joggers are everywhere.

One bird, on a barbed wire,
With an orange breast,
Fluffy cottontail:

The barrier of the canal
Has re-growth of gray-green brush

At the top of the ridge,
The Kachinas communicate
across the towers leading
In all directions across the desert.

The repatriated saguaro
Stretch out as Thunderbirds
Red-shift overhead.

I walk through
The manicured park
At dawn, the sound
Of motors swishing
Across metropolis,

Irregardless,
The sun still rises.

Vibratory centers
Of our bodies,
Overwhelmed with lust
And grief
Are licked by the tongue
Of Spiderwoman.

She gathered earth
Of four colors:
Yellow, red, white, black.

With electric love,

She licks a telegraph
across the McDowells,
A softening gray,
A white plume of cloud.

Behind that,
a universe of particles
and cold space.

Fear nothingness,
And nothingness will run.

The Kachina's Son

The gravity of the red sun in Navajoland,
impatient in the evening sky, held me down
to sixty-five miles per hour. The darkness came
as the mesas turned to introversion, purple shadows,
to trucks passing trucks passing little beat up Pontiacs
& brights resisting the temptation for head-on collision.

The blue-black raven gasped in the clouds
for a little sweet warm morsel of hope
of fresh road kill & the other fumes of promise.
Children played by the long-straight roadside
while mom & dad & uncle
& Bennie pushed a new Ford
toward the distance of the trading post's
ghostly red gas light glow.

Kayenta stood in a protracted war
against the holy emptiness of the crossroads
to Monument Valley, Dennehotso, Toe En Loc,
against the bog in the hole where the animals fell,
to the perennial stream emerging from a sandstone
quarry, reaching toward Laguna Canyon,
where flows concede themselves at Chinle Valley,
then the San Juan River, which is ecstasy.

Here, on the Redlands, the face gets long
& hollowed out as the stone children
at the roadside rest spot at Baby Rock.

Here, I came into the presence of the Kachina's son.
I could tell, I attest, I swear by the sudden drop
in temperature in the flat-bed truck,
the shadow passing through the back window,
an intuitive kick of fear
& the fall, like a cemetery stone chip,
of a cassette tape to the floor.

It happened where the plains became flat and the sunset,
lost in the hot winds, had long past dropped
into the curvature
of the canyon cut into Skeleton Mesa.

Later, after the Black Mesa coal elevator,
the duende jumped off
to claim its lonely home.
I thought I saw a wolf
in the rearview mirror.

Monarch Pass

Light was leaking a little bit each day.
Autumn was a deer with headlights
in its eyes. A snowstorm was coming in
from the north. On the streets of cow town
the wind sent a chill to the heart
& the residents ran for cover.
Stayed there one night,
knew how carburetors were running
for every propane truck & U-Haul pull
by the whistle of the cold steel
hurling down the road
and by my window.

Took a hot shower, anything for the heat,
anything to melt from the snow.
I'd basically given in. Realized:
driving on these mountain roads,
I can be outpaced by the sky's flurries
& the first storm of winter.

So I thought of you. Kept myself warm
with my only decent idea. My idea of you,
safe a warm. I slept, though, in distrust
of the storm pushing its cold face on my window
to minimal lights & a Safeway parking lot.

A man, shattered hands and hidden in his hands,
copped a free night on the couch down in the lobby,

hunters and loaded for beer salesmen
settled down in the bar and a view of the World Series.
The fat girl at the counter said there were no more blankets,
so the sleeper's dream of approaching snow
bit the fringes of my bed of killing music in my head.

Then my eyes just blurred open. Just wow. Light.
It was dark and there was no snow on the ground.
I said, "Go," "Go," find Monarch Pass and overcome
the nightmare of rehabilitating myself
at eleven thousand feet.

I iced off the truck, put it in gear and ran,
maybe thirty miles saw now the uphill climb
had bled my gas tank dry. I figured, "What the hell,
might just get lucky."

But then I thought about the breakneck pace of my life.
Thought: wisdom once was practicing the art of going slow.
There was a rabbit in the road
& it stood there, suicidal in the courage
that he belonged, to die, and I did not.
So I turned around right the sign to the Pass,
knowing, the arctic front has got me now.

But on the way back I changed my mind again, thinking,
if I stay on these desolate and self-destructive streets
I may never know my own heart's mind again.
So I re-armed. Gassed up the truck,
fifty miles per hour, then forty, then thirty,
up the Monarchy's uncaring ass.

There was a point, when the wheels
were spitting ice and burning rubber,
that I came to know this God as a fool,
like me, an insomniac from a chattering schemes
& the pondering the earthquakes of hidden meanings.

The truck lurched and the trailer did a jackknife howl
around he bend of demon weight, godless gravity,
bad habits in our dim trunk of broken dreams.
At the sixth of seven miles to the summit,
the world was over the precipice
if not for the torque of an angel
sent to give me strength

.

Disparate de Miedo (Folly of Fear)

Mr. Death hangs over
as they tumble.
Time will get them.
But not today.
Senore rises
in an angel's robe,
Aretha Franklin
singin' praises,
man with a sword,
face sketched
in a tree.
Wind blowing to the West.
Away from destiny,
which is too easy
to deny.

Disparate Feminino (Feminine Folly)

Spreading the blanket
like a firemen's net,
six women in jest
with two male jugglers.

Dancing in delight,
each long-dressed lass
has a different opinion
on the topic.

The jugglers,
they've got it so lucky,
all those women working
to make them happy.

But note: in the net,
the husk of a dead donkey,
Goya's coy brush with death
hanging in the air.

If Autumn came any earlier
there would be a counselor,
a policeman,
& tax collector
at the door.

Bear Creek (Telluride)

The day before
he fell in love,
lonely and tired,
electricals low,
he bought a gold pan
in a forester's shop.

He climbed up the mountain
just to the treeline,
to find an old miner's ruin ...
His eyes were to the ground.
Once before, he climbed
to speak
to the Prince
of Deep Water--
eyes to the sky.

Water bird spoke back:
Be kind to your fellow man.
Cover your children.
Favor your future wife.
Climb down
like a fish
on to a new river,
new lake, new oceans,
new foam.

Good Morning Rubicon!

Complex chemical components
Give me speed ... Speed!
Important volatiles,
Organic acids, aldehydes,
Ketones, esters, amines,
Mercaptans, el Capitan,
Oh caffeine King

Robust rubiaceae
Everybody is recovering
From something
From sleep, death,
Love's blind dark alleys
Oh come down to me
From the high altitudes
Make me aware, oh agent

First millenia Arabians
Gave the tree to Yemen
Which sent a hot breeze
To Dutch colonists
And French Martinists turned
The Eden of the West Indies
Into the first great coffee
Plantations of Latin America

Oh alkaloid, oh $C_8H_{10}O_2N_4$,
Tamed by H_2 oh, oh, oh,

Touch me, taste my Boiling blood,
my mercury rising,
Through the celebratory cortex
Into a computer at the FDA
Spitting out murky evidence:
Everybody is recovering
From something

Things I Didn't Do This Year

Drove down the highway in spring
in a wannabe Corvette.
Thinking of you: As always. As in always.
You know, in Cataract Canyon these days
the runoff will put hair on your ass,
ice cold waters running fast,
hooked on the phone, talking to you.
I had a bill for seventeen million dollars
that I outright refused to pay.
Earlier, the archons of paradise
flew me in for free. I asked again,
and they said, "no." Not this year,
not even the next.

So I ran to kill this thing inside,
crushed nicotine cigarettes
beneath my feet. I burned one
and I thought of Atlanta, burning.
I won't be running like Sherman
through the South.
I won't even be near there,
I promise you, no doubt.

Got a memo from Nantucket.
Knew a woman there who liked to...
Then the mail pile fell
and the words scattered in the wind,
convenience man came in,

said it was the air-conditioning.

Still couldn't fix that thing
and tomorrow it's goin' to roar.
Had an image of a pretty girl
and I waited by the door.

Put the Blasters on the stereo,
buck'n'bronco rock'n'roll.
Felt your touch in the rhythm,
sweet pie, blue blue eyes.
There's a beach house near Portsmouth.
Won't be there. Made plans for
a Christmas party on a mountaintop,
another bottle of dreams in black light.

Explanation of Arizona

See there, south, over the range,
down the road past Ralph Lauren's ranch,
the sandblasted expanse, the holy lands ...
Arizona looms, a dime in a dollar nation.

Hear the rumble of cattle trucks at 3 a.m.,
the tumult of Ohioans fleeing tornados,
bankruptcies, divorces, economic forces,
see nickel-made cowboys on false horses.

In Chicago they read magazines
about Sedona roads and they run there,
trampling the Navajo, the Apache, the Hopi,
who are holding back the end of the world.

Feel the hot winds smooth the sandstone,
the cold river California drinks.
In another time, they'd be a happy,
redoubtable people.

Count the three million men, women,
children, dogs, llamas, circus elephants ...
When the army came to imprison
the Apache they left experimental camels
to wander from Yuma to Harqua Halla.

Get a good price for a skull in Skull Valley.
See the hollow nostrils, blood fright,
little white lies about real estate & the fourth estate.
Touch the bomb trigger that killed Don Bolles.

Feel the dying pulse of Goldwater Republicans.

Glimpse the ancien' regime, the descending gyre
of infused Northlanders
from New York, Minneapolis,
Acropolis, too (two).

See that man is a city

& the city is a man.

Kiss the fine girl there
with a Greek name, butterfly desires.
Read her awkward green eyes
on the way to her dead-end job
in the half-filled office complex.

Analyze her weakening resolve
at the touch of my hand
on her smooth brown knee--
her shudder engendered there.

Then see her drift away,
seeking younger men,
who keep coming, coming
from California,
which is pushing pestilence
like a salesman,
carbon monoxide in winter,
the angel's breath in spring.

Alta

Wooden boards, rotted ghosts,
a mountain tilted toward fate:
Could be a year before high altitude
breezes wreak inevitable change.

The fear we face here is changeless
and ever changing. Lizard's Head Peak
stares across the valley
& telephone lines hint
at the advent of the first
cross-current electricity.

Tesla's electrochemical blind alley
is the Philosopher's Stone.
The humankind who filled these homes
were hard as nails and cold as night.
Tourista legends tell of screams:
the echoes of old mining accidents.

But why would phantoms linger
in the freeze at twelve-thousand feet?
They had brave, wise hands, time to read
in flickering firelight & dragged supplies
up steep inclines: timber & soap & Joe Smith's
betrayed final words.

Snow-crested mountains
scattered the clouds
while pioneer intellectuals
drove the American man
to his alchemical peak,
then fell back down the hill.

Transmutation

Turn the bad into good.
Glass into sand.
The agent is the pulverizer.
Beat up the plastic.
Improve the soul.
Trauma separator.
Matter turning to smoke.
Three moon shots separatin'
nine stages to nirvana,
seven steps to satan.
Think of performance art
and persecution
as one. Fear nothing
and nothingness will run.
Embrace everything,
everything will come.
Leave this place clean
as when you came.
Reflective sand,
driveways paved
with Cibola gold,
mustang mosaic,
round Indian shield...
creativity expands,
censor's cage contracts,
the tao of two is whole.
High performance standards
increase the odds of survival.

O protected one, carry us,
to a higher plane.
While it may not be apparent,
everything is in order.
Mobius strip, everything eternal,
ebbs out, then in, then out again,
the feedback loops gain force
or devour, depending upon
the potency--or, poison,
of the form. Interfere,
as little as possible.
Live in the present.

Study the past.
Know the future,
nature, soul fire,
is a neverending cycle.
Real time is irrelevant.
Strip mine Mobius:
Reduce, solve, practice
what is preached.
Wear often,
a plastic pop bottle hat,
corrugated cardboard shirt,
shoes and old rubber tires,
for a head like an alien.
Who says Augustus
would never amount
to anything?

Streetwalk (Positively, Seventh...)

Cement sidewalks shuttle future
weakened, totality, mass nerve endings,
prison yard feel, quick stepping,
average, intellectual, compassionate,
awakening: all of these designs are cloudy.
Perspective: rigorous, full head a steam,
Stared down twice, smiled at once,
the wise old world is sky high
scrappers penetrating the sea-deep
blood of tradition and cold stone.

Please watch your belongings.

Espresso speed, a young girl's
bottomless shopping bag,
her desire, a blunt stare.
A quiet closet,
an upstairs cafe
near the bookstore.
Eventually, If I stand
here long enough--
centuries, maybe--
I'll run into some sweet
Someone I know.

Central Avenue

The police have got Central Avenue
Blocked off better than Beirut.
There's a war out there.

It's the cops and the Colangelos
versus the crack heads,
versus the cars.

The city is shut off
between the poor
and the don't wanna know.

Victoria strolls out for a walk,
Drinking an espresso,
Gaining an edge for focus.
One of the one hundred
and forty four thousand
is given to drink.

She can't afford to think.

She saw a murder just the other night,
Right below the old Westward Ho:
Mexican mafia, sports dressed,
tough guys in white T-shirts,
cops around the corner, Grinning.
It's the darkest well-lit place downtown.

Meanwhile, the poets and police
in the Arizona center
Look down the girls' blouses,

The undercover
hide from the heat
in their dirty little houses.
Sheriff Joe is out
breathalyzing tonight,
breathless and bluesy,
While Victoria walks the street,
shooting off her mouth,

a human Uzi.

Philosophy of Numbers

I have accepted a philosophy
of numbers and you can account
for its ageless and agile truths.

Sweet and lovely accounts
that add up to a blank slate,
a tender ear off your balance sheets,
charts, and endless numbers.

The secret you see
is the difference,
multiplied, of course,
to the X and Y
of total truth
and chaos.

Old Connoisseurs insist:
The devil is using fractions,
sitting stilted, there, see the panic,
the volume, the distances of lives,
the gravity of time.
Second-law thermal dynamics
proclaim: Jesus confounds
our radar to this day.

Lonely ones wanting to be twos,
two atoms pulling apart to rejoin
the one, the almighty figure,

the truth that is his slate,
the bad mathematics of chaos
and the good numbers that rhyme,
reason, rational, saint-like
toward an oblivious horizon
of numbers and angles and charts,
the glory of the stars,
the price of tea on Mars.

