

**Imagine Writing This;
Imagine It's About You**

A Collection of Poems from 2011

Richard P. Gabriel

Contents

Years and Years.....	1
Dreaming of Dreaming of California.....	2
Barn Dreaming	3
Old Album Never Explained	4
Hill Making	5
Contradictions + Snow	6
Annoyed Arriver	7
Chinatown.....	8
Boston	9
Afraidness	10
Indictment	11
Laughing Again.....	12
Our Road.....	13
James Schiller Theme Song	14
Old Adages	17
Here's What Tired Means	18
Who Hates It	19
Easy Money	20
Foreign Leftovers	21
The Good Book	22
Speak of Impossible.....	23
Looking At	24
Or Not Much.....	25
Oh No.....	26
Too Far Gone	27
Lasting Wish.....	28
Identity Mismatched.....	29
Contrary To	30
Just Ask the Peace.....	31
Bent Over and Over	32
Some Streets	33
Away From Every Place Called Home	34
Again in Cold Europe.....	35
Bisbee Princess in a Joint of Coffee	36
Nordic Trainstorming.....	37
Snowfound	38
Torrential Sadness	39
Pain Ahead.....	40
Road Home	41
Four Years After Death	42
Wrinkled Inklings	43
A Possible Distance	44
Who Are They / Who They Are.....	45
Are Brown.....	46
Last To See Them.....	47

Snow Angles.....	48
Unbeneathable	49
Advice to Run By	50
About You Ma.....	51
Under the Night	52
She Never Told.....	53
Under A Sky Noted For Its Brevity.....	54
The Great Writer	55
Unguent	56
Potsdam 1910 Winter.....	57
Figure Active	58
Some Foreign Country	59
On To Fly	60
Or Bits.....	61
Reunion of Strangers	62
Have and Have More	63
Her Father's Knife.....	64
Day Fall.....	65
Black Holes Are Life.....	66
Revery	67
Just Get On Board.....	68
Milky Way.....	69
Clearing Voices	70
Simple Wishes And A Day.....	71
Merrimack.....	72
Her	73
Agency.....	74
Unison.....	75
Time Sucks	76
Hospice Likens	77
Fear of Flying	78
Saturday; Parents Gone.....	79
Always Scared	80
My Fast Friend.....	81
The Road / The Only One.....	82
Pernambuco.....	83
Obvious.....	84
After Smiling.....	85
South Girl.....	86
Circle of Circularity.....	87
Unencumbered.....	88
They Stepped Past Me.....	89
We're All Dead and This Is Hell.....	90
Christmas J.....	91
Barzeelian Tango Or Samba.....	92
Traveling Home	93
Please Help.....	94

Over Too Much	95
Very Practical	96
I Hope Steve Likes This.....	97
Is Life Simple.....	98
Right Now	99
It Can Be.....	100
Lesson With Meanings Galore.....	101
Why Is That?	102
Water Under.....	103
When The Eyes Don't Focus.....	104
Passing.....	105
A Funny Joke	106
Demoted	107
From An Old Movie.....	108
Ronnie D's	109
Forgiveness	110
My Profession Fails Again.....	111
Visit Soon	112
Technical Logic	113
And More To Make.....	114
A Road Not Findable	115
Where / I	116
I Love Atmospheric Noise.....	117
Reversiness	118
Fields and Seas.....	119
No More I Love Yous.....	120
She.....	121
After Being Alone Too Long.....	122
Bin Laden	123
Alexander's Test.....	124
Looking Up / Touching Down.....	125
Forensic Sentiment.....	126
I Got In The Way	127
High Over Me.....	128
My Problem Music.....	129
Some That I've Broken.....	130
Don't Fear	131
Toward Yuma	132
Toward Yuma	133
Blithely Unaware	134
Who Finds You.....	135
Lost Perk.....	136
Sadly.....	137
Brightness	138
Flush Wet	139
Billboards.....	140
Say Goodbye To The World.....	141

Of All Things Living.....	142
Talking to the Grave Guys.....	143
Small Mouth.....	144
With Butter.....	145
On Flying Out.....	146
Last Thing on the Merrimack.....	147
Dream Anchor.....	148
Surely It's Love.....	149
Stars Up On The Hill.....	150
Now I Feel Better.....	151
As If Thinking Too Hard.....	152
Consumable.....	153
Fostering.....	154
It Starts With a Call.....	155
How She Left.....	156
Simplicity Ends.....	157
Too Small Too Tall.....	158
Forgivable.....	159
Paris Riff.....	160
Affinity or Absence.....	161
Who Gets It?.....	162
No Memory of It.....	163
Sitting Around.....	164
No Art This Time.....	165
Summer What.....	166
After All.....	167
After More.....	168
Her And Me.....	169
And Passion.....	170
Locked In Decision.....	171
One Night In Boston.....	172
Now There.....	173
The Last Bit.....	174
So What If.....	175
Down and Down.....	176
Berlin Story (i).....	177
At The Top of The Stairs.....	178
1880s or So.....	179
Berlin Story 2.....	180
Berlin Story 3.....	181
Another.....	182
Faithless Again.....	183
Shortest Story.....	184
Stay And Watch.....	185
To Far Away.....	186
Pining.....	187
More of Same.....	188

Selection Committee.....	189
Turns To Go.....	190
Cambridge The Other One.....	191
So There.....	192
Lineman.....	193
The Space Between a Man and His Metaphor	194
Obscure But Unknown.....	195
Built For This.....	196
Still On	197
I'm Forever.....	198
Unfree	199
Crazy Like It Is	200
Signal Tonight	201
Quick Downhill Ride	202
We Got 'Em.....	203
During or After a Storm	204
How It Starts	205
Bitch	206
Hunger for Amazement	207
North Fear.....	208
Last Time Too.....	209
Envelope Please	210
Take Heart Most Worried Souls	211
I Have Found the Heated Misery / Mystery / Solitude	212
Old Old Stock.....	213
Bad Boys	214
Humility Squared	215
Political Shame	216
Stories For All Occasions.....	217
Only At Her Best	218
Why She Did It.....	219
She Did All My Work	220
Against Will	221
If What?.....	222
Story Matters.....	223
Story Unravelling.....	224
All Figures.....	225
But Too Late	226
By The Stones and Dusk	227
!	228
What About Now.....	229
Steep Hills.....	230
Us Just Us	231
Smells.....	232
Guess Where?.....	233
Lasting.....	234
Twelve Dead	235

Wrong Some More	236
Poor Duncan	237
God Says "For Your Memory Only"	238
PDX / Looking Out.....	239
Red Metal and In Thought.....	240
Connectors	241
Grand And Boring	242
Not The Innocent Woman.....	243
I Remember I Was Sad.....	244
Love & The Shiny Ark.....	245
California Undreaming.....	246
Dropping Down.....	247
No Free Lunch	248
Hold	249
Inner Bound	250
Bad Neighborhood	251
August	252
Thinking of Hard Things.....	253
In A North	254
1937 as If Important.....	255
On My Way.....	256
Nothing Else / Nothing More	257
Body Politeness	258
Femme.....	259
Green to Red Confusion.....	260
WTF	261
Slight Love.....	262
In The Dark A River A Loved	263
Into the Soul.....	264
River My Friend.....	265
One Last Time	266
Falling Deep	267
One Warm Night In September	268
Sidewalk Scene By Outdoor Café	269
Splash.....	270
Who Flees.....	271
Away and Far	272
Lifeliners	273
To The Heap	274
Along With It.....	275
Lying Lessons	276
Desperate Fear of Seeing	277
Deserts To Me	278
The Long And Short of It	279
What Messed It Up.....	280
More White / More Heat	281
Losing Lessons	282

That's How They Do It	283
Dreadful Reflection	284
Magic Of Writing.....	285
Intaglio	286
Under Nuts	287
30 Hadley Road	288
Music Being Always	289
Lost Side of Town.....	290
You're Still With Her	291
If Only.....	292
Fear of All.....	293
Deep In Woods One Road Passed.....	294
Up Close and Far Away	295
From Across the Way and Lighting the Bridge	296
When It's Weirder Than Al	297
And Why The Fuck Not	298
No.....	299
John McCarthy	300
Simple Impossible.....	301
Asking For Little.....	302
Time Etc Passes	303
Who Am I To	304
While That Song Plays	305
On Eve	306
And On A Day Just Like Today	307
God Sees Death.....	308
Once or Twice	309
Art of Creation.....	310
Colombine	311
Illusion Together	312
Bye Bye I Guess.....	313
As Usual.....	314
Searching for the Leslie	315
Fits and Starts	316
Don't Need to Imagine	317
Not Special.....	318
Greyish.....	319
Blackish.....	320
Looking Back and Forth.....	321
Strike Anywhere.....	322
Voyeur	323
Never Imagine When You Can Cry.....	324
Diner Time.....	325
Darkness Become Grey.....	326
And So A Man Wrote on Sunday	327
I Think.....	328
When It's All Dark.....	329

Budapestulance	330
Frilly Apron.....	331
Lament for Me	332
Saying Hello While Saying Goodbye.....	333
Fell Away	334
Brussels Maybe	335
Snowbound	336
Leave Me Burning.....	337
Look Don't Touch	338
Creepy and Uncomfortable	339
South of South.....	340
Something Happening.....	341
Come Back Home	342
Now This Is Pessimism	343
Dying Time	344
Hits Home	345
Highrock.....	346
Don't You Hate It.....	347
Forward and Backward.....	348
By The Road.....	349
Never.....	350
Celebration Not Quite.....	351
Entropy For Dummies.....	352
My Boy's Life.....	353
Assumption.....	354
Sincerity.....	355
What Clings	356
Clutter Memorial Up.....	357
Bulldog Tank	358
An Island Somewhere	359
Wild Day	360
And Cold.....	361
Or Impossible.....	362
Lines and Flat.....	363
Dig It.....	364
Indifference.....	365
Better Than Two.....	366
On Coldness.....	367
Backing Into The Fringe / A Thicket.....	368