The secret for you is to have numbers
that add up, your numerals, perfect, precise,
balancing the will around the land mines

that come from beauty and grace,
the dance of the sky in the your face
the physics of chance and delight,
the heat of your thigh in the night.

Last Night In New Hampshire

On the highway to the border he shook from the cold,
the cold never feeling so free and real. He had failed.
All the tests she set before his stupid brown eyes
read in report cards, left in piles, deposits of papers,
old traffic tickets, a map of Manchester, old cig butts
to keep him from stuttering in that damned cold
causing a fever like a witches' curse.
So he fell in love once with her witchy eyes
and couldn't see anything else for half a year.
Poor bastard. Always saw it coming, never blinked
long enough to believe he was truly unlovable.

So a master of words was found wanting for words.
His words had failed him. His dirty fingernails let go.
But he had her once and she had him, still does,
always will, the sentimental fool. Believed he could
keep himself warm in a young girl's wool.
He thought of perfections, ideals, belief the human body
had a place he still should be feeling, not the heart so much
but another painful organ, which, if left unattended
would fill up with black like an old wounded moon.

Quality means commitment. Every road has a memory.
That was where he got lost. That was where he found her.
That was where they bought tough little groceries to get by on.
That was where they lived, once, simply, for a short time,
and it was a place where they could love or talk or fight.
That was the road he carried her golden things,

Andover Town Center

All the darling trophy wives Shopping blond in the brunette Of winter
The sun gave me a break today
They poured out of mass And into their cars Bull steam blowing Through their
noses
I watched the sunset they missed
Made one last phone call. Yet another. Just to save my marriage.
Desolation will never know The angel I am.

Bedford Toll Plaza

And the more I drive up
The interstate, the more the evidence
of love gets pissed away into the snow.

Pee free or die,
So the state flag Of New Hampshire
May one day say.
The pattern runs hot
And steam runs loose
From a new day's snow
On a hothouse day
In which a solar storm
Would electrify A lake of fire
In the sky

The pattern: A tree,
maybe an off-ramp signage shadow,
with pecked And puckered knotty holes,
Where owls perch and eagles play.
I took that last quarter
To the phone booth ...

Oh, if not for so many lonely
And cynical Winnebegos
That drive, ceaselessly,
To bridge the great divide.

The real question isn't
How to turn lead into gold,
But how to turn gold into soul.

The Land of God & Cannon

With nothing but a compass in Concord
I landed at the Milldam cobblestone street square,
head aching, ancien' General Gage on my tail,
too much God & cannon coming up the road,
I scribbled a few now-forgotten notes
and moved into the spoiled woods of fabled Walden.
I made a roommate Of Henry David Thoreau.
We were in love at Thanksgiving ...
Now Plymouth Rock leads to
a bloodline of highways with no horizon,
A string of tree-lined tunnels, dirty snow,
beer cans and cigarette butts
sans a sniff of smoke for a soul.
You, the cool clear impossible place of my desire
became my jumbled and jumpy New Jerusalem
of steel and stone. The pond was surveyed and sold.
Henry David, he became a bit of a bore,
What's worse, he snored. Now he's a new shoe style,
Sturdy and rubbery and oh so dysfunctional,
all sold over the electronic Web of Life
via a mass major national megastore
From sea to shining shore.
Came and went as an angel of light.
So I moved West, following a tattered map:
Where the Tasty Freeze is going to be,
next to soon-to-be the Banco de Post-Democratica,
next to the next nouveau salon of old Saint Lou,
next to the yet-to-be named municipal zoo.

Still I trudged, and entered a golden Anasazi ruin,
sun-baked brick and clay, a chimney for a tomb,
a below-ground tunnel temple to the last great escape
for threadbare me, impossible though rational you.
Somebody, some angel, fell right off the map,
and left me here to consider both an arc of light
& the fly-shit tempest of a teapot domed scandal.
They left no other marker, but a megalith of rubble.
My compass spun wildly, and the wind swirled up a scare.
And now we pass through a narrow port.
From Concord to discord ... eventually ...
Ah, I know this much: There's no such thing.

There's a long-running song on an ever-running string.
All ripples, soft or made of jade, will eventually still.
I moved further up the hill, following a wire.
The wire led to a hook, and the hook led
to a phone. But the line was dead.
Finally, I thought: Paradise, silence.
This last great emptiness is my consolation,
This last dime I spend, a mere dollar in a donated nation.

California Zephyr

Take the train. The mystery whistle
gives warning as a service
to each and hovel and burgh along the line.

Take the train. Shape your body
At a bad angle, to sleep with
One eye open,
a hand on your backpack:
Walk the aisle of the peaceful.
Tiptoe through the dead.

Take the train, but do not envy
The conductors in beautiful
blue caps, who tell tall tales
of DEA rousts, great rivers
frozen over,
whole cities rolling
alive into possibility.
Take the train, leave the attendant
regrets of lost love behind
with the voice of reason
that rules the iron-fisted
tracks of time, faith
and paper-thin legal fantasies
concerning the state
of our nation.

Take the train. Avoid the bad energy
of airports. Smoke in the smoking car.
Listen to long and endless movement
and look toward the Northern Lights.

Take the train, but just know
Charlie Vaughn, he's just
a shape changer
in a checkered shirt.
The roust was real.

Take the train,

and he'll confirm
The sun behind the sun.

Take the train, note the brown burned
empty water tank on its side,
feel the mystery rail move forward
again. The observation deck is a churchy
made-for-tv movie ... a transition space
of carpet and glass, frozen stiff,
the great white world,
grafting all tracks
within the context
of our mutual lost
and lonely selves.

Take. The. Train. The late
lifeline and link from Boston
to San Francisco, monk's tea,
fuel-stained air, electricity humming
up ozone

from East to West.

Take the train,
But send it all back down the hill,
The anger, the fear, laments that fall
upon thine eyes.

Take the train, drilling through
a one-tracked meditation
on your soul's cruelest capabilities.
Take the train, step off,
greasy, forbidden
and a little too real.

Rio Grande Wind

In the Dallas airport, I'm on the way to greet my mother's death. We had to pull the plug. You know the joke... The little dirty one about Three accused priests by the pay telephone: One of them says the sky is falling, The other two say, "No, we are rushing To meet the wind, moon, sun and stars With a gravity We've come to call Forgiveness." It was a horrible, horrible ride, God throwin' stones in the sky. Every passenger had a tale to tell about the way the wings rang cell phones and the fuselage buckled in the Rio Grande wind. Stuck at the terminal I had an "estresso" and thanked the Lord; the small things being just small enough. DF Dubya was a zoo with American animals, Cold and huddled, dumped off like refugees in the Rio Grande rain; a hub of darkness, as total darkness glows, when it covers flesh close to the ground. So I floated around, the lost and lonely disembodied ranger, Wild and terrified at the fragile fullness of being me, exposed; pulling my coat over my left shoulder, imagining how I must seem to the gray-bearded masters of Judaic lore. The Rio Grande wind had never rolled a leaf quite this far before. That's the thing about airports: All of that anxiety and bad energy. Sometimes, we have a life. Sometimes, you don't want to leave or wave goodbye. But death is a meal on the jittery flight, the Rio Grande wind Blowin' ya, outta sight.

Little Missed Moon

The next time we see a full moon
The cold wind will make the night white
And the temperate evening
That's passed before us
Will be memory,
a joke shared In a glass jar

The next time the moon's gravity
Tempts the coyote's
Mythos in my blood,
I could be driven by force
Into the mountains
And howling for you

Right now, the orb hangs In the tree, unpicked.
We are a mere legend of love.
We are what other couples
Want to be But cannot be.

Put those things away, says she.

The next time we see the full moon
The autumn harvest
Will be shedding dreams
And the principle of love
Will have spoken
Our bonds will be
all they'll ever be

The next time
We look into the box
It will contain
Every memento
We will ever need

I've got no time for the moon, Says she

Here was a time when love was ...
Here was a time when love was ...
I forget what I was thinking

The next time I see your face
The sun will have come and gone
And then returned again
And the moon will have
sluiced itself A pretty vein,
More light will be leaking
out Of each day, And one less thing
Will be possible.

Put those things away, Says she.

Bragdon Farm

The grass on the wind-blown hill
is the only thing I know
that's grounded
to the earth.

But my feet are melting
into the dirt. My eyes, closer to the sky
than to the soil
Death and hope
are a common plight
at Bragdon Farm in the morning light.

I cannot contain my joy
at finally discovering
my own being
realizing
that if I must love anyone
I must love all sides of myself.

The thing I will remember is the way the yellow leaves
blew from the shade
and glittered in the sun
as they fell out into the tree-lined field.

I'll remember the wall of red and magenta
and the sense that autumn
is a good time to end
one kind of life
and begin another.

Click. Click. Click.
Feel the camera shutter's speed
in sync with the moment
by the small pond
where I tried to understand

how God's inviolate foliage reflects back toward me in a universe that's
separate, free and beyond my immortal will.
The main thing I know is I need to think
on my own
and learn to stare
into my own wintery gaze.
My boots plunge

into those rounded off hills
as if I'm planting seeds
on the vertical verge
of the never-ending world.

Rusty machines, farm implements
dot the landscape
and the plan to destroy
the house along the highway is the cancer of the world we make.

Then when winter comes
this place will be covered
in the sort of white
that cleanses all dreams
of doubt or timid reflection.
I cannot bear the thought
of forgetting this moment
and remembering
that I came to a place
and not a blue-eyed girl
at the center of the world.

Taboo

This delicate birth.
This cold season.
My prayer is a whisper
To the anatomy of love.

You crave my body
In fear and awakening.
I am, as in everything,
With you.

The summer
of the heart
Is a goal down
a winding road

Whether we need rain
To wash our sins
Or to cry...

It is no matter.

We can float roses
In the sea
And let them float
In the currents
Of our mutual
History

Starless and Bible Black

O haughty harlot
Why add to the troubles
Of the world?
Seems to me all vessels
Draw from the same well.
Your pinched insecurity
Squeezed me out
Like a pressurized pop bottle
And as you fret and threaten
And beat me over the head
The lesson of love is a lesson to avoid
But I came out here
Able to feel A blues I sing
Can at least believe
All winds blow
From the same Direction

Da Vinci Blues

Consider the totality of stress
on the renaissance man.
Hustlin' to & fro',
talkin' wings off birds,
puttin' eyeballs on kites,
makin' list of daemons.
Start one thing no sooner
you're burning the next green branch,
jugglin' chaos and oozing blood
to congeal the form,
breakin' time's inscrutable pane a' glass
& gettin' no fuckin' sleep in the process.

There are days when ideas
rise in the sequence
of smoke holes to the ceiling,
and you gasp for air,
allowing the muse to take form.
There is no sex life, nada,
no time for introspection,
only invention and monk's tea,
as if mere air were a seven-course meal
before you turn to bed to weep.

Friction Storms

Cruel April rains
did a November's ice bucket
face-down onto the baseball game.
Mad hatters, bald-head batters,
Hidden Egghead masters,
Behind the Green-Eyed Monster:
archons within archons;
they all went home.
Fenway Park
will never seem the same.
Time is a wall, a joke,
With the freeway
On the other side.
Jose, can't you see?
Shook up force, disturbance
From Pole to Pole,
So they say, puts salt peter
To burn hot as acid
On the singed globe
within the lighthouse bulb

Quantum Quandary

Great poetry is a failure
Of perception
Great perception
Is a failure of poetry
Great failure is the poetry
Of perception
Failed greatness
is The perception of poetry

Circuitry

God created man in his own image

Man created computer in his own image.

Computer re-created man in God's own image.

Bar Code

Black and white vertical lines,
of varying width: Our worst
subterranean fears attuned
for positivism, licensed,
packaged for material accumulation,
logical logistics for America the Database,
DNA and identity.

Code of conduct, the angel
or devil you know, or, don't know.
Each decision to click
you either adapt or resist,
filling in other
black vertical lines...

Better the devil you know,
as the blue light of a encircling globe
emits a scan across this very page,
then recedes, the ebb and cache of a Tesla coil.
What is now proved was once only imagined.

Urizen's code, Napsterized,
the imaginator subsumed
beneath the hierarchical
ayers of the Void.

Layers of forgetfulness.

The Bar Code girl at the bar,
taking my credit card.
Material law mandates:
One cannot buy or sell without code.
We need not ask why. It is just so.

The blue light scan,
that Eye, again,
expanding the artificial
consciousness of database.
The divine aggregator
crunches the code
and the fittest meaning survives:
... New Rules Game Bar,

... Rules Game New Bar,
... Game Rules New Bar,
... Bar Rules Game New ...

The bee in the hive
never knows why
it makes honey.

Why should I?

The limit of thought
is based on the code,
on the versatility

of each and every sign.

Repurpose thyself ... free the code,
... Merchandise code, genetic code, moral code
and the code of the one and only law.

3 a.m. with the Muses

True lady of the hill
Looking down a stream
Of chocolate
In the mountain twilight.

Centered,
In her gravitational
Throne, she asks
The sky for answers.

"None," says the infant
disdain. "Go," says the angel,
"Give yourself away."

The sublime country
Of ownership
Is also possession?
And dread

"Sight," says the angel.
"How and when?"
Asks the infant
In the anxiety
Agent of ill winds.

Bright, the angel beams:
"Be yourself that you own.
Stare down this melt

Of frozen stone."
With that, she kissed The paternal psychiatrist
And bid the gloom adieu.

Angel
of the
Avenues

Time Enough for Smoke?

He quit smoking right after the war. One day he was tooling around, heading toward a casino on the other side of the Colorado River at Lake Havasu, Arizona, and he came to a dock and the dock led to a loading ramp onto a ferry that would carry him to his dicey destination. But then he remembered, shit, he didn't have any cigarettes. He thought about turning around. As a thoughtful guy, heading back down the ramp, he started to do some math. He calculated, probably as he was also thinking about the money he needed for gambling, that if he stopped smoking for 10 years he would have saved himself about \$40,000. With that, he turned around. He never smoked again. However, he still gambles.

To bid, or not to bid? That is the question.

For a little more than eight years, I have been smoking a little Indian cigarette called a bid. In many respects it has changed my life, not all for the better, mind you. After all, setting fire to one's lungs defies logic and contradicts the proclivity of human nature toward longevity (i.e., smoking too much of anything of any kind will eventually kill participants, willing or unwilling, myself included). I was not really a smoker before I started inhaling them. Some kind of existential dilemma, however, induced by a knock-down drag-out divorce, as well as the untethering from the old modes of behavior that such an event implies, led me to an era of unmonitored experimentation. Whatever the case, the pleasing aura of the smoke and its surprising effects made my life a lot more interesting.

What are bidis? Well, they are basically peasant cigarettes from India. A eucalyptus leaf wrapped around tobacco. Various brands are available. Multi-flavored Darshan-brand bidis are dominating the market these days. Small Shivsagar Bidis are shaped like a hand-rolled cigarette, reminiscent of Humphrey Bogart's only accouterment.

A larger version by Sher Bidis are longer and fatter than an ordinary cigarette and much more powerful, quite capable of making even an initiated smoker sick to his stomach. Indeed, when first smoked, a bid can have a profound effect on the senses.

It's not the shape nor the smell but the almost narcotic sensation brought on by the leaf. A kick in the head, basically.

Perhaps that is the reason why some smoke shops in the United States had trouble keeping up with the demand for the little buggers when they hit a trendy flashpoint two or so years ago.

I have always thought of this peasant's solace as a type of marijuana substitute since the two share many characteristics, except for the THC, which is too bad. Hell, it could be hay wrapped in a maple leaf, for all it matters. It's the skanky, sweet-smelling smoke from the eucalyptus tree that delivers a powerful feeling. For a hyper, overemotional sort like myself, it really takes me down a notch. Its slight, twisted body, too small to hold like an ordinary cigarette, needs to be held between your thumb and index finger. To enable you to take in the bidi's last offering, you can unravel the little threads at its base like a roach clip. Just one of several reasons why this organic device resonates with thoughts toward its illegal associate.

Sound kinda scary? Well, don't get too excited. They are novelty smokes in the truest sense, like cloves or quirky cigarillos. And though they will probably always remain a cult item, bidis have changed my life.

I tried them for the first time in a bar called the Fly Me to the Moon Saloon in Telluride, Colorado. Located in the dank basement of an old mining town building, the Moon is one of the more sultry nightspots in all of the Colorado Rockies' ski towns. One reason is because of DeeJay Harry, a bleach blonde rastafarian who could turn "Trash Disco" Thursday nights into orgies of sampling at 100 beats per minute. The voodoo king of trance music, a kind of local celebrity, would induce his crowd into aerobic states of glee, turning the Yups into rhythm-possessed Yorubans.

The stage set, the mood was conveniently in place for the two young men. As they began to unwrap and pull slow drags of their strawberry scented Kailas Bidis, perhaps the most popular brand at the time, I watched as an amazing situation developed for the pair. Several women were immediately drawn, as if some animal magnetism were at work. The women ventured toward the illicit aroma and the increasingly enigmatic, though otherwise unremarkable, men. Obviously questioning, and soon requesting to sample the wares of the two young rich hipsters, nicknamed locally as "trustafarians" because they were most likely living at that elevations with the support of a trust fund. It wasn't long after that these strangers were dancing in a swirling rhythm of the young, the beautiful and over-exercised.

The next night I awoke savoring the previous night's indelible image. I was determined to conduct my own experiment with the

little wonders.

Not that I have ever had any trouble meeting people, but the temptation to have an instant "in" with total strangers was too great to resist further investigation. I began to question whether it was the cigarettes or something about the combination of the mood in the bar, maybe the vibe in the room, that was intoxicating enough to bring such good fortune on these men.

Curious if I would fare equally, I located the town's cigar shop (which has since closed), walked in, and stocked up on ammunition.

That night, I smoked bidis in bars from one end of town to the other, a stretch of about a half-mile. And yes, perhaps I did smoke a little too violently, but the results were amazing. I continued to move from one bar to another, wary of my initial findings and impressions, just as much as any good John Lilly of the West might try (remember "Altered States"?). Sure enough, everywhere I went people were asking "What is that?" , "Where did you get it?" and, of course, "Can I try one?"

When I returned to my home at the time in Phoenix, Arizona, I was assured that I was carrying some kind of socializing magnet in my shirt pocket. The results were much the same in the urbane confines of mall-dressed Scottsdale. It was my experience that people, especially women, would invariably stop to inquire and eventually ask for one. Even if they didn't smoke! A couple of hours into a night I would reach for one only to discover that I was left with an empty pack, being able to account for less than half of them myself. They were the ultimate first line. "They are Kailas Bidis," I would say with a certain jaded, half-closed right eyelid squint. As I said it, blowing out smoke to accent my exotic qualities, I'd add, enigmatically, "They are from Indjeeaaaaa."

Now fast forward: A year had passed since I first tried the cigarettes in Telluride. I had been working from my rented room the rural Massachusetts, trying to scrape out a living as a freelance writer after working for a year at the Robb Report, a magazine for rich bastards that was decidedly anti-peasant. I was climbing the walls of this sleepy suburban hovel, Acton, maybe 20 miles west of Boston, and I was needing my smokes just a bit too badly.

The problem: You just can't buy bidis in rural New England, thus making my addiction to them a total nuisance. I didn't feel

like quitting, because, after all, being a freelance writer meant being anxious about just about everything, and I had two choices in order to obtain more.

I could drive an hour and a half north to a New Hampshire mall, which was the last place I found bidis in ample supply, or, I could take a train to Boston, where there were sure to be plenty of bohemians about who could point me in the right direction to a cigar shop that carried them.

So I end up at Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a very crowded place bustling with its famous mix of chic retail franchises, coffee galore, lots of stuff to read, very old stone and brick and smarty pants liberalism for a select elite of people who can afford to be so. I looked down and saw half a spent bid discarded on the street. I felt that I was on the right track.

I found them easily, in stock at the David P. Ehrlich Company on Tremont Street, which has been supplying generations of tokers with smokes since 1868, a considerable legacy of suffering for more than a century's worth of hacking and general git stupidity. I bought a carton for \$27, which I could not really afford since I was a starving writer. But hey, I figured, the smokes would at least kill my appetite. The carton contained 10 red packs, a flavor called strawberry and that really means sweet, the first of which I peeled open practically before I was out of the cigar shop. I quickly found a seat on the patio of a Harvard Square pastry store, lit up, and watched the grey-templed professorial sorts and pretty people dressed in dot-com black passing by.

Cambridge was fairly unimpressed by the bidis smoky blue essence wafting between the tables by the pastry store. The guys playing chess didn't even look up when a cloud as big as a bus fart polluted their pawns. Worldly places like Harvard Square know bidis all too well.

A week before in Miami, my experience was very different, but still it wasn't the novelty that caught people's noses toward my smoking, it was the familiarity.

A woman from Spain sat near me at a bar in South Beach and wanted to talk about her experiences with bidis.

A Haitian cab driver on the way to the airport recognized the smell as I let the smoke drift out the window as we listened to an angry political commercial broadcast into his car's radio from Haiti. The heavy accented voice ranted as I took another puff of my peasant's pleasure.

A South African lawyer in the airport bar recognized it and wanted one.

While waiting for the plane outside the entry to the terminal, where everybody tends to smoke in a nervous, frenzied way, a couple of people came up to me, saying, "Oh, I recognize that smell," recalling "I haven't smoked one of those since I was in Paris," or "May I have one?"

Lest I not forget the wary looks on the faces of the luggage staff who looked on in disbelief; wondering whether they should call security or not.

Indeed, it's always a good idea to keep the original packaging around in case somebody thinks you are smoking a joint.

Once, at a U2 concert, a security guy grabbed me by the arm and pulled me into the aisle, accusing me of smoking pot. He grabbed the lit cigarette, the last one I had. In the darkened gloom of Foxboro Stadium it certainly looked like a joint. He was ready to lead me away as I fumbled in my pocket for the crumpled red packaging with the surgeon general's warning crudely stuck onto it. Fortunately, a half-dozen U2 fans sitting nearby saw what was going on, had seen me smoking for most of the show, and came to my rescue. "He's just smoking those bidis," they all said. Even though I was set free, I felt like a criminal.

Three days after my trip to Harvard Square, I had seven packs left, so I was on a pack a day rate. At the time, I had a female visitor to share my fascination with. Though she claimed she didn't smoke, she did her part in depleting the reserves. I was a little tired, strung out from smoking too many of the unfiltered tiny demons. I had this heavy feeling in my lungs, but I ignored the symptoms, as though bidis had lit my soul on fire and turned the self-awareness switch to "off."

Regardless of their obviously damaging effects they had seemed to have become an invaluable ice breaker, which had opened many new faces to me. They were a mask and a crutch and an everyday thing, like orange juice or bills in the mail. Payment due? Maybe 20 years, I'd say.

Postscript: In the time since these experiences were first recorded, about two years, I guess, I have stopped smoking, and then started again, then stopped again.

Right now I'm lighting one up, joylessly though, but I'm pretty sure these flavorful little flame sticks have passed their prime as novelty items. Arizona legislators were so incensed about their incense scent that they made bidis illegal to sell in

that state (or, for at least the time being, a lot of shenanigans going on, but the fact is: I can still always buy bidis of some stripe in Phoenix), known worldwide as a hovel of reactionary Americans. Too many kids thought they were candy, due to all of the cute flavors, and lately I've noticed that the cigar store salespeople are looking at me like some kind of 40-year-old juvenile. Once again, I think about quitting, and this mental exercise seems soul inflicting to me.

But then, I keep going back to what a Cherokee shaman in Telluride once told me about smoking the peace pipe. He proclaimed the social importance of a good smoke, and said when you exhale, it's like sending out a prayer. That's the funny thing about this smoke: It's the shortest distance between you, me and big deep dark oblivion.

Which brings us back to the old man in the coffeehouse. From this resonates the line Neil Young twisted anew, "Old Man, look at my life. I'm not anything like you are."

Here's why: As the old man continued to tell his story, relating how he quit smoking because it saved him \$40,000 over 10 years, how he served in the war with the merchant marines, how what he thought was a torpedo headed for his vessel turned out to be a porpoise instead, how he thanked Jesus anyway, how he travelled the world from port to port, how he noticed that all the people in the Third World need is electric light for their thatched huts, a microwave to cook their sanctified kill, how John Kerry is a traitor for opposing the war, how a unit that refused its doomed supply mission in Iraq are traitors deserving to be shot, too, how the Native Americans should straighten up and fly right, how the world should be made safe for democracy . . . well, I had a lingering phrase that kept sticking in my head. That phrase: This guy is a total asshole. This toothless old fool is what's wrong with the U.S. of A.

Now, I have nothing against old people. In fact, based on this memo, I would say I plan on being one, too. As I sit around at coffeehouses, the enigmatic fool blowing blue smoke out like a prayer, one of my favorite things to do is look at the old couples with their New York Times and sweet drinks and little poodles barking at passersby, relaxed in a day-long pose, discussing the possible right words for the crossword puzzle, acting like they have nothing but time on their hands . . . well, the thought occurs to me: That's what I want.

For a time, thinking about the toothless merchant marine non-smoker, I had determined maybe we will all be better off getting a loan for \$40,000 and spending it all on cigarettes for the next 10 years.

Because as the Bush regime exacts the principle that vengeance is hip in the new century, I figure that is all we, as a people, have left.

Especially if the porpoise doesn't turn into a torpedo to kill the assholes, especially if the assholes rule the waves from port to port, especially if the people of the Third World replace their woodfires with Bunsen burners, especially if everyone is cowed, out of fear of being a traitor, to oppose this war, especially if the doomed supply-siders refuse to turn their swords into ploughshares, especially if Native Americans fail to remember their roots, their language, their legacy of communion with the earth, especially if somebody doesn't decide, including all arrogant bastards here in America, that the world would be just as safer, if not safer, if it didn't impose democracy -- a beautiful euphemism for corporate greed, social darwinism and conspicuous consumption. But our arrogance rules the waves, and regarding this, I take time enough for smoke.

But really, I don't have time for smoke. Sure, it's great at the office, right? First of all, it takes you away from your desk, which is always the right choice. You learn more things about your particular business between a bazillion board meetings by simply going outside and in the designated or naturally selected smoking area, talking to your co-workers about what, if anything, exactly, is going on inside. There is the downside to this, though.

Since in at least your acre of the international harvester cube farm, nothing at all is going on at that particular moment. The rationalist in me might argue, however, that I do my best work at that moment, blowing out smoke and meditating on what I should write.

Once, I meditated on how much time I spent smoking while at work at various magazines and newspapers, at how that might, in fact, be the reason why I always feel so behind the eight ball. This study in numbers was based on a previous calculation I had done to successfully demonstrate that I was commuting about two months of 24 hour days at work each year, and as a result, I was better at getting fired from work for two months or so every few years or so in order to get that time back.

But you can't really get the time back. Oh sure, where there is smoke, there's hope. Yet, when you add it all up, there isn't time enough to smoke. During an eight hour shift, for example,

you might spend 15 minutes out at each hour smoking. So, that's two hours of each day in a board meeting, and if you have an actual board meeting, then you are really behind the eight ball. Since the eight ball is round as the black earth, I think, then the final question we have to ask this orb is why, why o why, Gaia, did you put the first bid cigarette in my hands?

Was it to write this essay?

Was it because I sought out the power of the goddess in numerous ways, and that was the highway, that toke was the road? Of course.

Where there is smoke, there's hope. I have time enough for love and smoke.

Colorless

Falling from the startled sky,
a ping pong ball hits a hardwood
floor. Earthy groundlings look up
as they plant their vacillating
ports of thirsts and wolves plow
through woven bursts of hunger.
It goes like this:

Last night I realized
this tussle is bigger
than all of us, this war,
and everyone else, too.

The world does not need
saving. We need to save
each other.

In our place of power
the humidity cave contracts,
pushing me out. My wall,
porous and impossible,
quakes into birth
in a bottomed-out boat
on awkward waters.

The world does not need
saving. We need to save
each other.

Penetrate me and you will fell
the timid tree of earthen polarity.
Open yourself and I will pour out
an endless river of myth
and information. I will become
that blank, vacant stone face
of the autocratic cowboy,
plugging the pipeline
with blood and tufts
of wool, terror and wonder.