Years and Years

years and years
this last year ended
with a long recovery from fatigue
with people disappointed
with a few more things not working
as usual the writing rebegins
more and more

Dreaming of Dreaming of California

I used to walk down the road toward Billy's
when winter was beginning but snow hadn't fallen yet
down toward the pond
on either side of the narrow barely paved road
the trees were like pasted together twigs
etching black on the cloudy white sky
and deep back into the woods the tangle
turned to a textured solid black
or I'd walk out into the big field
brown from the beginnings of dead regrowth after the last harvest
past the rock no one could exhume
back into the back field rimmed with the same twiggy trees
and green pines / crows made their rough song
up in them and chickadees would softly sing their names
my head held the song California Dreamin' and I would play it over and over
the direction from my house to the back field was toward California
I imagined the songwriters and songsingers
from a cold place like this
but maybe not / maybe not
wherever they were I moved to California
and with that move grew my nostalgia
for wanting to move there

Barn Dreaming

our old barn was once my mother's old barn
and before that her father's old barn
before that I've found out
it was several generations
of sons' and fathers' old barn
hand hewn beams weren't a sign of poverty and poor tools
but of antiquity
so were the rough nails in the siding
the worn smooth slats in the cow stalls
were not quaintly smoothed for the comfort of the cows
but by the necks of cows rubbing over the course of centuries
we don't think it of our country but parts of it are old
as old as some parts of Europe we travel great distances to see
in one corner near the front behind a place for farm tools
a door with leather hinges and latch hid a hard carved
seat with a hole to the underside of the barn
next to where we parked the side delivery
where water from an underground spring came up
and formed a creek that formed a stream that formed a brook
that emptied into the river that emptied to the nearby ocean
which connected this country with that
my wish though was to have owned that barn long enough
to know how valuable it must have been
and to have sex in the hay loft
yeah / both of those

Old Album Never Explained

once I knew
I could see it
she was older than he
their glasses were off for better pictures
taken by Nana
he wore a hat to disguise his hairline
he wore sharp clothes the way all Lithuanians
I ever knew did
he wore a wedding ring
(long gone)
and she did too
(less long but still long gone)
the bags under her eyes
from work on the farm they posed on
or age
all around those pictures on that cold fall day
I think their wedding day
I saw the heavy work that was required
dirty work too
including love

Hill Making

my place is on a hill
surrounded by trees
but with clear views
in several directions
along with a dictionary
and a way to write
I'll take care of the rest

Contradictions + Snow

the walk across the bridge
makes him tremble
it shakes when cars go by
there are no walkways
so he steps up on a curb as they pass
the snow is not coming heavy now
but he can hear the flakes hiss as they melt
when they hit the fast flowing water
he can hear the water slipping past the piers
it's near dusk so he is afraid of not being seen
it's near where he was raised so he is afraid
of being seen

Annoyed Arriver

outside the oldest hotel
snow sleet snow sleet
small flakes and hard drops
the sidewalk is slick only on the metal lift doors
the brick is as old as it gets
above the orange sky is just low clouds spitting
a woman with a formfitting down coat
steps in front of me
holds out her hand
asks
photo?

Chinatown

at the wedding
a classy show even though the religion hung heavy
many gestures / many players
some (joyful / tearful) some with grudges
later the reception and banquet
was food food foodfoodfood food food
we left with thoughts left behind
and lives being lived on the double

Boston

hard cold wind
coming off the relentless sea
we are walking directly into it
on our way to Union Oyster House
we are walking into it
on our way from Union Oyster House
such a place as this it is

Afraidness

who worries about the meaning of death
what will happen when the curtain falls
when the darkness will come when days are less certain
why there is something and not nothing
where the grass will part and the lowering begin
women are wise in knowing now is the essence
their plans execute quickly

Indictment

he is a loser
a failure early in life
he looked to blame others and institutions
for his own failings
for him
his life was a cup of failure
a load of non-achievements
a future of no promise

Laughing Again

will it all turn out well
the too much is starting once more
I will be diminished
but all that's ahead is diminishment
why all the depression
they all asked

Our Road

I have never lost my cloak of poverty
growing up on a farm where everything was falling apart
my father built houses / the two I knew best
have fallen apart
he was fired many times
and I have been too
he grew depressed except when speaking to strangers
and I have too
I've grown tired / feel myself falling down
firm around my shoulders
that cloak
firm and never slipping

James Schiller Theme Song

Kurkjian, Gabriel

<Intro> C F...C Am F G

<Verse>

C Am F G C Am F G

James Schiller is for me-ee-ee-ee-ee, oooo. (yeah)

C Am F G C Am F G

Vote for Jimmie-ee-ee-ee-ee-ee, vote for Jimmie S. Oooo.

C Am F G C Am F G

He's the man (yeah) we want to vote for, oooo.

C Am F G C Am F G

Vote for Jimmie or I'll pick up and throw you out the door.

F G C

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

F G C

Yeah, yeah, yeah,

F G C

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

G&K: Instrumental! Hear we go! Wooo, whoooo! All right!

<lead>

Inaudible: (Bullcorn!) (Aw Shucks!) (So sweet!) (Well, I'll be a suck-egg mule!)

(Hear me Talkin'!)(At's Right)(Hey, hey! Wooo, whooo!) (Heh!)

(Here I come, here I come, here come the Romper Stomper!) (Good God!)

(Anhh, hanhh!) (G:Ahhh, yeah! 'At's right!) (G: Hear me, talkin'!)

<Airplane>

G: Ahhh, yeah.

K: Hunh! Down the creek! Goin' down the delta!

G: Anhh, Bull Corn.

K: Shoot-I reckon.

G: Well, I'll be a suck-egg mule!

K: Here I come, here I come again.

G: Watch it, watch out, watch out now, here he comes, here he comes.

K: James...

G&K: Ahhh, yeah!

G: Ahh, hear me talkin', now. Hunh, here I come. Make it funky, there.

G: Make it slow and easy, there.

K: I like it slow.
G: Make it funky.
K: Nice and sweet.
G: Ah, let's have that good soul walk.
K: <No!>

K: Hear me talkin'.

G: Hey, hey, unh, hunh, and I'll say it again
K: 'At's right.
G: Ahh, let me hear ya.
G: Hunh!

<lead flub>

G: Ahhh, good timing.
K: He we are at the Agape Inn.
G: Make it mellow.
K: Hah! Hear me makin' it mellow, now.
G: Here comes the Romper Stomper.
K: Here, here I come, now.

<K: Wait a minute. See, when we come to a G....>

G: Unh, hunh.
K: Oh, yeah.
K: Listen to him, listen to him talk now.

G: Unh, hunh.
G: Lay it on him nice and easy.
K: 'At's right, now.
G: Hah!
G: Watch out, watch out: Here comes the Romper Stomper!
G: Here he comes. Watch out.
K: Here I come, here comes the Romper Stomper.
G: Watch out for the Romper Stomper!
K: Here I come, here comes the Romper Stomper.
G: Watch out for the Romper Stomper!
K: Here I come, here comes the Romper Stomper.
G: Watch out for the Romper Stomper!
K: Here I come, here comes the Romper Stomper.

<Verse>

James Schiller is for me, oooo.
(Well, let me hear you talkin' now)
Vote for Jimmie, vote for Jimmie S. Oooo.

(Oh yeah, lay it on him right now, come on, let's go! Watch out!)
He's the man (heh!) we want to vote for, oooo. (yeah!)
Vote for Jimmie or I'll pick up and throw you ou-wow-wow-wow-whoa-whoa-whoa....

G: <whisper> That's right.

G: Ah, yeah.

K: Oh, it's so sweet.

K: Even the Romper Stomper, it brings a tear to his eye.

K: Let's fade out now.

G: That's so mellow.

G&K: Hey, hey, hey, wooo, whooo. That's right, and I'll say it again.

K: End it!

G: Big ending.

G: It's all over now.

K: Oooh.

Old Adages

I've learned to expect
that in those things I care least about
I do not grow better at them
and the rest
I'm not that good at either

Here's What Tired Means

who cares what the words are
why worry about who will read it
because no one will
why do anything more than just keep alive
as long as you can
why work yourself overly
because really who cares

Who Hates It

playing for keeps
the pale water is an anchor to desire
sitting on the floor reading last week's
London Sunday Times to catch the phrasing differences
the song that played over and over
was a Swiss techno slow song about love
and the rain washed over the windows
and down the drains back down deep
into what makes civilization livable

Easy Money

catch a squirrel
sedate it with strychnine
put on a smock coat
grabs its paws
twist its tail
lay it out on your arm
sell it to a farmer's boy

Foreign Leftovers

the night event is passed
the sheets are lightly damp
one sits on the couch fingering
her hair back into place
her slightly hanging full breasts
sway beautifully
the other lies on her side facing me
her breast sticking to my arm
her eyes drape mine
one window's blinds are slightly open
the lights stripe everything behind us
the night is in the past

The Good Book

she carried the book
from the shelf in the barn
where her father had stored it for easy reference
how to plant plants and nurture them
how to tend to cows horses rabbits and chickens
grafting making beer crushing grapes
he was gone
her mother had killed him
now she needed to know those things
and how to cook take care of things in the house
she is gone
I have the book now