We are the air between the clouds,
the unembellished force between you,

me, silent pulse in cell phone static,
tongues that lick, pendulous TV.
If I smoke, I will be like smoke,
and of smoke I will be ... Myth
and Turks, tongue and TV. Our vapor,
my steam, colorless and apt, cools
the firestorm of the big mistake.

But all politics aside, this thing
is bigger than you, bigger than me.
We are sick and sad and shuddering
tense toward all roads leading
to darkness within darkness.
This dark place, colorless and free.
This congenial mix of ebony leaf,
taurine, fear, cell phones and TV.
The world does not need
saving. We need to save
each other. Lies and myth,
steel and money, cell phones
and tongues, Taurine and TV.

Piggy Taking Inventory

Thou earth mother
whose art made a heaven,
hollow is thy name,
hollow as a donut hole
downed by Dunkies sugar suckers
Across this dirty BVD
they come in, saltless and mean,
sucking dry for purple and orange
styrofoam cup containers,
cattle car crates of donut holes,
great salty sea-vats of caffeine,
akiline and molten H2O;
See their blood boil
Tremble at the knowledge:
To know is to burn
High blood-sugar zonks
the dust of freedom
moldered in solo donut hole
clusters. They cram their gassy
gutter rollers up to the bar,
slamming their BMW brakes,
coming to a halt, dead-walking
out of the morning light into
the Orange Coated Cluster Pill,
pulling Dunky air in behind them
in gentle whorls of ache ...
Piggy needs to take inventory, Piggy needs to take.
Not so lean and snaking mean, she sucks down
a donut hole as her last breath
and testament to the desert ...

II.

I dreamt of your skull & crossbones
and it read me like an X-ray machine
as you lay there, the master,
in our silence and slumber:
I skulked about the place
Lightning last night;

It licked the world mean
and Piggy called six times,
six! Just as we had discussed
the ghost dancers' return,
the rent of the buffalo,
the assassination
of Sitting Bull
Just as plasma fields, unified,
rippled in the chemtrail orange sky
as it tumbled up and angry roll
of pressure and purity
friction and dread.
Piggy called six times, six!

III.

You said the desert sheds
us of our vanity
as the wind blew a scare
up the trees.
You awoke in a stir
of anger and vengeance
raving about "The Law Of 3s."
You awoke in a stir
and everyday I wonder,
why Gaia? Why? So nurturing,
so pure. Why so angry? Why!
Tremble to know the angel
of vengeance: To know is to burn ...
You said something about the dark,
but light was everywhere
in a system of pretty pearly stars

IV.

Piggy crossed the desert in a Humvee
moving eastward fast, loaded down
with software and stolen sacred relics,
as her brother Jacob threw beer cans
along the long, twisty road, northeasterly ...
Piggy crossed the desert
and the mirage followed her:
A man made of metal, in a mod
fright wig, shrieking laugh,

a blast of gunmetal, modal fire,
schist, plaster, a blast of rock.
O man, you left a mess,
tore it all up out of spite,
what a waste, this scorched earth,
bedding tossed like a body
into the garbage pail pile

V.

Knocked to my knees
but bleeding clean,
Man rises and thunders!
Three a.m., O son of Sam!
She didn't consider
that castle re-enter
When all is dark.
The message:
Clear. Clear out!
Gaia scooped me out,
sucking the cold, even,
out of the refrigerator!

VI.

Piggy needs to take inventory,
Piggy needs to take.
She leaves Ulysses on the shelf
a misquote from Sir Thomas More ...
flower petals on the white tile floor.
Then you hear that sucking sound
Then your hear
that sucking sound
Coming down the highway, Whoof!
The missing inventory includes
but is not limited to:
Three red maple leaves from Walden,
one copy of the Grapes of Rats,
one moonbeam, one bolt of light,
lots of lights ..
"I am the light taker of the world!
There shall be no
interior lighting
without me!"

Lightbulbs missing. More than just three.

VII.

Ozo sam
Urizen Man!
Christian saint,
O, house full of pain
Twisted rock
upon the oak
the river bends,
it bleeds and dries
See them, over the expanse,
the hot rubbered wheels,
the Holy lands: The Bull is rising,
O, Don't mess with Tex!
Of e-mail shouts,
the doctor is out
Piggy has left the bulding
crossing state lines,
crisscrossing America
O house full of pain!
Urizen man!
O Christian Saint!
A road made of sand!

Kevlar Blankets for the Indians

No one had the courage
to sign up and fight the Patriot Act.
Time to give Kevlar blankets to the Indians.
No one had the courage
to apply their damn rights.
They just took the deal.
No one had the courage
to stay awake and wail
as the moon waned in the night.
No one had the courage
to light my cigarette and blow
the smoke right back at my face.
No one had the courage
to step off the grid with King Lud.
No one had the courage to say "No code! No way!"
No one had the courage
to faith-leap into the mythic abyss,
nor to stare into the eye in the sky with pity.
One had the courage to try ...
Another had the courage to lie ... then ...
one tried and tried and tired ... and then ...
Dear friends, this IS the end! But end fear.
No one needs to care if the sun's tongue will lick
the world clean of green carpets with steam;
nor will they tussel over
Kevlar coats & hats & blankets within the year:
As long as we are One with the Creator
all else is ash turning to cloud, turning to rain,
turning to seed ...

Portrait of a Suburban Legend as a Young Man

Street skates ply the highway
leading to the lost children
They line up in court
after scarring their arms
with bursts of blue blood
and butane

Skateboard dude. Holy ranger.
Stiff shouldered, with close-cropped hair,
lanky as a sorrowful willow,
standing at attention,
sulking in regret, hand-bound,
the silent rebuke.
Stiff shouldered, sneering wise,
the great white defendant,
in nasal tremors, flares,
stares, surrenders the deed,
the vice, the miscue.

The lawyer shouts, in xenophobic
redoubt: Tall soliders, unite!
Vivi vivi o muertes!
O, Lost children of sight!

But the judge hands over their
car keys, then, pleases them
with their rights.

What is truth, O judge
What is truth? They challenged
him, this Romeo, this stalker
with a guitar, strumming
on the sidewalk, who slept
in the desperation of this city's
plastic grace, this suburban
meatlocker of convenience

and shame, where they
pop cold pills like candy,
then get suckerpunched
by gun-toting dads
in their SUVs, and O yes,
the cops, old Cyclops,
watching these streets,
the machine eye
loading this motherlode
of video games and hormones
and fear onto the conveyer belt
of justice, O yes, your justice, sure.

They hand over their rights,
compliant souls, one by one
They hand over their rights.
Compliant souls. One by one.

They take the deal
then spin roller wheels
down the photo radar lane
lusting and loitering,
lingering, in love.

Hotel Jerome

Staircases leading up
the old mining town,
now a town of ghosts,
not ghosts so much,
people in some kind
of haze. So many steps
to climb and they resist,
step in your way, but she
makes this place her hairdo.

Set aside the residents
who fail to rhyme, act
upon their ghosts inside;
summoning the angels
who roll on scant radio
clattering on the street below
The city is falling off her back
and the dark daemons of Jerome
lust and burn, kept in tow.

Every feminine hijink
is working in bouncing,
pairs unbound, every
blitzed biker in the bar
locked onto the information
of her strawberry hips:
You out of love, into fear,
become the charmer,
drawing in the lusty,
flies licking, stuck on honey.

O, do keep your dearest near,
?cause the next day, I rise,
look up the hotel second-floor
window, up to you,
the porcelain sheen shy as your lips,
glitters, graceful, in morning light,
I quiver and crawl, take photos

of two birds on the wire,
wonderin? which one was right.

The rolling of the radio
clatters on the street below
I lust and burn and dream
of return to Hotel Jerome,
knowing I will be there,
with you or alone like
a lost thing, counted
but forgotten, coughed up,
lost things spinning, in flames,
lost things, rotten things,
rusted things, the dead stare:
Stupid little things, the blue fame,
a memory, a cool lamp
at the bottom of an empty beer can.
We left as bits of corrugated
rusted metal, cut and bled,
needing tetnus from the gash
upon our hands.

Sacrifice me. Bleed me clean.
Let me be your lamb tonight
Let me be your meat
Sacrifice me before a prayer
For thy fasted sacrificial meal
Let me be your hunted due
Let your claws sink into my skull
Send love into the Venus transit
Of my eviscerated soul
Let me be your sacrifice
beneath a streetlamp in Jerome.
Let me be your meat
Tonight, take my blood
Tonight, take my heat

Bardstown, Kentucky

Happy Hollow Road
is a place where grain elevators
watch over Ford trucks
in an asphalt parking lot
& steam rises from pipes
as birds fly south
& I lay stretched
and pray for Booker Noe,
master distiller emeritus
to explain why, exactly,
she is lying to me right
now, and I cannot forgive,
should never forgive
as I swallow my pain whole,
hoping for invisible Bourbon
to set my soul alight
as ash burns holes into my chest
and long soft little fingers
move away from me

Savage Pilgrim

Sparks flew off her fingertips
the first time they met, this much
we know. It was a blue flame, a red
dot of light. She had sad dreams, blue eyes.

When he saw her for the first time it was over
before it even began. So terrified was he
of the process, well not the process,
but the end game of love, well,
the Savage Pilgrim was terrified
of the threat of lost love,
what it could do, how it would feel
Terrified of what love can do to him;
but without love, there is death,
death moving in, fine and slow,
in white wings, a mercy.

He told her: Keep all my passwords, please,
and my money, my keys, when you receive
this note, don't look back, just go.

The Savage Pilgrim lies in state tonight.

He loved the girl so much it hurt,
he told her so much it was all he could
do to stunt his words as they crawled up
through his lips, into the Void, that botched
job, That Fake.

Silently, he would ask: Marry me? Bound me
to this mortal soil? She said No.

Preposterous, sayeth she, not the marrying kind,
and so love and failure became simultaneous
epitaphs in his brain. His weakened, tormented,
chemical addled mind. Of the heart?
Who knows for sure? The Savage Pilgrim,
a sprinter, a conjurer, in leather boots,
a time traveler, a breach birth, just another
botched job as it moved through space, a misfit

full of lies and sacred music, his tomb, his life,
his death ... the long distance race ended
when he met her.

Not much choice in these matters: Not for love,
who he loved, who he plundered, where he ran for cover,
like a vampire, he, stealing hearts for fuel, even
in the end (though the Savage Pilgrim knew better),
this is all a test, really, a lesson. Life is practice, see?

So they lay there, on the stones overlooking
the Red Rock valley. He told her: It's all right
with me if you just want to lay here and die together.
She was completely free (well, not really)
but connected to him (yeah, right buddy)
in ways they would never completely understand.

In the Valley of Death, the psychoanalyst roamed,
she bobbed and weaved through a dotted juniper grove,
stamping through pinion and prickly pear below.
That was right after he saw the face of Gaia
in meditation, of Esha Na Glese, of Changing Woman,
with a broad pudgy face, broad lips, wide forehead,
bad teeth (now that was a detail he would have never
considered ...)

There would be no sexual healing, no earth healing,
for the Savage Pilgrim, who lies in state here,
stretched out, stretched, a stretching wretch,
victim of psychoanalyzing half-truths, and worse,
dopey metaphysical mush about love and lust, truth and trust,
for he knew: The other side of every wing is higher, even,
than the spiritual thing.

Gaia, moving in mysterious ways, was just a manifestation,
and so the Savage Pilgrim moved across the earth and plowed
it asunder; haunting for the sound of her thunder, her body
moving under. For her torso to worship or whip, it was obvious.

His church was her passion, his city her lips, her toes he kissed
in mythic bliss. But she forgets like the moon bouncing
back light, like a monsoon storm in summer, barren and cold by the fall.

Weary and old, with a love that just scolds, frowning

its brow, all enclosed, refusing his heat
as the Savage Pilgrim ran from his dimming soul and found it, again,
on the empty still streets before dawn. For a time, her churned,
for maybe a full moon, maybe an eclipse, maybe two, yearning for her
touch.

But ashen and true, a white lunar dust, she made a bland dream
of mountain and bones. The Savage Pilgrim, in a chilly mornin`
moondance, walked into the city square, left on a razor sharp boat,
a fine edge he borrowed from some woman,
some new soon-gone tomorrow.
He lifted from here, in the Tao of Ra, dreaming of her black eyeliner,
her jaw, eclipsing his blood within the dark
in staccato chants, morbid, then silent, his last big romance.

Seventy Two Hours as a Social Darwinist

To the sound of silent cyberpunk we go:
Spent seventy two hours as a social Darwinist
Gotta get ahead of you (Seventy two hours)
Seventy two hours as a Social Darwinist
Gotta get an edge over the loss,
vengeance is hip you know
Gotta get a handle on the guilt I miss
gotta get a multiple set a girlies to kiss

Spent seventy two hours as a social Darwinist
Gotta get over you (seventy two, seventy two, seventy two hours)
Seventy two fucking shitty hours as a Social Darwinist
As you tried to convince me of your Know Nothing bliss,
I let my eyes look away, if for just a minute (Seventy two, seventy two
seventy two)
Being anti-social ain't darlin little Darwin
You won't like the feeling, your empty hand will be shaking (seventy two,
seventy two)
Won't like the smell as the whole world is quaking (seventy two, seventy
two seventy seventy seventy two)

(Refrain)

On the third day I flew across the sky
rebuilt the temple of love, I did pray
Sure, I fell, makin' a heaven of hell,
and man O man let the bunker busters fly.
I ran for cover, O sweet Seventy Two (eyes of blue, eyes of blue)
After Seventy two hours as a social Darwinist
I ran for cover, looking for the way you look at me,
hoping and I'm praying to look up to you.

(Jaggedy Guitar riffs here)

Seventy hours as a social Darwinist
for just three days I forgot about you (seventy two, O, seventy two, yeah)
Seventy two hours of living from your hand to my fist
Separate but equal, sure, gotta get a step on you.
Treated every living thing like my private little toy
Dreamin of the cosmos now, when I was just a boy
Wore your love like a glove but there was no joy

Gotta get around these blank walls, gotta get over you

Black Madonna

In the beginning was de word,
de talking drum & de invention of sword,
followed by de blood of de prophets,
and de blood of de best sanger.
He sang rael well. He was a rael good sanger.
The roll of daughter blues, of Martin Luther Jr. hues,
in France, ders de clues, de meaning & good news,
the ebb and the flow, de coming and de go.
Away from de ego, into our DNA soul.
Her graal is de Grail, since de sweet Sarah did sail.
She sang rael well. She was de rael sangraal.

**In the Beginning
There Was a Word
from Our Sponsors**

Welcome, O welcome
the many winged archetypes,
supple and black,
enfolded in milky white,
milky way white,
hanging in midair,
peering through
the portal, the slinky tube
of the time traveling
Dream Catcher wheel.

Help is on the way ...
Hooray. Hooray.
Help is on the way ?
Hooray. Hooray.

For whom?
I cannot say.
They exist in the imperfect
Shapeless spaces unifying
Our oppositional own imperfect
Spaces. They resonate in
The ripples of the swimming
Pool light at moonlight,
And intimate choices
Made by man and volcano
Long ago.

Help is on the way ?
Hooray. Hooray.
Help is on the way ..

As they wave, pleading,
Begging for business deals,
Moving closer to our dreams,
Tumbling through timeless

Synchronistic switches
That speak our name.
They twitch in the fierce
Firestorm of the Eve-bitten
Apple, and dance,
frightened and purple
Help is on the way,
They hope and pray:
Hooray. Hooray.
Their master, like ours,
Has up and gone away.

The Gothic Playhouse

She knows we are watching ?
The rows of flowers, I mean.
They feel us, our hardness
Beneath impish petals ..

O how they lean. You can just
Burn them in permafrost temptation,
Stunned solidity, escapist solutions,
Theatrical human glue mendings,
The box office disconnects of love,
The heart, the sickened old heart,
The swinging rhythm of the play,
Held over, the amputated hand,
Held taught until it applauds,
Bursts out, busts out, held tight
In the embrace beneath the sacred
geometric Etherian proscenium stares,
Shape changers in the spotlight,
Masonic brick, stone, barbed rebar,
Twisted by the pleasures of rain
Soaking down to the center of the earth,
This hearth, denying Manhattan heat,
Rising equal to the brown cloud,
Distributed in leaflets into a sea of saline
And walking meat, all to the benefit of birds,
Pushed around by sensational breezes ?

They come, cloistered here
In this downtown Gothic playhouse,
Sit still, pert, filling up red cushioned seats,
Grinding down their fine eats, whispering
In penumbral light, vanishing into bliss.

The Diva stands, soaks in the night,
Empty inside, a messenger, a portal,
A lacerated vessel of both dark and light,
All sponsored by corporate angels
As the demigods of ego and desire

Blow through her flaxen hair.

Elijah

The raven mocked the wolf
In telepathic echoes,
In impervious communiques
Bounding off the sandstone
Walls north of Baal.
Bible black carrion and hummock bread ?
Each taste a feast of denial, turning thoughts
Of candle oil into acetylene joys
For twenty centuries of drought.

Elijah communes with the One,
Dodging white-hot torment at noon,
Gouging on locusts, batting away
Frisky cave bats at night, shaking,
In silence at snakes that crawl,
Bleachy or blue at until dawn,
Until they are tranquil at dusk,
The calm of heat, brighter than neon
Red, rising at the first spark of stones ?

There is smoke and fire enough to eat
All of the grey devils, their brains,
Their wisdom, their greasy flesh,
Feeding electromagnetic energy
Into a second millennia.

Coulda been a habadasher.
Coulda cut stone.
Coulda built three temples
To overshadow the lost innocence
Of the three-fingered whore.

Longed but did not lust. His only error
Was trusting the raw earthen crust.
He could have done better
If he was just one of us

The Second Eclipse

I wept about what I feared,
Feared what she wept,
Wrote up a list of timid sorrows
And faults, fell dead, laying awake,
Trying it out in wordless whispers
Into a mirror: Pride, hypocrisy, manic
Moods and shame; finally fell asleep,
A fuel-stained moment of empty bliss.
She pegged her donkey to a target
And sealed it with a kiss. Told me
I had to wait till the second eclipse.
I turned a half-moon, mooned white my ass,
Unbuttoning my Levi mask of blue ash,
Went back to my puny dry barrio abode,
Listened to the sweet Popsicle truck bells
And faced a loaded gun. Couldn't keep still.
Her delicate rebirth. My cold season.
My prayer, a whisper of self-made ritual,
My salty Hohokam tongue licking
Small circles around
The anatomy of love.
You crave my body, I crave you,
When moonlight passes cool.
I live in terror and wonder
Of a woman's churning bones.
Listening to music
So loud it's not true.
I could go deaf
Trying not to
telephone you.

Le Bicycle Thief

Fear not thy brother in shame.
Given the opportunity, in the past,
I would do the same. May my bicycle
wheels roll you to your dream.
Fear not thy sister in shame.
You did you what did, as did I;
in warlord acts, we are the same.
May my lost sacred things,
propel you to a new dream.
Fear not thy angels of thy mind`s eye,
whose silent code I dare not speak.
You come to me in my lidded twilight,
your dragon eyes and wide black wings
only come when I know and believe.
May you lead us all to a perfect
pretty dream, as us to you,
reason to bring Ra back home.
Fear not, my love, I am all
now that I do not say. Your life
is tough, but love is enough
to fill my wind-dried sea.

War Treaty

O you know the magic
words to lay me low
in your unchecked depths
of irrational rationality
Human only half, Horus the other:
In one hand I carry an olive branch,
in the other hand, fitful flighty war.
If we can't be peaceful as two eagles
flying apart, what is the hope
for the rest?
Let us strike a deal,
O grim Priestess,
to make the dark angel
shudder in woe.

Milton Morning Song

Celestial heavenly lights blinking
At dawn over Camelback Mountain.
The rose is left in view, rosy
And true. The sky is a blue frame
For madness or his nameless name.

Milton wrote, he choked and smoked:
The mind is its own place,
and in itself,
Can make heaven a hell,
A hell of heaven.

But if this the Void,
it's a Void of truth.
The stirs of green cirrus streaks
In the cloud, the chair-back
Alignment of Venus and Mars,
The waning dusty moon;
All simple proof there's no real
Distance between me
And unknowable you.

Silhouette of a Praying Monk,
I smolder and move
to get a better view,
lay my shitty pocket things
into a fire pit and sit
on a merry temporary throne.

Light up. Listen to
a raven's haunting call,
The trickling of cool waters running
Beneath the surface of the desert:
O Milton, poor bastard, you only
Had it half right. Man, his heart;
The only Void in view.

I climb this tree, O Bard,
And sing a sad song for thee:
Thy sun,

thy surface,
thy furnace.

Queen of the Tigress

Done early, done often,
My queen sifts in the shadows
Of silky sheets; in the indivisible
Darkness of morning, she disappears
In a bed of cloud, perfume and loam
I wonder: Is she really there?
Is my dawn receiver receptor
Merely reacting to trickster light?
Returning to mount her,
my Tigress Queen,
And release all the pleasures
Of a spinning soul & sour world.

Hermes the Dog

Chasing birds two-by-two
In morning light, I, a Ra,
Who comes long in shadows,
Dies, trickling at dusk, sifts
In the breeze for cigarette butts
At the hidden hacienda.
Morning here, is lined up with stars,
Camelback Mountain holds back
The rabbits running across
The Manicured trail, a still pool.
The roadrunner is still possible.
In deed we leave Hermes the dog
Suddenly, let go the leash,
And drive away. Oh sure,
Last night she killed some worms
And took them right into her mouth.
Hermes ran and ran, chasing our car,
Despite being tired from chasing birds
Through the prickly pear, the palm,
The lamp-lined thoroughfares. He never
Got to fall asleep, a cuddling kitten.

Barrio Fire Kiss

Don't have much time to smoke,
damn, I line up the little critters
in a row upon the ashtray, unfinished
bizness. And unfinished is as business
does and does not. Fear of failure
and whatnot.

What I do know, well, the teen Latinos
line up in the stairwells here,
kissing up a firestorm.

Time enough to swell in the emotions
stirring in your sudden disappearance:
O gawd, how many cassette recordings
you must inspire. O gawd, that hope
you might listen to this song or that,
so you feel what we all end up feeling.
Longing along, leaving it alone.

A kiss under a streetlight, a wave
goodbye. I guess where there's fire,
there's hope. I don't have time to smoke.

Raising Arizona

Caught a hot summer updraft outta Sky Harbor,
lifted over the barrios of the sun, the hosed
prostitutes along Roosevelt, where beauty
is as far away as the savior, his hands,
reaching out, graceful, willing to love,
despite all that damned human DNA in his loins,
as a handout, stay quick for a five-dollar table dance,
the only cure for the moon-bounced heat of el sol,
and water, always lacking, strolls on down the street.
The girl trashed the place. Every living, breathing
thing cussed up a torment. Walked right in, kicked her way
through security, demanding money and vengeance;
Which is quite popular for most. Vengeance is hip, right?
'Cause even if unattended baggage gets the evil eye,
we are living in diaphanous times. When the scroll
unrolls, crackling, and the creaking and the blind
call out for reason and the shrieking: O fuck, I'm leaving.
These night lights, flying over Central in wind-blown Phoenix,
illumines the real issue going on here: The lack of rain.

Horus

Internet accessed
Horus the database,
and banks sold
you my name,
and with my database
you make war.

Brahman

Jesus walked
two thousand years
away from Hindu masters.
Even Cicero knew:
Nothing is new
with the eternal.

Young Girls

Easy to talk about nothing.
Come like a storm and go in gloom.
Shallow waters dry on a lukewarm,
empty moon.

Planet

Glued to the tube.

Swirling, agaze.

Bombing is Olympic sport.

The Weatherford Hotel

Smoking Sher Bidis
in front of brick made Charley's.
The red wine glasses clink
and loved ones clatter.
Went next door, business booms.
Looking through the round clear glass -
the mug of Ed Abbey,
the monkeywrencher.
That Cowboy hat; ah, el sol nuestro estrella.
That white beard, elfish grin, I tell you,
I still saw the white light in his eagle eyes.

- *Flagstaff, 1996*

Two Sleeping Tigers

I, the living high-wave amplitude
of sleep disturbance, disturb thee,
my sweet imperfect beauty,
in coughs and sputters
and whoring whirls of ache.

You stir as you hear my sick heart
quicken, hear thunder in eyes that blink
You mutter meek slumber sounds, not a purr,
dreaming of antelope and emu, the great wide plain,
wheels spinning round and round
Soft, hot-soaked meanders of tangled blankets,
cloud banks of knowing pairs, you and I,
we are unruly emotions, unbinding in rules,
tossing in the shallow sleepy deeps
of a dark world imploding, spinning apart,
quaking in the volcano's molten cone

When I awake before dawn
I kiss thine eyes
and crawl upon the hearth
a stalking Romeo on misfit earth
There are no little lies in you,
nothing I can find but innocence
and periodic mists of bottomless brood
As you dream, I scheme, scour the earth
for sign of the easiest meatiest meat
Now I rise, being way too careful, remote
and tiptoe out the door and into the heat
having learned how to leave you alone
to let you grow and gather those old woes
for a circle of stones, minding the bad omens
alerting you to self-fulfilling stars, finding
you inert as a lunar eclipse, parched dry lips

And now I, in undying low-wave longitude, long,
lie down, weary and old, grimacing the hyper-manic
hunt for enduring truth, running from imagined angst
and for this I am grateful, for this I give thanks
for my still strong growl, but still hoping

for a soft purr, a paw, a little tiger smile,
good spirits, good humor, good love
and abundance to last a Serengetti mile

Sioux Me

She gave me an Ogallala Sioux bracelet,
My Ogallala blue-eyed Sue
I wear this key, this bind to keep
From going blind in her underworld.
So it starts to come apart,
My Ogallala blue-eyed Sue
The black porcupine twines unwind.
Entropy threatened to unbind. The blues
are good, oranges, the reds, the yellows,
all kinds of code of striped white peace paint.
O, what happened to you?
O, My Ogallala blue-eyed Sue
The adornment grasped to me, a circle
around my left wrist, and unraveled.
I stumbled in her dark, her bone-dry
Sea of Tranquility rubbed my clockwise
Watch against her counter-clockwise screw.
O, what happened to you
My Ogallala blue-eyed Sue
In a war-painted world, I couldn't
help but think, this was very bad magic,
so I took it off, sadly, mournful in disgrace,
couldn't get the star for me to shine in her face.
I asked for more the muse to hand-bound me,
But she was bone-dry in her stormy Sea of Tranquility.
O, what happened to you
O My Ogallala blue-eyed Sue
Rather than give up, I became the re-engineer,
mixed an epoxy of Ogallala Sioux glue:
a mend of Scotch tape, Elmers and wax,
a molten melt of a sacred red candle, which I fire up
whenever her darkness gets outta sight.
Now its on my right wrist, fragile to the touch,
Ghost dancing in the space between my skin
and the porcupine quills, but it's just too tough,
only our air-tight grasping makes us true,
a tentative clasp is just not enough.
O, what happened to you?
O, My Ogallala blue-eyed Sue

Ipswich
at
War

**Prologue:
Media Arts in War**

What is happening to artistic expression since Sept. 11 as its transmitted through any kind of media (or anyone claiming to be a medium), from the political satire of David Letterman to the mega-bombastic sequel to the classic post-apocalyptic thriller in any theater near you. To the episodes of Survivor. To every creative impulse that every tried to be a light in the darkness; to all those media images that are flowing through us now: How do we respond? How do we deal creatively with our own struggle to find the appropriate voice? How do we know the right thing to say, when we see death, so much death? He do we contend with what David Byrne of the Talking Heads once anticipated in Life During Wartime:

Aint got no speakers

Aint got no headphones,

Aint got no music to play.

After many knee-jerk reactions to Sept. 11, including a slew of benefit performances by rock stars and actors, there was a shaky sense of assurance. After an alleged victory over the Taliban, Americans have crawled out of the foxholes and flooded back into the malls. Sundays gladiatorial epic, otherwise known as the NFL, stormed right on through to the Super Bowl. A country dotted like a pushpin map of the Stars and Stripes remains as a menacing reminder of who we have become.