Speak of Impossible

we carried them there
something they never expected
never would expect
never could expect
a place they rarely visited
that I know of
she planted geraniums
in front of her nh house
he never visited anyone's resting place
but look at it / three colors only
green the most in late spring
a deep blue if you look the right direction
and some grays some stone colors maybe some light reds
reds from geraniums and the yellows that go with green
bright greens and shade greens
you could ask this question
did they in the end love you
were they ever proud
did they worry you were so far away and never called
see the clear watered river now flowing like sharp glass
did they ever sit here where you sometimes now sit
by the river near the green bridge
did they seem to each other to love each other
which secrets did they tell each other
watch me stand back and recreate it all for them
this is something no one could expect

Looking At

many hopes
small ones that grow
the hedges that block
our old yard is now overgrown
filled with shade we never imagined
even when the oak was tall and full
and the shag-bark hickory was tall and dropping nuts
now it's all fallen down / the house rotten
it is falling into itself its forgetting just barely
keeping up

Or Not Much

I missed the tribute
but I can console because I didn't know of it
this means of course no one thought to tell me
which tells me
what they think
of me which is nothing

Oh No

really amazing
how fame is it's own thing
famous for nothing really
but famous enough
that when people who treat the famous man as ordinary
because he seems so
they hide their faces and cry oh
no
when they learn his name
and they really mean
their cries of despair

Too Far Gone

I remember the sidewalk from our kitchen door
to the road
the thick tall oak we later cut down
the shagbark hickory spewing nuts
a stone we could never get out of the ground
that would rip at our mowers
the short blue spruces now 40' tall
the outline of the garden still apparent
but surrounded by brush
the pictures are pictures of me too
such a horrible sight

Lasting Wish

I wish for this
a young woman from Europe
would come and say
I will be your patron
and all you need to do is write
and walk along the river with me
every day or to a park
or down side streets and alleys
I will cook and provide
talk write walk
bring your wife along

Identity Mismatched

hello

I used to be Dick Gabriel

the rising star

the new computer scientist

the skeptic with the cutting wit

the happy father

the deep lover

the avid bicyclist

the rock climber

the lead guitarist

the poet

the book writer

the writer of fiction

the entrancing speaker

the ceo the president the cto the fellow the vp the de the staff member

long dark thick shining hair

black pensive beard

soft loving eyes

legs like timbers

modest but adept athlete

programmer designer

spooky creative thinker

photographer of note

many remember me but today as they walk up

there is no recognition / they walk past

wondering were those eyes familiar

this list maps to a list to falsehoods

my journey turns these corners

my parents' graves

my friends' graves

a great writer's grave

where I married once

where I grew up and how I wish it were still mine

and this keyboard trying to find when to write it all

because some still believe I am Dick Gabriel

but I am not him for ten years now

my wife says maybe more

Contrary To

I am built for weeping
for carrying only small loads
for forgetting quickly and easily
the strength now of my mind
is its weakness

Just Ask the Peace

as time's passed
my computer setup's gotten better
now I have computers all around
they are like slaves or friends
or purposeful enemies
writing in little notebooks
everything I type and many
things I say
just waiting for some prosecutor
to just ask

Bent Over and Over

what if they were well off
before he died
maybe my mother didn't understand that
just figuring that the nice cars were commonplace
and all the things that made them look poor
to townsfolk were merely traditions they chose
like the heavy breads and kielbasa and sour cabbage
then he died
and the source of good luck and money ran out
she and her mother became poor
then that's all she ever remembered
like a tree struck young by a truck
and unable to remember life without the kink

Some Streets

two things
one place right now
a boy is under a streetlight
kissing a girl the first time
and after she will tell him it was nice
another place right now
a girl is on a dark street
being kissed by a boy for the first time
after her sense of approbation will kick in
and she will tell him it was nice

Away From Every Place Called Home

with you the windblown streets
feel of warmth / once these streets
sat beneath the river and though those days
seemed the worst / only the next year
would happen / but with you
I walked in the darkness
who wouldn't need the light near dawn
to go on

Again in Cold Europe

sipping an espresso at the table
by the window on the second floor
her heavy fur-collared coat hanging
from the back of her chair
a book open in front of her
and below shoppers crowd the covered
mall just an old alley covered
by translucent glass held by lacework lead
she watches the handholders below
straying away from the rain slowing down
to browse nothing they like aside from themselves
in the windows / or perhaps it's the chocolates
then her small cup still heaving with hot black
finally the book spragging philosophy or words of imagination
she can have anyone she wishes
she doesn't look over here

Bisbee Princess in a Joint of Coffee

so many of the colors are upset
with each other even though none
is a shade past pastel
but the woman's pants
as she watches intently the movie on her macbook
bear a design too intricate and formal
to be the design of a professional
such attention to detail to the pants
of a woman so unpure-lighted
that her coffee continues to heat up
even as time passes and her breath
repeatedly blows over the lips
of her cup

Nordic Trainstorming

on the train
after a long plane ride
once we were out of the city
headed for a distant place
she handed me her ipod
and played a song sung
by a woman with an icy voice
toned by warmed vowels
I took it as words she
wished to say but had no words for
later she proved I was right
that night / with her body heat

Snowfound

back where I grew up
the snow's piled up almost 100 feet
by bulldozers and dump trucks
because there is no place to put it
collected from roads and driveways
you'd think with all the state and nearby states
there'd be plenty of room but you need roads
to get to where you dump it

to be snowed in with a source or two of warmth
plenty of food and means to drink and all
is what it means to be alive / a man
mind and culture pushing out the raving cold
then around the bend the snowplow veers
then pushes the snow up the bank in vain
the snow like a wake filling in behind
the snow now is up to mid-window
blankets and warmth
something sweetly wet

Torrential Sadness

as I listen to the sad song playing on the computer I write on
I can also feel myself dying
not metaphorically I can feel the parts of me I once cherished
as immortal stopping dead
it made me think
in Egypt I am as good as dead
in Cambodia
in Indonesia
no one there experiences me
I don't experience there or anyone there
I am dead to those places
dead to most places on the earth
and all the other places in the universe
dead can't be so bad
I already mostly am

Pain Ahead

the only hope I feel
is hope for characters in stories
and novels / hope for the youths I know
in their lives ahead
hope for me is now only for diminished pain

Road Home

darkness early and a cold wind
overhanging clouds trees holding still
onto snow fallen over days
to the west I feel a pull to leave
but once I do the pull will be reversed
like a fish returning near death to spawn near home
is this what's called fate
or faith

Four Years After Death

in 2007 I started to program
credits for a conference I was running
at that time I realized it was the culmination
of my career
the music I chose to play while the credits rolled
was sad electronica from Portugal
the feeling was right
it was the culmination

Wrinkled Inklings

some of the days are floaters
others are tied to an image or a place
finding the balance is a running joke
some of the poets I know actually
believe in themselves

A Possible Distance

finding the distance
making it as broad as possible
like the hot press of love merely abandoned
no goodbyes after never a hello
just a kind of yearning
then the long decline
as it gets sanded down
until all that's left is a few songs
I don't like anymore

Who Are They / Who They Are

yes I see them
standing / sitting on cool grass
my mother at one end near relatives
of kids I would one day know
but the boy who stands out the most
his arms are folded in front of him
his elbows are on his knees
he sits in the grass
hunched over and his heels dug in
his toes pointed straight up
and he is glancing up and to the side
toward the camera
as if everything going on was just a lame joke
all this in 1933
when it was thought we thought
impossible to be hip

Are Brown

unimaginable today
seen from 1000 years ago
which feeble attempts
will be recalled in another
for example did the students
in front of Merrimac High School in 1933
suspect I would be looking at the school picture
being taken right then as I write this

Last To See Them

tell me of the essentials
this crowd by the school is fully dispersed now
I am the last to disperse
but I was alone by then
they caught me in B&W

Snow Angles

too much snow they say
up into everything
ice dams breaking roofs
heating through the roof
reminds me of a winter back in to '60s
when it piled to the roof
ours was steep enough to survive
everything now has fallen in

Unbeneathable

which real is real
the one in our memories or the one
we later write down
the one others can read
like a puzzle or a mystery
is my life a mystery
meaning there is no right answer
meaning there is no wrong answer
right?

Advice to Run By

find the people who shout the loudest
who make claims about themselves
who believe the self-unbelievable
then write about them
warn others of them
then run for your lives

About You Ma

Ma / before you join your schoolmates
in front of the school for the yearly picture
let me tell you something you won't believe
first / I will be your son
second / even though your copy of this picture will burn in 1942
and no one you know will have a copy
I will find a copy & photograph it with a digital camera
restore it to its near pristine condition
and display it on my computer monitor as a background image
and today 78 years later I will look at you and your schoolmates
while I write this terrible poem

Under the Night

tonight the tears won't stop
I have this deep pity and regret
I have already moved into the deep past
reserved for the oldest
these pains worry me

She Never Told

she's walking down the road
toward the river
I am hidden behind the stand of trees
she's wearing a fine but homemade dress
her short dark hair is curled in the humid late spring air
she moves so swiftly
her body sways like it never did when she was old
if she happens to look back and see me
she'll see someone she won't meet for years
her son plotting her story

Under A Sky Noted For Its Brevity

oh the rain that falls fills the river
soaks the fields which will turn yellow green in the spring
rust / decay / a collapse
she was unable to stop it and barns collapsed
the outside walls grayed under sun and rain
without repair it all decayed
none of her tears stopped that
none of mine can make a story of it

The Great Writer

he is a fool laughing outrageously
writing like a god
he is obsessed with his father's suicide
and writes that character over and over
unreflectively / believing it therapy
now I see him as easy target
forget the smart questions
I wanted to ask / here are
the dumb ones

Unguent

man up your skin
transcendental and approached
information is hiding from me
these words fly past its head
slicing off the tips of its hair

Potsdam 1910 Winter

the clouds he saw
were low and dark on their undersides
patterned like pillows packed like tiles
early Berlin light filled the cracks between
and overall the light was filtered through city haze
smoke and ash the result of burning
urging ahead the city's awakening
and purging into the day
he was excited by the place they sat
by the distressed river
he was scared by the thought of moving on