Anything that strays from this patriotic vision is likely to be, with the force of a fully diligent flight crew, wrestled to the ground and whisked away.

A terrible beauty is born.

~

Seth Butler, out of a concern for air pollution on North Shore of Massachusetts and a need to burn film for a photo essay for a class at Montserrat College, loaded a roll of film and fired.

He pointed his weapon, a truth-telling device, at the churned and weathered brown spires of the Salem Power Plant. Since photos never lie, or, at least, a picture beats a thousand words, he figured in some small way the images might flesh out of the mystery and wonder of the place. He thought the suspected poisons made possible on a daily basis by the plant might be explicated by his pictorial essay, and through this kind of

| Ipswich at War

truth we might all be saved from this inconvenience, or, at least, that we might all enjoy some breathtaking pictures of the alleged poisoning taking place.

In fact, such satanic mills have been fodder for artists since William Blake. In fact, power plants and factories will always be great targets for interesting photos. Especially now. Technological wonders perched on American shores will always make great targets. For artists. And for terrorists.

Which, for Seth Butler, age 22, of Vermont, became part of the problem.

After Sept. 11, as a he snapped on the lens and took in the fall New England air, he looked at the monumental smokestacks, trying to see what the relationship was between himself, the lens and the world at war----not so much the brother-against-brother battle, but man-against-nature war.

I was just struggling with how to deal with it, he says.

~

If the medium is the message, then the date, Sept. 11, is the portal where we pour all of our pain, and then, put it on display.

The message is our mantra, our artistic Alamo. Lest we forget, every shark-eyed cub reporter tooling around the town halls of Salem, Beverly, Gloucester and Marblehead has felt a nearly subconscious duty to post that date, Sept. 11, at least once or twice, like staples into the newsprint, glossy or cheap, of whatever passes for local media.

One reporter, well after the attacks, typed Sept. 11 in four times within the text of an article that had absolutely nothing to do with the war or terror, real or imaginary. (Well, actually, even in some tangential way, it was hard to fail to find some way the war against terror might apply to each and every thing we did in a daily lives, from trips to the mall to articles written under intense deadline.)

Plagued by nightmares before a pilgrimage to Ground Zero in New York City, the writer provided repeated semi-accidental advertising for our national numeral of mourning, anger and fear, for all of the shell-shocked sensibilities, destructive or creative, which launched our nation into a heightened state of awareness (whatever that means) on Sept. 11. To write Sept. 11 in copy, in short, became our patriotic duty as muckrackers and documentarians for our times.

For example, so far this article has used the date five times. The date, Sept. 11 (OK, thats six) flows like water, like shorthand, or better yet, a link to the streaming media of shock, horror, and yes, nationalistic fervor, our personal bond to (what it believes to be) justice and (unbelievable) vengeance. By expressing oneself in this way, in times of mass hypnotic states of hysteria, war, famine and scary bad TV, we discover the most constructive choice in terms of reacting to the world around us.

I mean, why send a missile when maybe a simple e-mail note or a Hallmark card would do? Hey, we write, Remember Sept. 11, and get well soon.

~

As they say, the medium (Or, the media) is the message. So is writing the date, Sept. 11 (seven). On posters, stamps, newspaper supplements, whatever we can get our hands on.

But what is the most appropriate way to express oneself on the big blank page of life during a time of national trauma, and yes, tight security? The Urizen archons of control, the warlords and the convergent media paradigms, are all in sync with the Union at War. What if you are a dissenter? A pacifist? With dark skin? Maybe even a Canadian.

Or worse, an Islamic art dealer who needs to take a plane to Paris?

A Hub taxi driver?

A Quaker who just woke up one day, and, feeling his or her oats, decided they had something to say?

A photographer on the North Shore of Massachusetts who pointing and firing near some power plant smokestacks?

Better think twice. First figure out if its naughty, or, nice. Think twice before you click.

~

Seth Butler, age 22, photography student at Montserrat, isnt an idiot. As a cub photojournalist he knew that when firing off snapshots of satanic mills in Salem during wartime, its best to let the most immediately available authority in on what you are up to.

I went up to the police officer out front of the plant, gave them three IDs, and warned them that I was shooting photos for a project, he says.

Butler thought hed received permission, at that point, since he was on public property, to start firing away with his telephoto lens. The guard at the gate said sure, whatever.

But then this guy pulls up, a security guard, he says. I just wanted to do my work. They told me I had to leave.

~

The bombardment of the global media, crashing all day, all night upon the New England shores, lighting up the giant video screens of Times-Square (still standing) and the pubs of London (last time checked), and yes, your living room, is overwhelming.

Our sense of freedom and free expression, in every aspect of our daily lives, from Paris to Portsmouth, is being critically impacted. Especially so for those of us in the

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curious position of being at the seacoast front of a new kind of war when the media buzzword, as in terror, is the message, and the enemy could be just about anyone.

Since Sept. 11, as a photographer, says Ron DiRito, a teacher at Montserrat whose specialty is art and media and its context and meaning in society, I dont think they understand what its like for us. I think the rest of the country doesnt have the same kind of ..., he pauses, looking for ways to explain how it feels to be at the front of this new war, then, completing the thought: Everybody in New York understands it better than other people in the country. The physical distance changes our perception of something. There is this overwhelming sensibility.

We have learned to tolerate each other better, but on the other hand, there is that thing going on, you dont know who to suspect. This is still relatively trying to be understood. I dont think we have processed it culturally and socially.

~

They watched me leave and get back into my car, says Seth Butler, spurned photojournalist after being unable to capture very much of any possible dangers, through photographic realism, of the alleged poisoning of the sky at the Salem power plant.

As he moved on into an intersection, at a speed of 15 miles per hour, the legal limit, a white pickup truck sped in front of Butlers vehicle and slammed on the brakes. He must of have going thirty five when he went by me and stopped, he says.

This cop says, Some people want to talk to you.

Another police car pulled up, and then another. The local arm of the security state was coming down on Seth Butler, age 22, of Vermont, like something out of a Raymond Chandler novel.

A large black SUV with tinted windows pulled up next. I kept my hands in clear view, he said. I had the film ..., he laughed nervously, visibly shaken, as he spread photos of American flag imagery upon a table in the media lab basement at Montserrat.

I was in possession, he admits, of concealed film.

~

For all practical intents, seemingly, the latest CD by Madonna is rendered not so much obscene but most certainly oblique. On the surface level (which really the only level you can really make money in the entertainment business) its a commercial question. What are audiences looking for?

Perhaps everyone has seen enough. That was at least the sentiment immediately after the attacks exploded so cinematically onto the real worlds stage. While it was hard to know what to feel, the natural inclination toward unity, even for writers, artists and performers, who are often malcontents and social renegades, even they seemed to join up and salute to the brave new paradigm: grieve now, kick ass later.

Oh sure, there was that initial sense that pyrotechnic violence on theater and television screens was a thing of the past.

A lot of people had the same impression, that it seemed like Hollywood, not the real thing, said David Goss, director of fine arts at Gordon College, of the terrorizing video of the Sept. 11 attacks. Prior to the terrible events of that day, and the subsequent season of terror that followed and continues to this day, the main concern for the planners of fall concerts, for example, might be quality, recognition, publicity, recognition, ticket sales, recognition, who might get top billing, and oh yeah, recognition. But now, everything has changed.

People are feeling uneasy about what they once considered to be so exciting, Goth said.

~

My first night in Ipswich was Sept. 18, 2001, and it revealed something ... at least in terms of the ripple effects (tidal wave, actually, in hardy Ipswich sea-shanty talk) of the post-Sept. 11 realization. I was feeling world weary. So much moving from town to town. I just wanted to be an old tree, not a burned out leaf in the

crosswind of global or civil war. All the same, on that day, Sept. 18, I was feeling thankful for having found some shelter in the storm.

More out of accident than a sense of patriotism, I wore my blue Ralph Lauren, Polo Jeans Company, RL, baseball cap, which features stripes, but no stars, because Mr. Lauren is the only star to be allowed on this particular head-based insignia. I was a human billboard for Ralph Lauren, patriot ... even if most people only recognized my tribal signifier: red, white and blue.

I had a beat up used copy of Marshall McLuhans *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* in my back pocket, as well as a childlike curiosity about this strange town called Ipswich. Down the street I went, toward the town center, a babe in the woods beneath a dusky sky of implied imaginary terror.

~

Is the media really ready to fess up, since Osama-style violence is only the copycat caricature of three, hmmm, maybe four late 80s get-the-terrorist films, two of those starring Bruce Willis, who can walk on the White House lawn, most likely, any day of the week without an invitation. Are post-Sept. 11 tastes no longer able to stomach the video violence?

Yeah, right.

You only need to consider the many years conditioning, that is, whats required to stomach a totalitarian storm of Christmas-season escapes into *Star Wars*, *hobbits* and pre-teenage detective wizards, *Monsters, Inc.*, *The Sopranos* and on into the phantasm we go.

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In the global mythic village, the plastic monsters and war toys are as real, within the own scale, as anything you can find in the jumbled up world. Just another mask for our national fascination with violence, which is still, quite surely, anything but satiated.

While the purpose of art has not changed, the art of repurposing myth towards the designs of the machine are more than ever apparent. But money machines, still, easy to come by, for some, are less easy for others. Starving artists included. So then, the big money still wins. The purpose of mass entertainment (as opposed to art), taking its Dec. 7 queue from the way the film industry rallied to the cause in the 1940s, now becomes a mouthpiece for that very same machine.

And its only beginning: Coming to a theater near you----a lock-step, achy breaky heart sort of thing, with a plastic Bill Murray doll for the marketing tie-in. Its a pull-up-your-bootstraps at the boot-camp sorta flick. With real napalm, and, real renegades to storm the unsafe gates of the Republic.

~

Just then, it happened: a spontaneous moment of humanity. A grizzled old man walked toward me. Small towns such as Ipswich, especially those that have made peace with nature, require us to say hello. Its the decent thing to do. But a

week after Sept. 11 everyone was being decent to one another. A crying of our lot in each and every eye.

But this time my fellow pedestrian and I appeared to be on a collision course. The man just came right up to me, took my hand and shook it, saying, God bless you, brother.

I was taken aback. Maybe giggled out of a sense of surprise. I figured he saw my cap and was thanking me for my heroism. Yes, Ipswich is a friendly little place, but connections like these, random acts of humanity, were taking place all over the country. For the first time in a long time we noticed each other, realizing we all had something----loss----to share.

~

As Boston political satirist Jimmy Tingle put it, in a post-Sept. 11 performance at the Wingate Street Micro Theatre in Haverhill, Massachusetts, everything has changed.

As part of the performance, serious even for a satirist in less apocalyptic climes, he read from a poem he had written in reaction to Sept. 11, 911: Prayer for America.

Theres a hole in the tip of Manhattan

A hole in the soul of America

A hole in the center of our psyche A hole in the foundation of our confidence

Theres a hole in the faith of our country That fills churches in search of our God

Theres a crack in the national mirror empty chairs around the family table dark

houses of our missing neighbors Vacant desks of our absent workers

On our streets, There's a wail from the widows with candles sobs from the

orphaned with pictures the face breaks on the lawyer of the dead womens

husband flags and flowers for the public servants

Theres a hole in the soul of America Afraid with the televised pictures Numb with

the morning papers Grieving for the land they loved Grieving for the land they

lost Grieving for the innocent victims Grieving for the broken families Grieving for

the friends still weeping Grieving for the ones who fight fire Grieving for the ones

who fight crime Grieving for the volunteers by the thousands Grieving for the City

that never Sleeps Grieving for the City on a Hill

Theres a hole in the soul of Humanity And I pray for all of our leaders Good

people and well intentioned Condemned to retaliation,

Ipswich at War

Doomed to retribution

Sentenced to seek revenge

~

It happened again in the local café. Strangers meeting eye to eye, recognizing the shock and the grief and pain. We all had good radar for it, at least until Thanksgiving. We were awakened out of our complacency, if for just a few weeks, months or years, depending on your sensitivity to such things as alcohol, Duncan Donuts coffee or intensive psychotherapy.

Times such as these bring out the best, and also the worst. It has always been that way. In 1916, a small contingent of Irish patriots (today we might call them terrorists), took over a post office and ended up dying in a martyrdom of British bullets and fire.

The poet, W.B. Yeats, reflecting on the shock waves the event created in Irish society, wrote the following: All is changed, changed utterly. A terrible beauty is born.

America is that terrible beauty now.

~

After his 45-minute roust, Seth Butler, spurned photojournalist, put his Greenpeace passions aside over the Salem power plant, and started taking photographs of American flags. But rather than puffing up his frames with a patriotic fervor, his eye seemed to be finding something else. An irony. A horror. A beauty. A terror. And more than anything else, a sense of alienation.

For the first time in my life, I was feeling like a stranger in my own country, he said. They basically insulted me. They asked me why I wasn't in Vermont (which is where his family lives). I was being very open about the whole thing. I was being very civil about the whole thing.

Im trying to deal with an event, a problem, over air quality, carcinogens, a serious matter. I ended up being shut down. I tried to work from farther away, and ended up trying to look at it in different contexts.

But never did I think that I was going to run into the FBI as a college student.

This was history. I didnt want to give up. Somebody needs to be working, recording. It doesnt stop, and Im not going to either.

Of the flag photo project, a follow up to his season of hope, terror, frustration, whatever, Butler has decided to call the series Tattered.

A terrible beauty is born.

~

During those fall nights and days in Ipswich, I worked the late-night copy desk at The Salem Evening News. More than anything else, I remember the horrible anxiety I felt each time the 10 p.m. news came on in the newsroom. It got to the point where I was afraid to look over my shoulder and at the television. But still, I got all of the sound. Each night, the local anchorpersons would gleefully report the days horrors, the new death count for the Sept. 11 attacks, and, of course, handy health tips for the best way to deal with the anthrax threat.

One night I decided to ask another copy editor, who also lived in Ipswich, about the God bless you guy. He told me a story that I did not expect.

He said the man was a kind of local loony. Somewhere along the line the man, who had been a boxer but decent civil servant, lost his marbles. Something to do with a divorce. Figures.

In fact, he had been coming up to people in Ipswich and blessing them for years.

This stunned me. My impression, as first impressions often are, was incorrect. The God bless you guys greeting to me was just another day in the life of

Ipswich. It had nothing to do at all with the sudden wash of compassion and kindness in American life. He was always like that.

It was then that I realized this: While everything has indeed since Sept. 11 has changed, the biggest change of all, the one that I couldnt detect, was within me.

So, let me just say this: God bless you all, brothers. A terrible beauty is reborn.

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Rebuilding a doll house
Piece by piece

Little wood beams
Adjustable walls

Suitable for child safety
Out on the street

Flags at half mast
Raised after one official
Week of mass mourning

Cinematic violence
Blowing a red leaf
Through the dented car:
You know, Our separation
Is bigger than
The both of us

We are memory,
Clinging, clutching
pebbles in prayer
Each stranger
We meet has
The same stones
And rubble Of shock
Eye to eye

Wellington Station

I saw you across
the commuter aisle
twitching and huffing
at Wellington Station.

I, too, am a loser
in the war. I lay
down my sword.
Set my auto alight.
Left it a funereal husk,
just a memory
to the challenges
of sunny October days.

Be still, my brother,
my angel of anxiety.
I see you gasping,
reading the news,
oh so careful
about what you touch,
what we all touch.
We meet in common
places of terror, our
shared communiqués ...

Oh veteran.
Oh war lord;
I lay down my arms,
I comply, I let go,
I ride smoothly
into the inner-city
bowels of tension
and glittering dreams.

Then I will take on the attire
of Napoleon's three-pointed hat.
I will curtsy, bend, that is,
into the sweet reflection
of what a peaceful city
wants to be.

The war news is hard,
ubiquitous as pearls and steel
and mobile phones.

My train runs silently,
beneath the stars and stripes
of all conquering heroes.

The Bunker Hill spire
is muted through glass
running by in the opposite,
direction. I descend
down the catwalk
of morbid hell. Silence
encloses me in a lightless
pipe of dread.

I am a monster.
I confess it all.
Just this, please,
after this night,
on the battlefield
of Boston,
will you let me
safely caress
my love, my sweet
daughter's face, or,
anything else I can keep
perfect or sane
for a whole rail yard
of days.

Let me retreat
with my bag of games,
my pen, my spear,
my telefrantic machines.
Let me walk, just one more time
into the target valley
of technology.

And though I will breathe
the very microbes of hell,
through pile drives, tunnels,
lost wheels and poisoned wells,

the endless botched catacomb
of the world you made:
Oh Wellington, allow my return
to Corsica, even Elbe, I will allow.

Where I can be at peace.
With who? Myself, at least,
as I wait for the night
to fall upon your victory.
If Napoleon could stoop
this far into the refrigerator,
he would have become
a suburban monk like me.

Refugees

Bandits running
Remote country,
One day short
Of a room,
Exporting
a truckload
Of expectations
And pre-fabrication.

We are the heathen.
Agents of
the Axis
Of Evil
until proven
innocent

Light is leaking
A little out of each
And every fall day.
The sheltered share
Nothing, not even to rent,
And our belongings,
Or sense of our stuff,
Stretched in piles,
Like cairns to give us
Direction over

The plain.
Our hands are cold
And our tires hot,
Numb to the labor
Of the road.

The trees are gray
And the ground is blood damp...
Every day A little hope occurs,
Another button pops
Out of our tattered coats
And runs away
To a better place
Beneath a hotel room bed.

We burn ephemera,
Mortar memories,
In the fireplace with a haphazard
Bundle of stolen logs,
A threadbare furnace
Burning hot and hungry
For some bastard
To cut us a break.
If all this roaming
Made sense
We would be laughing.

Long icicles
Suspended above
The solemn creek,
Wise to the leaves
Turned to red, fallen
To the fetid bottom
Of the shady places.

If all this roaming
Makes sense,
We will notice the sound
Of an indivisible flock of birds,
Making love, hurrying then
To our day, a regular day,
In sensible pleasure
And finally,
A limit to our pain.

Sanctuary

Alone in a one-room sanctuary
A girl wants to give me a TV
And I resist
I say no, I need to hear, well,
More like filter through
To find
The voice
Of myself
In my head

Life in war sharpens senses
And I am well prepared
All stocked up
On clean socks

The city is a skin,
a cloth against shock,
embracing steel
I wed or shed, depending
On what time of day

A leaf falls outside
My window.
I take this
as a good sign:

The civil right
Of gravity is still
In force past dark.

Everything amuses me.
The ethereal clutter of this room
Reminds the voice
That memory is more clear
When the gargoyles
Shadow shimmers
From the window
To the wall.

A girl wants to give me a TV.

I shudder, pray and check the lock.

Birth Canal

Before I was born
I was an anxious young man.
A premature baby
Crawling in a toxic
Sea of sand.

Oh harsh light.
Oh mother. I left
You for this?
The panic I feel,
The destruction
that saves me,
Is older than I.

Now my birth
is wearing me out.
I leave the birth canal,
And looking back,
Am born again.

Which is why
Creature comfort,
The soft, wet womb
Is a fire that lights
A furnace beneath
My eternal arse.

Which is why
My escape imprint
Has been lifelong,
A pattern to understand,
Address and alter.

So I dont gasp
For air in your
Loving arms,
Or take the back door
out the burning fort.

Boston Harbor

So I descend into the dark city
Beneath the sea
Singing and swimming
Asking, to myself
Why do I want to go
Down there, the deep diver,
saying, to the first fish
I see, Jeez, my wife says
I gotta quite diving
Or she'll divorce me. God how Ill miss her.

Then I return to the surface
All mangled from the currents
And dodging sharks and seaweed,
Navigating by sun streams
Of electrical light through
Green eddies and mysts of mirth

All wrecks down there, Oh lord, I know.
A lot of them. And sunken treasure, too,
But not much worth taking.
A lot heavier than
whole chains of rusted anchors.

My tanks of air get clanking Silly,
all choked up and gasping.

Cat and Andrew's Ring

Your ground is weeping
The humid air soaks
Wrinkles into all my
Categorization.

I am The air, ever changing
And its easy to see
How my inability
To be ever present
On the earth Is enough to send
You beneath the surface.

He was a fair-faced man
With a smooth baby face
And a soft tone of mouth
That would easily shatter
But he could shatter none.

They bought a wedding ring
And experienced love
Well before the mildew
Of everyday things
Could wear the heat away

She would talk talk talk
About the little things
I couldnt see, or believe
My wind heart hardened
Into storm clouds
Into a rain of gloomy
Terror in a private sky.

Mostly I was jealous
But realistic, knowing
Love is a survival game
Old as the dirt and sun A
nd if for just a while
I consider the trees
As I blow through in ill ease
Of temperature and pain
Let me for just this once

See the majesty
in the impermanent
Pebbles, and in tenderness
For just this one day
Of weather, remain.

Cops and Lovers

The first casualty of love is war Irrational bonding follows Whole families,
Neighborhood policemen embracing the big lie And when the truth is gone
Nothing left but a cubby Little hole Where God is the last safety net a security, a
delusion We need like light in the darkness as love dies with a whimper, when
you really need a bang

Deirdre of the Sorrows

Hello. You must be Deirdre. Dont be scared. I stole your name. Ive been looking at you. Stunned me, really, yes, I know, even without Your makeup on. All Tumbled red lock And breasts as in The promise of an Unfortunate evening That never lets go. Even without makeup, Jesus, how they cheat us With paint on the face And the faint memory Of the afterglow. Deirdre, You become a slick magazine, All shiny and glossy, Tantalizingly so. But then I get inside and struggle, Swimming upstream Like a salmon, working Toward a deadline That never ends.

Your Moral Authority

O haughty hard one Why add to the troubles Of the world? Seems to me all vessels Draw from the same well. Your pinched fundament Squeezed me out Like a pressurized pop bottle At an impossible altitude. And as you fret and threaten And beat me over the head With a sequence of sequined Dreams, a Bible black. Your lesson of Gods love became a lesson to avoid, an institutionalized classroom, a system, a lie. Better to live with plastic forks than silvery knives. Better to walk In the rain and woods than put on a hood and cover my eyes. All winds blow From the same Direction. This much I know, this much Is wise. Self-same for me, Prophets and gunmen, Cathedrals and wives.

The Trouble With Laundry

The trouble with laundry
Is that I let you see my soil
And you told me I never
Learned to fold.
Now I fold in my own way

On a windy Sunday morning
After a short drive to see wave caps break,
I got home, turned off the car, and sighed,
Im free. No more technology.
Then I went down to my dank cold cellar,
Hauled a blue laundry bag over my shoulder
And pulled taught its string. I skipped a peace
Down the hill to the mat, remembering.

It isnt easy being clean, this much I need to see.
Cant even tie my own shoelaces. Its a motherless thing.
But more than that, this ongoing entropy
Is a shudder in the halt of who I will ever be.
I have to practice the art of cycling slow.
Around me now even the tossed churchgoer,
The hurried newspaper I never completely read,
Forgets to know.

And somewhere back
In the long gone dung of my brain
I recall a bum who called himself Change.
He told me about what it takes to survive
with a laundry list better than at least three
commandments. The first was sleep,

A good nights sleep, and a place to bathe,
A post office box, and you can always
Stay warm in the library (which is why
Many destitute men are so well read).
But more than anything else,
A place to shower the baptismal self,
And a laundry, now boy, thats the key.

I enter the rows of circles and machines

And carefully pry my prickly dirty things apart.
This takes so much care, Oh God, the anguish;
My shoes are untied again. My mother gone,
My father isolated in a city of noisome dream.
Of all things I failed to learn, Im really learning
Laundry now. I crawl a pace, buying
A little orange box of sandy blue and white soap.
My dirt is the cause of a loss of no small fortune.

Then I remember to take out the change
From my pockets, Im richer than I think.
Small wrappers and pocket tumbled follies
Spill into my hand. Im just a beat up shirt
and wreckage in the wrinkled laundry land.

What else, theres this: The little shortcuts
I learn from making mistakes. Not my mistakes,
So much, but the machines.
Not so much the machines mistake,
But a failure to meet the tumble dry
needs of man. Redemption goes on a spin
and returns again as you fumble for buttons
at the bottom of the pan.

Then I wait. Then I wait some more.
Then I walk down the street, smoke,
Buy a fifty cent piano for my daughters
doll house. The wind up part still plays,
Memories of the Way We Were.
I wince at the mat, but I do not weep.
My laundry is my dirt to keep.

Too Many Horses

Automobiles owned,
driven and reacted to,
starting with the one
that ran over my dog,
but not limited to,
include the following:

One 1965 Ford Mustang,
which my dad owned,
a star-shined silver-blue wing;

one green Oldsmobile station wagon,
which my mom, dad, brother and sister
endured from Texas to see Wyoming,
right at the dawning of the Age of Aquarius;

That same green bomb,
a handover by high school,
Mark Hirte, my so-called friend,
Who could both clown and do math,
who died in a restaurant robbery,
who put dog shit on the windshield,
all apparently random
thoughtless acts; but there's
no such thing as an accident.
People die for the same
Irrational reasons that make
Gas bombs green.

One really cool blue efficient
Toyota hatch-back station wagon,
another hand me down,
which I stroked through college
at the University of Arizona, Tucson,
got married, and therefore, embraced
personal financial oblivion,
eventually blowing an engine
in the desert on the way to a U2 concert;

One hitchhike home in a white truck,
the good vibes of the show lasting a decade;
one series of turnover cars, gas guzzlers,
four door, family friendly, snow weary,
with lacerating dents over one wheel well
when the chains came off in a storm,
playing a drum of pain on the paint;

one red Nissan truck, a mighty steed,
which drove me out of danger,
trouble and into a world of need;
one silver Datsun, which I believed
possessed the spirit of my dead mother;

all the high-end hijinks
of Porsches and Jags,
all rented to lead me to believe
I was a rich man leading the existence
of a druid philosopher playboy;

one old Volkswagen Rabbit
that I bought for two hundred dollars
as an act of rebellion against
the smog belching stink,

as well as the vanity
of that self-same think tank;

One Taurus, circa 94,
fast as boiling blood
on a clogged freeway,
forty miles one way to work,
forty miles back,
a month and a half
of eight-hour days
per year, just driving,
the stereo blasting a skin
to shield me from the world,
until the day that I,
a bull in a china shop,
kicked and sputtered
to get those days back,
and lost my little bobbing head
in a Sicilian clans counter-attack,

all angry that I could
no longer accept the life
of conspicuous consumption,
all so assured in their hobbit hole
expectations of me; so I pedestrian
a pace to the mountains, the sea
and a Newberry place, got tired,
and dried myself in a shower
with a one-dollar bill American.

One two thousand dollar Honda Civic,
circa 1990, which belched oil because,
truthfully, I know nothing about engines,
self-knowledge pulsing protons,

truthfully toward not so much you,
but myself, probably the best of the bunch,
so I sold the damn thing.
Because its mine. Now I walk
And dont have to fix anything.
Thats my responsibility,
my gasoline dream.

White Pond

I stand beside, no, sit,
No, its just that I am
Beside a nameless pond,
Or rather, it has a name,
But I dont know it yet.
This much I know: Electricity,
It resides, a lingering wire
Along an old railroad line.
Near Walden, Thoreaus ghost
Is standing right beside me, B
ut I dont know it yet.

Let me observe. Thats what I do best:
To the East,
the wall They call Atlantean;
to the West,
A mighty mite mountain of dust
Remains unclimbed;
the South, Framingham, donut shops,
Phony malls, mills that send
Phosphates down the stream,
All the temporal things

We coil ourselves in as we Give names and bar codes
To every teaming brook,
Book, photo snap and animal.

My stomach grumbles. How will I feed it:
Steak, But I dont know it yet.

To the North are witless warlords,
Mercenary media whores,
Slayers of the icons of polarity.
The winners, the losers, a blank page
That I cant read yet. All I know
Is I am neither light nor dark,
And the barren moon
Is a fair maiden of death
that looms, a husk of loam
and nameless pillars of salt.

It is I. I just dont know that yet.