Figure Active

her coat is filled out
her breath a white braid to just above her head
she is willing for me to touch her hands
I wish our eyes would close simultaneously

Some Foreign Country

she like all
of us are removed far
from the place her dreams
as extravagant as they once were
started as small as her and what seemed
imaginable became un- and she learned to forget to weep

On To Fly

the poem written that night
after the day posts what happened
while the poem written the night
before posits what will

Or Bits

smiling faces directed at the camera
now at me / some other day at those who read this
most now dead / they were at their beginnings
with nothing left to do but let them unfold
but all I see is information not kids
and what seems like hope is just
a configuration of ink

Reunion of Strangers

they danced to disco as a way to remember
their childhoods and though most of them lumbered and sweated
two of them made a clear picture of what their youth had been
the hunk and cheerleader / they danced dance after dance
while their husband and wife sat near me sipping cokes
and trying to triangulate their wife and husband
and themselves too / looking and wondering
how fate would figure that night

Have and Have More

one by one the sparrows
clip each plum petal off the branch
climbing up until the branch is bare
then hopping to the next and clipping clipping
why would a bird remove each petal from a blooming fruit tree
ask the one who has it all and asks for more

Her Father's Knife

she had her favorite knife so long
it had worn down from a good 8 inches to less than 4
she wouldn't let anyone else use it
on that day my wife asked her to use it on our short hike
she resisted / said no / said we'd lose it
but we promised
my father my wife and I hiked up to the ridge
sat on a rock to eat
my wife peeling a cucumber with the knife
let it fly off the cliff
we searched for hours
nearly till dark
the knife was lost
my mother never said a thing
I've heard her weeping ever since

Day Fall

the girl walked up the hill
from the simple 4-room school
carrying a bag of books and papers
walking past the homes of the children
who teased her daily / her and her
brother / in the town square the rough bus
waited to take those few who lived beyond
the village home to farms and isolated houses
she rarely smiled even at the farm to beloved father
who rarely yelled at her / rarely raised his hand
one day she would run the farm alone
except for a mother always drunk

Black Holes Are Life

falling into the black
eyes closed
the pull is so strong it feels like no pull at all
they say when you open your eyes
you will see the light that leads you out
my eyes have been open forever here
and that grows clear are the scratch marks
that make up the black

Revery

the pull is hard
all that had raised me up before
is gone or imagined
some days I sleep more than half
feeling is leaving my body / my heart
on the shore I long for the waves to take me
small and few

Just Get On Board

sometimes I awaken to singing
the voice comes to me like warm butter
from the other room where she is working
without thinking of the meaning or the reach
of the song into other ears / other hearts
soothing as it is it's not meant for me
that thought would throw her off
throttle her throat and stifle the song
everyone's chances grow thinner

Milky Way

yes it's amazing
to be hacked on FB
who'd a thunk
the possessive's a giveaway
and the poor writing
says ain't me

Clearing Voices

strange reading someone else's memoir
of the places near where I grew up
and how that writer disguised
places like combining Skip's and Hodgie's
into Skippys / mysterious ponds
that don't exist and directions that lead
nowhere like every memoir / every
one of them leading back to their boring
centered guess where writers
me me me

Simple Wishes And A Day

sneered at today
my stock falling
but tonight I am ready
for sleep and lots of it
at least I don't fly into the nest
of earthquakes my buddy does

Merrimack

the river smelled of oil and plastic
dead fish and sewage
in the winter the ice would form
over brown bubbles
bad enough to cause
15 years of nightmares
now the fish leap by joy from the river in summer
and eagles nest above its banks
only after though my ties have long been broken

Her

his decision factored in her dowry
in this case a farm
her ability to cook
an anchor in a new country
and someone less threatening
less thrilling
than Kalyna Truss

Agency

I am in a field
no one not even birds
no gnats no bugs
no worms even under me
the sky would be blue
but it's gone too
now the field
now me

Unison

once all the girls were on stage
the song took one slow turn
then pushed into the loud ending
the slow turn though ran low and clean
his voice smooth and clear
you could watch all their hips

Time Sucks

the swaying trees
the blowing wind
the fast moving clouds
the birds flying away
the insects burrowing deep
the rain coming sideways
my body refusing to operate

Hospice Likens

when they decide it's time
for me to die and cart
me off to a stone building in the mountains
make sure those mountains are covered
with hardwood / that there is a twin rutted
gravel road leading up to it
and pines scattered in those birch and maple woods
so I can smell the farm I grew up on
because as they all sit and watch crying
as if I weren't there all I'll be doing
is reliving ever minute of my life on the farm
timing my departure with my departure

Fear of Flying

in two days I travel
halfway around the world again
and through I've flown a million miles or more
and never made a serious mistake
I still fear a blunder that will send me away
forever unable to return
why so much doubt

Saturday; Parents Gone

driving to Salisbury
to get a slice or three each
of Cristy's beach pizza in the Volksw
then back to the farm
to watch a horror movie
pulled in by tall antenna
from Rhode Island
we'd be lucky if there were enough
contrast in the snow to know
how many characters etc
were on the screen at any time
we'd imagine the rest

Always Scared

when my parents left for the weekend
to the place in NH I would revel in the freedom
except the fear each night
beyond rational neighbors
I carried a sharpened knife after dark
held it like a lover until I fell asleep
40 years later I can finally let go

My Fast Friend

fear's been by my side since birth
I remember the time my mother dropped
me at Steve Kimbrell's to walk 3 blocks
to the elementary school where we went
on Tuesday nights to learn how to dance
and he was away and I cried every step
of the way from fear of being alone
for the class we'd been in for weeks and weeks
my mother drove up to the school before class started
picked me up and took me home
did she know
did she suspect
did she hang back and watch

The Road / The Only One

the road

I am on it walking fast

as I can toward the setting sun

a haloed bulb through a low light fog

reaching only to the tops of pruned shade

trees lining the road and I'm certain that behind

me my shadow is sharp and long / distorted

by my angle to the sun / my head small but long

///

ahead of me my better companion casts his shadow

over me and over mine when he moves ahead

quickly / more quickly than I can move

the sun after all is busy setting

and my companion is faster

indistinct but faster

Pernambuco

inside the circle the pros sing
they dance with oblivious european influences
some american too / it's Brazil you see
the circle claps and can't help but move
a little / sway / feet a/shuffle
but outside the woman who has selected
the silkiest dress dances lightly and the dress
bobs seductively / each little move moves it
more than it deserves / more than I deserve

Obvious

they ask
why can't you speak
they wait for the answer
but it's because...

After Smiling

god the fatigue
the heavy throat
I need sleep
and no one to ever bother
me

South Girl

raised in a country
where travel once
was forbidden
she now
is everywhere

Circle of Circularity

in the favela girl
walks back to her shanty
with a bundle of papayas
she acquired by being a girl
walking alone on the streets
surrounding the favela
where she was into
that girl

Unencumbered

she's a doll
a ripe one
she leads us to all manner
in her sleek accent

They Stepped Past Me

two old men
outside eating shrimp
two young hookers
one young one not so
the young one
black hair low silk wrap dress
breasts defined moves like the sea or
a samba saying look at me look
at me look at
me look

We're All Dead and This Is Hell

the streets by night
through tinted taxi windows
looks great but we all know
we're at one of the 7
gates of hell

Christmas J

I dream of white Christmas
exactly like those which J used to know
where treetops shine
and children hear questions
he hears the bells of sledges
he hears the bells of snow

I dream o' da white Christmas
with each map of Christmas
that J might write
his days are merry and shining
all his Christmases are white cans

Barzeelian Tango Or Samba

across the street the Brazilian woman
steps in short steps by her man
and though he is invisible to me
she is demure and her long long brown hair
hardly twists when she glances side to side
one time toward me

Traveling Home

I test my fears tonight
finding my way home
all I need is to get out of this country
and into mine and then my brain
will be an asset

Please Help

I should be writing this
when I'll be asleep
after a ride a trip
from half way around the world
the other way
the vertical way
people are good here
but fear is a closer friend

Over Too Much

nothing went wrong on my trip home
but nevertheless time was taken off
my clock / I can feel those minutes gone now
many things seem wrong
and getting wronger by the minute

Very Practical

this would be when I'd go to Florida
to pack up and close up
get ready for the drive north
heat driven back and the cold ahead
her insults unending and lessons on how to drive
walking from the motels to restaurants and drive ins
grocery stores and figuring out how to get online
finally we'd learn the place was snowed under
and we'd hire a skip loader to clear the driveway
or find out the well stopped working and hire an artesian well driller
or the roof would have fallen in and we'd plot
how to end it all / end everything right then and there

I Hope Steve Likes This

words coming in like darts
connections irregular or lost
spies report truth as if assignments
while on a street in the dark
I reported the woman who walking
away rolled her hips like
a big no saying yes

Is Life Simple

there's a long road
that eventually crosses a bridge
on the other side it's just as long
we start at one end of the bridge
and end at the other
this is how simple life is

Right Now

by now every choice
has been made
no new homes
no new wives
no kids anymore
what I've got is all I'll ever have
and that's being taken away

It Can Be

shivering coughing
throat raw
too sick to write
that's how bad

Lesson With Meanings Galore

the wind in the pine tops
the wind through the windows midday
sometimes the wind blows the sea air to me
sometimes smoke from fires upriver
always wind means something's hot and rising
only not here

Why Is That?

how can he be
but he really isn't
better than his father
who could capture a place
but wrote short things
the fame world ignores
and like me
he has no accent of his origin

Water Under

large blocks of ice flowing downriver
under the bridge then beyond
long melted now
how like everything