My stomach grumbles
But I choose to swallow
The emptiness of a moonless cold,
Rather than just eat, as opposed to
Taking a big snatch out of life,
A mouthful of light, since energy
Is everywhere, right? In the tall pines,
Spindly trees, in the supposedly
useless leaves, in Indian summer slumps
Of swampy foam, the great houses
Beside the shore of the nameless pond,
The name of which I know not yet.

I just followed the wind here.
It was traceable in the mere
Swirl of leaves, all brown spirits,
Supposedly dead, brought to life
In an eternal returning from tree tops
To pine needles fallen to hide
The nameless track to Watertown,

But its in plain view, not hidden yet.

I am an angel. There are many others.
We are far more wired up and free
Than the bogged down corporations
Of fear, Sears shears, bullets and gloom:
O pale and empty pathetic moon,
Your laser science cannot dissect,
Nor even connect to the southerly
Breeze of winter to come. Much less me.
Nor will you ever completely plunder,
Lineup, signup, gobble up or devour
Our slender curve of bonding synergy.

Someday, Ill leave my life husk here.
My blue bubble will be on that swing,
Which is tied to this tree, Ill let go,
And float above this no longer nameless
pond, no mere place near a poison sea.
I will be White Pond energy. When?
I just dont know that, not quite yet.

The Fire Mound

Stand on this mound of stone.
Look around. Energy is fire,
And fire is everywhere.

You are afraid of fire.
Do not worry. A fire hydrant
Stands nearby.

Controlling mechanisms
Are everywhere. Public
Safety is ubiquitous.

This quarry is holy land
Overlooking Ipswich town center,
Once a roughneck riverside harbor.

Mitigating factors include:
One park sign full of donts;
A church, an Odd Fellows hall.

We tolerate witches now.
They, too, are needed:
Human spirit pushing up.

The fearful want to burn us both.
Hot and cold is the way. No matter.
We walk the stones, simmer down

Do You Know Me?

Night basement
alley sweats
Meet on
the fashionably iced
mountain resort street
Our time together
is the fate we keep

Strolling circles
bone to bone
The Maker is making
Our Time together;
Time that bends
with the wind

We got silly with sin
You played a game,
puckered and stroked
and waved me home

You know where I live,
and lived with you I did
My penny price
was a plastic flower,
and poetry ...

Enough!
Magic in a broken
bottle of vitamins.
Enough!

William Blake
kissed and ran,

ran and kissed.
Albion' son took
Safe harbor in the box canyon
shadow of mountain and mist
Lingering there in early
Afternoon cold shade;

and in the darkness,
howling at his phantoms fire
by electric streetlight

His mind got quiet out there, somewhere
She saved a single
Scrapple of soul
Petting his dry skull
As the river ran by.

He starved her, got sorry later,
and fell in love
Creek water ran through their veins
And cleansed the salt from his tear-duct dreams

They matched, heights,
Showered to be sanctified,
wined and dined
He wept and feared
And feared what she wept
He wrote up a list of his faults,
Or fell dead asleep trying:
Pride, shame, manic moods,
moments of empty bliss.

She pegged
her donkey
to a target,
sealed it
with a kiss

He was stunned
by the beauty
and purity of this.

Ulysses in Post-Industrial New England Hell

And this day,
this week of
the hammer of the law ...
a traffic ticket
for a miniscule complaint,
in which he,
a magnificent lost king,
was in virtual compliance,
now requires two different
court appearances
to avoid paying the fine ...

A far-flung Capricorn goat
On a tethered telephone line

Massachusetts is a liberal state,
sayeth He, observing
the fallen coastal city
from a submarine periscope
within the wine-dark sea,
so there are many, many rules ...

Six dollars! For what?
Breathing the air in Concord
home of the First Shot
Heard Round the World.
Paradise Lost, indeed!

With great care Ulysses
crawls the water-rim of earth,
because the state will not let him be ...
Judgment cometh upon us all,
and we must all face Zeus alone,
Prometheus bound to wave-wet rock
In shackles and an unfortunate lack of shame

He cries out to the shore,
Make your hand close,
and my hand will closer be.

He wished to see thy face
by thy river, in hopes she
were still dwelling there,
so that late at night
he would fall upon thee
in care and kisses
as seeds planted for evermore

But he could ask not what
sick psychopants
dwell there, nor will you
lately, find he, for you see,
wind in a bottle becomes
a stale thing to breathe.

He slumbered off-shore
Afraid but safe, humdrum and alone
Safe from the doldrums of summer
Or the Salem hangman's scythe

Make your hand close,
and my hand will closer be ...

A Paranoid Plan for the Day

Yes Piggy,
there is a Santa Claus.
When you see him,
Run as fast as you can.
You must trust me cause
One such clown
Killed my dad

We will take the train.
It's cheaper. You can carry more things.
We don't need cars. They are dangerous,
foul smoke chokers,
unbreathing unbeings.

How can you be a free leaf
if you are a bark of the tree?

When our work is done here,

perhaps the first part of the year.
But I won't rush, or plan,
I'll just let the wind spirit make it so.

In death, as in life,
before winter,
we must till the soil.
Let each morning's bright light
tell us what we need to know.
Let the darkness instruct us
like the devil to his foe.

You seem to be
knowing less all the time,
sleeping more.
I'll bet you are sleeping,
but then, it's 5:36 a.m.

Wake up, Piggy! Rise and wake up.
Get out of that house
before you become
a complete cynic,
a non-romantic human being.

You are not saving your mother
by being Narcissus' mirror to her now.

You write beautifully,
but that is a mere shadow
in the distortion machine.

I know. I cannot tell a lie
when I get inside.
In the real world,
the truth is a snake
that must uncoil its tail.

I was at the fire mound
last night in Ipswich,
and a man told me
an interesting story there
while we both watched members
of the Cape Anne Task Force
prepare for another raid.

He said that there are footprints
in the very rock,
and they are known
to the locals
as "The Devil's Footprints."

Apparently, say the legends,
a great hooped Satan
blew out of the fiery earth here,
broke up through the ground,
burning down the church,
and landed on the stone
where his hot talons
melted a scrape
into the earth.

I told him,
hey, give the serpent a break.
It could have just been
the spirit of fiery Orc,
of poetic imagination,
fighting its way
through the logical
cold sphere of Urizen.

I told him that these very churches,
pointing to the other one across the street,
were elements of those same cold waters
that dim the human spirit
as a necessary and beneficial
kind of control.

Then, he told me something stranger.

He said, as a janitor
in the church across the street,
which we visited,
he has seen some very strange things.

For example, there are five telephone lines
in the church tower, and catacombs
of freemason-like layers
in the basement and downward.

That once, MIBs, who came
in unmarked black vans,
came to the church
bearing metal suitcases.

I told him hey, do not fear
just because you've seen
something you do not understand.

All sides, dark or light,
are a part of the same
unknowable plan
to imminent the Escaton,
which is, translated,
make ready and speedier
the return of Christ.

That the church tower
is simply an undercover facility,
due to its great height,
for U.S. government surveillance facilities

That is, Echelon, for lack of a better term,
on Great Neck, overlooking the bay.

He said people have seen
a great satellite dish come out
from underneath the ground
on Great Neck,

Which shouldn't surprise anyone, anymore.

Except for you skeptics out there
who can only see the sun,
and not the sun behind the sun.

In print, I cannot lie.
Now you have all that you need.
On the gray rock overlooking Ipswich,
The Devils footstep reveals the science
Of the October spirits,
born when the black moon,
Vanished from the sky, holds her

Wintry horn.

Wire Fence

Wet snow falls in clumps
On a barbed wire fence;
Eyes through mesh,
A dream of democracies
Crushing grim,
Grim in the throat,
Choking up, flowing out
In discountenance

Once a prisoner pushed
His Shakespearean heart
Through an electric fence;
His face turned to muck
And blood, but crossed a sea
To meet his hard-headed woman
In the palatial prance
Of loves intolerance

But the snow fell harder
And the twisty tin wire
Became a shovel,
The shovel became a plow,
The plow became a motor,
And the motor drove
Over the edge

Just as Aaron Burr shot
Alexander Hamilton
Right above the heart,
The pendulum of law

Is a swinging limb
of steel and foul weather

The snow sticks upon
Needle threads of green grass.
Middleton jail is summery
Warm in January, even as cattle cars
And shooting range guns sound off
In the distance and we trade
German Shepherd shouts

For brief bouts of Gaelic ire

Shout. Shout out for plainspoken truth!
The Constitution is a cold and wet tissue
In the lavatory bowl of discontent,
And that carcass out there, over the fence,
Is a twinge of agony over the breeze,
While Lefty here, he paces the unfortunate
Floor, unfortunate in the choice his DNA made,
Hes sneezing up dustbunnies, phlem and TB

The new bearded Aaron Burr is in caves
Somewhere, in Pakistan, Maui or Peru,
flicking out a light, turning on a flashlight.
The preamble of love is a target on a sheet,
The sheet becomes a bullseye on a wall,
While the guard dog sniffs, his master pouts,
The FDA nurse shouts, Meds only! Meds Only,
If that doesnt mean you, lock yourself down!

Lefty leaves the big metal door open, to resist
Is to enhance sanity and salvation. The clamp
May disfigure his hands, yet he abstains, feigns sleep,

Waiting for the breath of the whore
To dream, slithery, sleepy,
Shaking off the conspiratorial frame,
from the other side of the door.

The Time Capsule

My car is covered
In autumn leaves
Stuck wet in the morning,
Wind-plastered, reds, yellows
And faded brown bumper stickers.

My car is just me, being natural.

Your car has a temperamental sound,
A whine, piercing harm up the hood.
Runs hot afternoons,
Cold in the morning,
and oh how it purrs,
streetwise.

Anothers car is a time capsule
Just look at the passenger side.
These crates of care,
Coffee cups, unopened mail
Being all that we are
Or avoid ever being.

Cassette tapes, papers, flyers, books
Well never finish reading,
Crumbling crackerjacks,
All the things wed rustle around
to fix in shame. No one
wants you to see their dirty car.

My car is clean, cept for the ashes

That have gone out of control.
Leaves just blow through
And I leave them there, amused.

My time capsule is a scrap
Of nature. Once, I just threw everything
Into a pile because I was consciously
Concealing myself. No more.
I just open the door. Let nature ride
On the passenger side.

When the plague or atom bomb comes,
or the sun burns out, some future
Archeologist will read us
Like the Bible. We are

liable and linked
To the truth
of our car carpets.

**Dont Tread on Me
(God help us all)**

We are leaving this old home.
Gone is the safe haven,
free for the multitudes.
There are crack heads out there,
bomb throwers, too.
We are at the apex
in the schizoid petting zoo.
Fringe wingers, Bill of Rights singers,
Jailers and bailers and decorated
Flying wingers, listen hard:
You are acting like dogs
in a dirty little yard.
Could be a time soon someday
youll erase all that ya love.

Gods children eat people, sometimes.
The pilgrims ate the Indians,
and see yourself, there,
chewing on the wings of a dove.
May your campouts in the forest freeze
you into pumice stone. May all that I love
return to the way it was.
Lest we dissolve into lethal tribal wars.

Storms Across America

She leans into the sea
keening a song
from the Madonna vagina
of the deep as hailstones
ring white pins honed from Hawaii
and a tide of low pressure
rounds up upon the shore
of the Forty-Fifth parallel,
a crowny curtain of thorns

Unknowing from the unquiet
slumbers of lost ships
still melting in icy currents
below the surface,
the seagulls scatter
and defecate upon her:

Rise, O rise, storms across America
Your plastic passions await you
as cars stream in from the Orient
and gas passes through your ports
of entry, pleased, as they are
from the total penetration
of the perfect plan

Star of India, our captains
catch colds in the bowlegged
polarities of warm seas
and freezing skies
The sun, well-timed,
is a clock-face ticking,
hidden from our view

America, may the tilted jet stream
blow a gale of goth up your nose
May the ocean rise and plaster
a new continent where truth,
chased in the wind, wakes
the ghost dancers from
the Pacific to the Atlantic

before the living dead
can get out of bed

Shipwrecked sailors
found lost at sea
discovered homes
in their own faces,
in bindles of woody words
crushed to hand-length bits

After forty days of fire,
forty days of rain,
the northwesterly El Nino
sheared shanks of wind
off the Oregon coast,
then brought a low blow
the slap the temples
of the City of Angels

Driftwood is piled fore desire
against sandy beach stumps
and stop gaps, infinite and wise:
Infinity stopped here for a day,
a deluge for the dead,
so I could admire
our wood chips,
our broken bones

A winter-long windshear
plucked the breath
from my pressurized lungs,
turning my fire to water.
I floated some, then burst,
mounted a floating oar
then sank into an orb
of sand

The sun, beyond the grey wail,
shaped a man inside here,
inside this calamity of clams;
one-part plastic,
one-part fishhook,
a bonney redwood mast,
a skull & crossbones flying,

walking the plank on dry land
without an anchor, who cares?

Setting these banalities
of life aside, let me perscibble:
Glass floats on the beach,
I've found, and the ebb-tide
of the avenues are a roar
of trucks in the rain

On tuesdays, Great Food
is closed in a seaside town;
and what a tree lacks,
the wind whispers;
and loving couples
strand tennis shoes
on the frosty morning shores
as missiles are clicked
into load in the underground
caverns of Iran

Also this: The electric truth sheds
the oil slick skin off the CIA
and sickened seagulls
reel in the ninety mile winds
and Pennsylvania miners
with black lung bibles
defuse the threat
with another tragic
mind blast

The sun goes up
and Mercury goes
into retrograde
as our satellite's
telescopic echo fades
and techno-pop
becomes the sea
in which we wade

The camera's eye
is just a catch
for this cuckoo cluck house,
our mourning latch

and what is least
is that which lasts
as buzzard gulls sift
through black morning trash
and I try to unlearn
this noisy cache
of highway moms
speeding by bullet blasts
and taxi driver Thanatoss plants
look like gods in camouflage pants

Glass floats on the beach,
it's endless, at last!
The end is coming near
and it's coming here fast
It's time to drink
from the pirate's flask
and toast a tune
to all of that glass,
to the sun, the sky,
the nuclear smash,
the currents, the past,
the pounding surf,
the manic search
for meaning and gas,
the molten glow,
the melting snow,
the rivers that run
through those who know ...

Glass floats on the beach,
the ebb is endless,
it's here, at last