When The Eyes Don't Focus

too later for another chance
do the right thing versus do
what you need to do
I would still own the farm
I would have known myself better
I would have happier work
I would not write about another chance

Passing

I don't think he'll make
it through the night
someone with knowledge
will say one day
and I'll know if
I hear it that
the second doorway
is opening and it will / it can be said
that through this world
I passed

A Funny Joke

someone told me
you've lost the will to live
I told her no I have lost will
but the will to work only to live
not the will to do my life's work

Demoted

if the end is the bottom
of a dark pit then today
I was lowered a good
portion of the way
and asked to thank
them for it

From An Old Movie

a street unchanged for forty
years / I walk up one side then up
the other / most windows sport dead
flies in fly-stick poses and at least one
newspaper ten years old / a woman passes
young and sporting / she is every curve
and tonight the dream I'll forget tomorrow
will be about her taking up an odd position
in a bed I'll fall into somewhere along
that street

Ronnie D's

Ronnie was devoted
friend
father
brother
and husband
he was a simple and loving man
cherished his family
his work
his dog Bella
his cars
and motorcycle
though his challenges were many
Ronnie never complained
he lived his life
giving to others
touched so many
with his caring ways
we will miss him clearly

Forgiveness

enough pain
to keep a big man
down / in bed and weeping
nothing warm can lure him out

My Profession Fails Again

who in their right mind
puts up with the horsehit
programmers make us do

Visit Soon

I feel ready for a visit
for the chance to sit and watch
to photograph
to write and revise / to dig deeper
into the past or paint it
onto the wall and stare
until great writers leap back from the dead
and praise or shred
I plan to stare
at them
at the water rushing by
one way or another
I am dedicated

Technical Logic

musicians can't resist nostalgia
they take a melancholy song
and sadden it year by year
now in my old age I can listen
to songs that shaped me
and the shaping seems misshapen
it's all very wonderful
and technological

And More To Make

once I had a big bed in the band room
and I listened to music on big speakers
and a loud amplifier that eventually in California
lost its transistor mind and I threw it into a dump
I can still remember the day
the toss of that amp and its preamp
the hot day and sweat
the bad taste still in my mouth
just more mistakes

A Road Not Findable

there weren't many birches
on our farm / only in the woods
behind the L shaped field
in the crook of the L
an old dump with bedsprings
parts of cars or trucks
who could tell with the rust
and vines / a road led to the very back
field where we buried my dog
the behind that a stand of young birches
white bark punctuated with black slashes
I spent many hours of my life
walking that hidden and woodsy road

Where / I

our farm had several roads on it
in the woods
mostly in tall pine woods
little undergrowth
these roads were old
connected different parts of the woods
for logging
for hauling from one field to another
or maybe once there were buildings there
maybe one of them leads to me

I Love Atmospheric Noise

pick a random place
and it's the ocean
pick a random time
and it's not now
no matter how improbable
now sounds it was inevitable
not that long ago or nearly so
or so it seems / there is a possible
lessness to it / this is true in the margins
of our understanding / in the fractures
of our reality / somewhere at the corner
of order and chaos

Reversiness

back there prettiness
is getting ready for my visit
as in setting a lure
baiting a trap
the one I escaped from when
I thought the hatred my family felt
was poison and the depth of dumbness
imbuing the place beyond my patience
then there was the lure of the warmth
sunniness of the place of the other
the other and I joined
near the lure actually
now my finals plans are in the making
I look at all this as a macrocosm
of myself

Fields and Seas

she promised
to guide me to the end of the pier
to stand there with a look of humanity
until I disappeared

No More I Love You

I used to watch shows
where the featured character
would be told “you’re too good
for them not to want to steal
you” and I’d
think yeah that’s me but
last night I didn’t
and it was that I just didn’t
I really didn’t

She

she of course dressed perfectly
and so made herself respectable
as a choice / who could argue
clever or sincere

After Being Alone Too Long

if you're in a foreign city
what is it to be lonely
imagine the woman walking ahead of you
in the cold north air her boot backs kicking
up the back of her coat
what would be wrong to take her
to your room / warm together
create a possible world
explore different us
after a light sleep in the night
by the lights of the city in through the window
shades not pulled I watch her uncover
and walk silently to the toilet
then minutes later her telltale shadow
returns and pretending to sleep as a spouse
I reach around her and fall back
into a real sleep

Bin Laden

when I started writing these
poem a days
it was not long until
New York was taken down
and now tonight right this minute
as I write this I am hearing on the radio
that the man responsible is dead
though I hate for people to die
or be killed tonight I am considering
an exception

Alexander's Test

who imagines
smart imaginations are tied to **this**
many things can be
we are interested only
in
ones that might be
are not
haven't been treated like this
surprise
and are pretty once
the tears dry

Looking Up / Touching Down

I met her on a dustblown street
in the deep southwest
we grabbed a coffee even in the heat
later she took me to her desert tent
where we watched the second show
the dustblown sky and the magic possibilities
of others

Forensic Sentiment

outside / the warm air
the yellowed green
a breeze that doesn't know its way around
the grass upon the ground is still cool
this is where I'll lay my head / my self
in a better world such dozing off
would drip away and become
the right end

I Got In The Way

the perfect man
for the perfect woman
much conspires
to keep them apart
circumstances
time / centuries / seconds
a bit of land
a spit of sea
maybe me

High Over Me

one constant
my life long
music running through my head
listening
playing
I wonder how long after
it will linger

My ~~Problem~~ Music

speaking of music
the song playing now
over and over
the one I listened to
while waiting up
for my daughter to sleep
not long after she was born
I recall the sadness and the rain outside
the view down to the highway
where carlights told just two stories
that was the highest place I ever lived
the woman the wrong woman
weren't they all
all I needed was me

Some That I've Broken

here is something everybody
already knows / the road
you believe goes on forever
ends at a river / hits it
square on and your trip from that point on
will be either an effortless drift
in a time like Spring or
a hard swim against a cruel current
then either it ends
or the sea will greet you with the widest
smile a world can smile

Don't Fear

I look forward
to the time when what I do
won't be attempted
when the critics are off in a bar drinking
and their only topic will be
I wonder if anyone's trying
that these days

Toward Yuma

tomorrow the road
hot I hope
we'll drive all day and drink coffee like Cubans
eat bad food
lots of it
maybe wonder
on some evenings
where life is hiding
when the sun's too bright
and the night's too shining

Toward Yuma

the road to Yuma
swells heated
I lost what's behind me
now in front beckons

Blithely Unaware

well enough
well nothing here
the uninformidable sandwich
that I hope is soon long gone
will be left behind
somewhere just as all else has been
or will be

Who Finds You

here in Yuma the roads are well kept
and lead to the border
many of the buildings
fake you out with their despair
it might seem hot but the townsfolk
just laugh
we ate too much
now the room is too loud
I feel gone

Lost Perk

the will not to press forward
apparently is essence
for when it's gone
tears and long naps
follow on

Sadly

the woman with red hair
white skin very white
lace dress with some green
she smiled pretty at her
date?
she was older than she wanted to look
the backs of her hands were stained with spots
she spoke well
watched him with wide wide eyes
I left before I could see what followed on
sadly

Brightness

the pictures are keen
to be taken and played
over again / I love
the margins and the colors
that can be faded

Flush Wet

and for that I credit
the faults of oddly made things
that they can adapt to wildness
I notice that for example
strange shapes appear
sometimes and sometimes
the clarity is so sharp the corners
of my eyes tear up
I am grateful for these few years of life
so unlike the margins

Billboards

from behind him
I can see her eyes
green looking up at him
she is more attentive than he can ever be
he seems looking in the air
straight ahead
maybe down toward her
never mind
she is intense
me too wondering
who has ever looked like that at me
he and I
people like us will never know

Say Goodbye To The World

the house sits owned
by a government branch
the notice claims wonder who lives there
how that person or those persons
can make their choice legal
the world I lived in 40 years ago
was one I owned enough of to be able
to walk for hours without retracing
my steps / crossing yes retracing no
others' lives are continuous
mine is in spurts with players all different
eras / an era I wished to revisit
is that one / the one where I had my own
and enough

Of All Things Living

like all the other times
this time I felt slow and old
I the behemoth hunched and sad
if only I could go down one side
into health and happiness
or down the other to quiet
so unlike the disquiet

Talking to the Grave Guys

today nearby a grave was filled
first by the box gold with her name
Beatrice Yeo 1919–2011
inside that the coffin
holding something like her
second by tractor scoops of soil
spread and tamped by a handheld shovel
and tamper / then a layer of loam
a flat namestone / then the cuts sections
of turf and what do you know
the world is a little more like it was in 1919
but its shape tipped in the direction
of Beatrice Yeo

Small Mouth

fisherman infest the banks
their talk infuriates
a smallmouth bass in salt water
that's a first for me
I've never heard of catching a smallmouth
bass in salt water
first time I ever caught a smallmouth bass
in salt water like this / this is new
catching a smallmouth bass in salt
water / ok man I left your medal at home
ok now so cool it and get out of my frame

With Butter

she can't help it
bipolar he says
her brain racing to begin
each new thought before the old one
is all out / so she says things
like bastard when you joke
you'll leave them at the restaurant
but it's just her with her
critic trailing behind
then she orders rolls and cornbread
for my trip home

On Flying Out

show me why where I lived
should be forgotten
why my memories are worth so little
I write them down I write them
I revise them / and why not
they are the only truths
I find worth keeping

Last Thing on the Merrimack

the fisherman saying let's rock 'n' roll
strolls in his snow boots shorts and tee shirt
into the river with his 10ft pole and when
he's armpit deep he flings the weight hook and line
out to the middle of the widest part of the river then
walks back to the bank and plants his rod
against a tree and that's what we
call folks fishin'

Dream Anchor

what we call dreaming
is our brain's last hold
on the real lest sleep
so resembling death
is lulled too far toward
the imaginary and becomes
what is resembles and the brain
pulls the mind into the abyss
and all right again with the
world locally speaking

Surely It's Love

my mother was right
about my flaw
soon to become
a fatal one

Stars Up On The Hill

the fields I remember
are gone now
either grown over with junk trees
or with homes I never lived in
when I see them though
the look the same
do my eyes lie
or does the world itself

Now I Feel Better

I learned today
I shouldn't compare myself
to the best in the world
only those I grew up with
because where you start and end up
is a better measure than only
where you end up

As If Thinking Too Hard

tonight my head went
all sweaty after a good cup of coffee
and I wonder what sort
of bad sign this could be
yet another and brief like all the rest

Consumable

what is this sadness
who made it and how
bad can it get
like a pair of geraniums planted by a headstone
first one side of me then
the other will be eaten by a fat thought
the started its life about
the same time I did

Fostering

the decisions made
must stand
the test of time
if we are to trust to make
them ever again

It Starts With a Call

the call / the phone
ringing like that then the voice
on the other end / I knew her
and she said Helen
Helen the hospital
shall I get the message
on the other end of the wire
stretched from the house
to the pole pole to pole
into town and Ethel on that other end
time to go
the hospital
and the end

How She Left

heavy rain wind
heavy thunder but before
sharp quick lightning
a spark across the window
she's afraid but cannot move
her insides twist and the blood comes
she remembers the time
when she was little
and the lightning past her head
exploded the picture of Jesus
all that might have happened that night too
but she decided to die first

Simplicity Ends

deep thunder and high flash lightning
scared her
to death

Too Small Too Tall

finding the right
takes about the right
amount of time

Forgivable

when I asked him
why he died
all he answered was when
he said only facts could be told
that the world that surrounds the living
is filled only with facts
truth he said
didn't factor
I thought he sighed

Paris Riff

before his words were
like the swan who glides
in the water so
smooth on a smooth
surface so clear and sharp so
silent and crisp as they easy-speak
before he spoke he was
as the swan walking
stumbling fearful on dried leaves
as he began to speak it was
as the swan steps onto the water
to glide like the slight curled smile on
the tips of her lips

Affinity or Absence

does wanting count
who built that in
hunger I can understand
desire makes sense
but the want
the lack
the absence
how could that come from nothing
except by affinity

Who Gets It?

after decades
to hear music clearly
my father would be in tears
imagination versus ears
he took imagination
and was a musician
I ears and am a listener

No Memory of It

how to zero memory
forget everything fast
with the fewest lasting effects
so it's not possible to remember
when and how you forgot

Sitting Around

she still has
her ice grey eyes
her voice is still constricted
do I still wish?
should I?

No Art This Time

I suppose she wondered
who I had become
and why I'd shy away
we're not young and not again
when she walks away this time
all it will be is walking away

Summer What

the stems ride high
I'm vaulting the flowers
hoping for clean clearance
meanwhile a good gleaming sound
blurts from the speakers
making this writing hard and ugly

After All

she was standing by the river
facing it late one night
from what I could see the water was black
and the red lights locating the piers
smeared their red on the black
the bridge was green and its lights
she had something important to say
to me but she never saw me arrive
never heard me walk nearly up to her
stand behind her stare at her from behind
both of us perplexed by the water
by what we had planned to say
instead I left / really left
she never followed
I guess we said it all

After More

I settled in a flat place
absent trees or even tall brush
so though my eyes had little power
it felt like I could see forever
never spellbound by her turned away from me
backside view and the tendernesses
I saw lying beneath

Her And Me

what happened was that the past
disappeared / once time had passed
it was gone / even photographs could
be held aside / no more / I own the past
and the look on my mother's face
at 17 kneeling one row deep in the grass
with her friends beside her tell me this moment
was one the never crossed her mind
during her long and sadness streaming life
and what a disappointment I was for her

And Passion

I wish the beauty of music
making it in small groups
could instill the great talks
the scientific presentations
to see several working together
to make it all make
sense would make
the world of science safe
for thought

Locked In Decision

outside the window
sky lit by the city
cold air draws beads of sweat
from the hotel room
inside she has settled under the feathery duvet
is resting her head on her hand
elbow creasing the pillow
it's not late and the night will be long
the morning and afternoon too
we are camped and will never leave
voluntarily

One Night In Boston

his living room was unlit
aside from small spots on his McIntosh
and TEAC tape player
a reading light / his flat
on Beacon near the Hill
dark wood where wood would be
red Turkish carpet and deep blue chairs
he drank cognac and commented on my taste in music
the first urban man I ever met
he stared me down
he crushed me using culture
I was / I became / I remain
a farm boy

Now There

right now a woodchuck
is sitting by an entrance to his burrow
in the cemetery where he lives back East
if I could I would be there near him
watching the sky darken but
not all the way as the city just over the trees
fights with infinite dark
waiting just outside our eyesight

The Last Bit

I can't shake it
I am unable to find joy
anywhere / eyes so sad
they all say / why would
I want that / how can I escape it
is this what it all comes
down to

So What If

beneath the heat
layers of sweat
unpliable thoughts
what if perfection
were the worst thing

Down and Down

every day
I lose something else that seemed valuable
and the depression grins

Berlin Story (i)

once in Berlin
I found her running into a doorway off the main street
into small village
a café / a bistro / a market
and flats all the way up
I lived there with her my
whole life just to see what
that would be
like

At The Top of The Stairs

she didn't care
we didn't talk
we spoke so differently
only our movements were the same
her clothes were layered
and her tight pants came
to a point / we ate too many times
and after her shower we laced up
then the dreams

1880s or So

we moved through the tall yellow grass
on the other side of a green stand of pines and such
near a river running green and brown at the end of winter
looking for a place to camp / to build a fire of twigs
then larger boughs / our aim simply a hefty
meal of sofky followed by a night of tight sleep
in rough but heavy and many blankets

Berlin Story 2

an unknown girl in the corner
waiting for a chance to take a picture
stands in plaid skirt and furlined coat
bookbag in one hand and camera hanging
from her neck / her perch is the crease
of two smooth tall stone building walls
she made me cry / her wet hair did
I needed her

Berlin Story 3

sitting with his coffee perched in one hand
holding the tall cup from its top
he smiles at the deep mocha flavor it sacrifices to him
his short hair and short mustache make
him out to be my age
his ribbed sweater make
him from a different place
he is spiked by a few low lights
hanging above the bar where he sits
reflections are blurred / I think
another coffee awaits or perhaps
my dinner with her requires me

Another

almost every day
a setback
some important
some annoying
but I get laid low

Faithless Again

a spread of sand awaits
red under a red sky and sun
sprinkled about spots of green and burnt brown
some rock and some would say minerals
once thoughts roamed here

Shortest Story

a quick flash across the sky
we awake and reach
comes a cracking roar
then a hard rain
finally a dreamless sleep

Stay And Watch

never thought I'd see a date
like today's / perhaps the edge of the century
as I figured what age death began
funny how memories hang on
how the bits lie or diffuse
the length of truth shortens
just while the length of shadows
draws the opposite

To Far Away

the land is yellow with wheat
or green with produce and grass
green with trees some with white trunks
it looks like home could look
were I to go I think I would weep
into the rivers and kiss the soil
if I could see the grave of a relative
I would jump for joy then hug the ground
this would me I had found me

Pining

so warm / hot and the distance
is in the way again
I sit here and stare / the photos
as important as the different stations
of devotion / I wish I could stop
all this flailing and concentrate
on remembrance / and making up

More of Same

why oh why
does everything go wrong
like this / diagnostics
tingling fingers
bad ram
panics / everything is crap

Selection Committee

they ask me to do
what I am unable to do
the sound of my name has just
reached them / I shouted it
decades ago

Turns To Go

I was on the bed
lying sick at heart and wondering
about the future of the next five
minutes when she stood up
and all I could see was her soft skirt
wrapping her legs
she left the room
taking everything important

Cambridge The Other One

song for worse is better

Notting Hillbillies

Mark Knopfler

a dollar a day

get my money

get my pay

So There

it takes longer to figure things out
not thinking of everything that's not constant
64 bit versus 32 bit
something not contended with so far
but I did figure it out
and the Apple Genius didn't

Lineman

the song is a longing
there is the one
then there is the echo
which is the truth
it's a call to a place
that holds only you
and desires
they speak of the "other"
when we speak of people
in this song the place that calls
in an other / it's where you live forever
and the land reflects your emotions
you live every day there a sad but perfect day
everyone who knew you once wonders
where you are / they may look but they
never find / you can be there with the one
you've loved but can't attain
it's like a heaven but it's a hot dry flat dusty Kansas

The Space Between a Man and His Metaphor

the space
the dust blowing
scraps blowing down the street
the sadness filling every sunlit place
the sadness hiding in the shadows waiting
for me to pass by / to hijack any optimism let
alone the happiness
the space

Obscure But Unknown

taking a nap
talking all night
thrusting into the wrong situation
making a beautiful photo HDR and deleting
the originals / such details
defy arrangement / one just happens
they just happen / my head snaps up
when the sleep deepens when I sleep
while sitting in front of my workstation

Built For This

out in the grass strip
between bike path and road
the rabbits munch and though the walkers
and bikers come within inches they
never stop pulling at the grass
lying as if in seductive repose
or pointing their ears a different direction
but when a crow hangs above floating past
they freeze / scurry for the berm and slough beyond
and crouch in the tall swamp grass
by the shore birds and egrets
afraid being made in them

Still On

the past
the memory of it
drains out my eyes
and falls like tears
on the dry ground
it will remain

I'm Forever

I do not know how often I am
in the last 3 years sobbing on the bed throwing
too often I had wanted to make the public authorities
exercise my freedom of religion worm
even the medical officer was sent
the ORF is my story processed in a detailed documentation
all this only because I have a good Pastafari
but I've been patiently...
eat!

today I could on the Vienna office
get my new credit-card-driver's license
in the photo can be seen clearly
I am wearing a colander on her head
my affiliation with the Church of the FSM
demonstrates I'm partying my mind
my religious freedom Sun

laugh at me for 10 minutes
in the office dead nobody understands
it is divine
(and this time even literally)

golden travel times to break!
I'm sure I've gotten from now on
every routine control of the whole program:
safety vest
warning triangle
first aid
repair kit
registration certificate
bubbles

Unfree

every day the cries
grow sharper
longer
spurred by the littlest things
all I can do is listen to the music
repeating all night

Crazy Like It Is

her voice sweet as it is
makes me stare
at the floor
so it is with the singing voice
of a melancholy woman
singing of love
or her life

Signal Tonight

so it's the winter
the middle of it
when it gets close to dark
the sun's been low
already a long time
this means the streetlights
will glow a sickly yellow
well into the night
maybe beyond
well beyond
sickly yellow
till snow melts

Quick Downhill Ride

down the road the smells
tarweed eucalyptus dried grass
wind in the oaks
fog through the wind gap ahead
some smell the faint salt in the breeze
such a perfumery
such a touching blend
the perfect balance out
there has no reflection
just rejection

We Got 'Em

the size of a person's craziness
grows with the ingestion
of silly words
silly sentences
silly speeches

During or After a Storm

would I have been able
to open the door and be a savior
her life draining away
the pain like nothing before
whose name did she say
to herself last
which face came to mind
which scene in her life
real or imagined
regret / fear / anger / hate
disappointment
what did she believe
ultimately
her life was for

How It Starts

first the cracks in the tv signal
then flashes across the bottoms of clouds
roiling flashes and vibrations in the black puffed clouds
next a long low rock-like rumble that shakes the concrete slab
beneath her / and she is alone in the heat
and dark from the power stopping
and everything around and in her fading black
from the pains in her gut and she runs on the toilet
she knows no more storms will come

Bitch

caught Ayn broken down by the side of the road
she croaked help me
“do it yourself”

Hunger for Amazement

black water under a green
bridge yellow lights
crescent moon rising
middle of the night
the fear dogs are barking
running closer

North Fear

ok I never go there
it never has been home
I'm afraid of the whispering pines
when the wind is cold
and comes off the lakes
it would force me inside
to the stove fire and solid bed
too close

Last Time Too

after I rested my forehead
on the cold glass
fifteen floors up in a hotel in the north
I smelled the old smell from home
of the cold air dropping down the surface
of the glass and I stared at the lights
from uncovered or partially curtained windows
in the row of flats down and to the right
on a street that angled past the back of the hotel
past one of them I thought I saw a woman
unclothed or nearly so I couldn't tell she moved
so fast past the window and I stood back just a fraction
and reflected I saw a woman unclothed or nearly so I couldn't
tell she moved so fast out of the bathroom into
a bed about to be shared for the first time

Envelope Please

the snow and scattered ice
on the road didn't slow me
down when I was young
and biking from farm to bridge
and beyond meant only storing
things to remember when biking
became hard

Take Heart Most Worried Souls

the comfort of being forgotten
and knowing that you have been
if you worry you won't be
take heart in the fact that it's a necessary
part of the physics of existence
which itself will one day be forgotten

I Have Found the Heated Misery / Mystery / Solitude

the point of the repeating
repeating lonely chords
the repetition / repeating the words
the line / the hope abandoned
when they add an end to the song
they show how little they know
of the nature / of life

Old Old Stock

my father worked in tubes
built radios / amplifiers
he had many but now 12
years past his passing
the boxes are near empty
all that're left have been used
and haven't been stored well
their age then will make them
weak / make their song rough and soft
make them resemble all who have
handled them

Bad Boys

to be humble when you're great
is like handing a bandage to the man you've punched
to be humble when you suck
is like telling the truth outside the confessional

Humility Squared

I am the feeble vessel
that embodies an uncommon
but foul tasting too-old wine

Political Shame

better to lie
or repeat lies
better to be on the side of evil
or just stupid

Stories For All Occasions

no matter what happens beneath
the story happens above
taking in everything
stretching what lies above
so it's so smooth so strange
so wonderful

Only At Her Best

I saw her working
hard in the weight room
lifting via a machine
small weights but she
sweat all the same
and looking at me
she clearly saw no
one to shy away from

Why She Did It

she left the farm
sold it
to finally forget how it happened
how her father was killed
how he died
and her role in it

She Did All My Work

where was she
what did she do when she found out
did she find out
did the police talk to her
did she plan the funeral
did she stand there while they spoke of him
did she hold back and watch them fill in the hole
why did she believe I was no good

Against Will

the water so black
the bridge above haunts in green
if your gaze softens the water's surface melts
something about the place
fills death with dread

If What?

what if she never knew
just a question in her head
as her mother drank herself over the edge
what if driving the tractor
with her mother behind working the mower
she thought of tipping the machine
what if when she saw the snakes racing away
she thought of jumping and letting
things happen
things happen is what the neighbors said
what the police said what her brother said
what the priest said before cutting the kielbasa in half
everyone was drunk one day afterward
she could see what that meant
what a killer that was

Story Matters

if only I had known some of this story
I could have asked
I could have tried different times
my that's why my father told me
he would stand by her no matter what
he knew the story and her role in it
knew she couldn't live alone with it

Story Unravelling

they reported he had been poked
hard in the abdomen a week or two
earlier and this was a re-injury
what if that first poke was the truth
and the human kick was covered up
by it / what if my mother thought of this

All Figures

it was to save everyone's reputation
to think a woman could do that to a man
and what did the man do to deserve it
they believed he would live
but he didn't and an assault
became a killing
they all had mean streaks
it's what drew them together
what drew their blueprints

But Too Late

I picture her
sitting in the hay
in the loft
maybe on the rafter just above
hay smell cow piss chickens
thinking through the options
no one was about to die
only the shame facing the family
the nosy neighbors who once seemed
so fit and friendly
talking and talking to the others
to the chief / the day was too hot
for thinking and the hay still not
quite dry fumed her as she sat
crying then thinking
the lie would work because everyone down
the road each way knew of the accident last
week and this week's would be the same
a double accident / a sharp horse-driven
jab in the same place / the tongue of the wagon
years later she told me it was the horse's kick
the better lie

By The Stones and Dusk

she ran through the fields
and down the little forest road to the back back
field then to the stone wall
at the base of the oak she dug
to the box of jars
unlatched it and drank
amber in the bottle
and through the maple leaves
in the younger field to the West
he had died in Amesbury
despite the hope that hung
over them all

!

gorgeous galaxies celebrate
Hubble's 21st birthday
when beauty and science collide
a collision of past and present
evidence and theory collide
with galactic proportions

What About Now

they never understood
I put it to their parenthood
but then I think do I never understand
my daughter my children
they thought me stupid in lots of ways
everyone is smart the way they can be smart
what would my father think
of this tube amp playing right now

Steep Hills

time is running out

I grow tired

I struggle to get back strength

worry worry

Us Just Us

when I say I grew up a century ago
it's not some figurative claim
the way we lived alone out there
on the western edge of our small town
we mostly made grew or cut down
everything we needed
isolation was so constant
we never noticed that the whole
world was us

Smells

the vexing problem of place
the stitchery where she sewed soles to uppers
the farm of hay and animals
work everywhere
working at a machine above the river
it smells of shit
working with a pitchfork in the barn
it smells of shit
the problem is vexing
because there is no purchase

Guess Where?

I have something to tell you Ma
what's that
I'm pregnant
when are you due
right now
quick I scrubbed the bathroom floor
it's the cleanest place in the house
thanks ma

Lasting

how many hours or days
maybe a week of pain
fear before the final storm
scared resenting the unfairness
of living beyond those who would help her
she never loved me too much to keep me away
but respected me too little

Twelve Dead

the cars seemed to have exploded
doors gone
hoods gone trunk lids gone
at the bottom of a little gulch
the road dipped through
blood like paint blown
out a severed commercial spray painter
we drove past
the drivers it seemed from the little glimpse I had of them
and what the Sunday night gathered crowd remarked
we elderly and the victims their families
coming back from the White Mountains
where we were headed
we cursed the delay

Wrong Some More

everything down
trip coming up
scrambling as usual

Poor Duncan

she up and married
someone else after a to
me fairy tale romance
with a casual friend
they both were photographers
and she trusted only
him to do it right and well
and it was a true feeling she
had to ask him to picture her
and another wedding in the woods
and he did
his casual blog post couldn't hide
what it did to him

God Says “For Your Memory Only”

people who try to value
education by using money
are sick little puppies

the light this late afternoon
in Portland was beyond perfection
and my camera in my room
by accident

PDX / Looking Out

cars down the highway
across the tarmac
emergency vehicles
sirening toward a disaster
(but now they are returning)
little smears of cloud
but the light is pure and filtered
by some great artist
I wish I could be the one
to paint the memories
of those dead who wish
they were not
I picture each gazing up
like one whose petition to leave
was made nobly and inconclusively
I picture one whose instincts
for some other is like to children
but whose instinct for me
is other

Red Metal and In Thought

I was sitting in a great building
tall overlooking the city and the river six
blocks away night but not late
across the way sat a great building
lights on all up and down
some rooms looked like offices
some like apartments
never a person in sight
one by one
or in coincident groups
the lights went out
hours it took but I watched
unblinking and in a funk
until it was all black
except the lights from my great
building which lit that great
building and its blood leaking
red roof

Connectors

so I said
to the shiny redhead
posing in the math stacks
are we on the same side
of love's surface
or not and

Grand And Boring

nothing like fear
keeping you up
advising the sweat
I live now to tell
teach some might say
but it's just the fabulous story
all the great thinkers have surged ahead
time for a slowpoke like me
to turn off the jets
straining to keep up
the peloton is long gone
time to tell stories

Not The Innocent Woman

against ideology

I claim it was not the clearcut
answer / Nana was not the innocent
woman who killed out of preservation
and exonerated because men are violent
and women innocent
she still provided the moonshine
the milk the geese the turkeys the pigs
the eggs to the important people in town
and the neighbors closed ranks
so nothing but the story my mother made up
was given to the chief

I Remember I Was Sad

she hopped onto the frame
of my bike / her legs over on one side
and I took her for a short ride up the street
into New hampshire
I recited my social security number
I just got my card
these were just a couple of the old
things I remember

Love & The Shiny Ark

the sadness that arises
when the land that was once yours
and cherished is now someone else's
and has been trashed

California Undreaming

I miss big weather
here we get a heavy rain
sometimes / hot but not
scorching / I miss the blizzards
the thunderstorms all summer
the hail the floods even
trees down leaves all missing
days that make wish I were here
the make here the perfect dream
it's the longing I miss
having makes me sad

Dropping Down

where I'm from September means get
ready for endings / just a couple
of months until earliest dark days
and already the trees act it there
then

No Free Lunch

soon the creative partners
will well up and wish
their strange likes on me
without thinking
I'll write them down
automatic writing?
no it's manual

Hold

in the trunk of my car I'll
carry a hand spade a bottle
and mulch to spruce
up the little garden
I've built time after time
by the stone that marks their passing
in hopes it'll
take

Inner Bound

oh yes the pretty woman
said and then
I whisked us both
to the middle of the bridge which
spun around smartly but slow
with four tight men
turning the crank
we sat at either end of the twisted apart span
while the tall boat with sail furled motored
up the river but with the tide
toward that unpronouncable thing
everyone fears / then loves

Bad Neighborhood

after years I still
fear the river
the water in it
clear as it can be
I can watch fishermen wade
up to their armpits
but I still can't get closer than three feet
I suppose when god remakes hell
into the east side of heaven
some old timers won't be able to walk the sidewalks
for fear of a drive by

August

who cares about the poor
their lives and health are wastelands
we the rich hope they die soon
that's why we take their health care away
that's why when they retire we give them nothing
I mean it's their fault for not knowing
that as good businessmen
we were lying the whole time

Thinking of Hard Things

writing a simple sentence
reminds me of elegance
the awkward intercourse
of function and aesthetics
a minimalist that cannot
be revised

In A North

walking the hard wind streets
I saw a galvanized door
with a big red A
on it and inside
upstairs in a sweet bedroom
I imagined the young two
coupling and for them
it's all a new start with no scar
long in healing
and me / I was cold
getting colder
able only
to walk slower and slower

1937 as If Important

the last of the cars are drove away
the one on the horse too is gone
around the bend and up the hill
behind her a stone drops on the wood
just lowered into the ground
on the other side of her leaning on a trunk
beyond earshot two men smoke and wait
she can smell it / it smells like loneliness
looking down at the oak box
she crosses the threshold from girl to bitch

On My Way

coming into Boston tonight
I saw all the lights spread out
like that thing Eliot said things spread out like
kind of yellow or maybe some orange too
car lights flashlighting roads
and each other
I was scrunched into a window seat
but an exit so lots of leg room
several of the women were gorgeous
they probably still are
I got into the house
and only everything had moved somewhere else
outside the reflecting window
only the dark

Nothing Else / Nothing More

the river was running high
with a full moon at noon
everything was pulled apart
and so the river was running high
that and the heavy flooding last week
what I remember are the stories I heard
of floods of yore / once the past is the past
everything's a story / get busy learning
how stories go

Body Politeness

lots of days are when beautiful
women are born and each is a harm
to many / perhaps you have seen
one trying to climb up onto a tractor
in a tight pencil skirt and even though
nothing showed everything
was seen

Femme

with her wide hips
she rotates from her back to her side
her legs lead
her black hairs hangs back
through it all
made of things we cannot name
she moves all who see
slashing down the street
sitting slowly in a held out chair
at the most expensive restaurant
a man can afford
whatever they try
she is more

Green to Red Confusion

in the beautiful park
we call the final resting place
even the trees mention their mortality
which we think of as humanity
sometimes but it's really just death

WTF

a layer of salt
kosher preferred
sea salt otherwise
then the steak
a layer of salt
kosher preferred
sea salt otherwise
warm stewed tomatoes
welcome to the Pine Club

Slight Love

of course the ships still quell
the desire to languish
by water dreams act out
the final instruments hang back
like a thorn unwilling to prick
once I sat by a big bay
and wondered how much order
could be tolerated not just by
the fiends flying by and leaping
but by the sharp sun that turned
the pretty woman's face a bit red
and then redder

In The Dark A River A Loved

we saw the water
we saw it blacker
than any night
nearby lonely women
tended their beds
they loved their windows
from them the river seemed silver
and the wind up from the sea
was warm and caressing
every day they walked down to the bank
wearing their best skirts and dresses
listening from behind the trees
you could hear the sway of the music
they walked in time to
everything was ripe
only one thing wasn't

Into the Soul

a rollicking beat
melancholy chords and melody
to this I entered the cemetery
for the last time this late afternoon
I think they would have stopped to listen
were they around / in theory they were
but the actual of it never made much sense
to me / I hope they would recognize
the best of my melancholy / how
it could become with sweat art

River My Friend

the river doesn't expect
makeup and fashion style
it doesn't care who gave birth to you
it doesn't need you and it eats the sad
runoff from hills and fields and beyond
that the mountains and high lakes
it is the color of its bed or of its depth
it would gladly take you to the sea
or beyond
it is always ready

One Last Time

in the shadow of the hangar
pools of light from the parts being taken apart
tangle your toes and sandaled feet
no one near you is beautiful
yet you seek and seek them
some of your thoughts are hinged
when you thought they were un
you marvel that you keep trying
passionless / hankering for your mind
to soar

Falling Deep

standing by the road
cars swerve past
on the bridge / I step
up onto the silly curb
the bridge shakes side to side
one day it could be gone
everything I mean

One Warm Night In September

some of the worst times were had while the door was open
in the outside people walked by the house
in the doorway we made love
30 feet from the street
we did something that cannot be spoken of

Sidewalk Scene By Outdoor Café

in the mustard
dress with the flared skirt
a woman walks away
but it feels to my eyes
that she's walking here
for me / for that's
how they do it
for me

Splash

perhaps I won't make the trip
wouldn't that be a trip?

Who Flees

the haunted desert reclaims
its green / its kindling
so many of its fears
surface at night in the cold of space
hide beneath in the heat of high heavens

Away and Far

where my imagination flees
the waters flow
the bridge spans
the cold air rises
up to spark the fires of Winter
give me the strength to find
a way
any way
back

Lifelingers

sporadic
cold rain / Spring with its yellowed green
dripping heat and frappes
cold rain / Fall with it's greened yellows
snow of concealment
the visits are not continuous
everything's in a jerk
and finally appearing

To The Heap

they in turn embraced this
gruff emissary from the exotic
intimidating but newly
chic world of technology
Gabriel's dissonant desiccated plainchant blank
verse was dark disturbing distant candid calculating and desperate
at once florid yet monochromatic
it could "cons-up" a soul
in a single haunting searing stanza
and remand it remorselessly insouciantly
to the heap in the next

Along With It

it struck me the narrative
didn't fit the crime
time to suffer the consequences
of deep laughter

Lying Lessons

a pretty picture
made from poor things
and squinting eyes
the shades have rolled off
the sky saturated
sharp / sharpened
it becomes memory

Desperate Fear of Seeing

there's a beauty to a place
even when the skies threaten
to grow dark and though it's a threat
it happens on a timetable
all these years I had the directions wrong
everything wrong
my strategy was empty and I pushed reluctantly
for fear of having nothing but my lack of long vision
made for intermittent strong focus like a horsepowered engine
just banging each cylinder's heart out
pounding like a heart

Deserts To Me

there are little fears
just right across the street
sometimes the street's so heated
from a faraway thing like a judgment
but white hot from boiled emotions
that feet fear the heated touch on the soles
behind me / I am on one side
of such a street / stands a bar where men stand
and wobble as they soothe their throats
attack their senses / is nothing in there
where are the gentle ones who seem
always to weep / this makes me think
of cooling rain and maybe a deep rest

The Long And Short of It

sometimes a month is all there is
the phrase our time together
makes its round through amnesia
and back
in a room nearby perhaps downstairs
a piano sounds deep chords
given all this all
I can imagine are the rooms up on the second floor
lit late and shadows passing by
as I stand against a tree trunk wet from days of rain
to me the world is nothing but moments like this
strung together until they reach a month

What Messed It Up

there is quite a capture
the hard drive scrambled
behavior unlike civilization
cautious but
seems back

More White / More Heat

here is something worth supposing
that the joy at the start balances
melancholy at the end but really
it's just a tilt / a long sad one
but that sadness is someone else's
not part of the original equation
some might say a long joyous one
if the point were to mess
with my mind

Losing Lessons

I saw a small stone
just below the river's top
I wondered whether it was there
the first time I crossed that bridge
50 years ago / as I sit here in the bulb
of light my computer makes
it seems so not long ago but
math and biology say it is
and such a small stone
perhaps it was larger then
like my vision
my hopes

That's How They Do It

I remember walking from the bus to my front door
high school in the 60s
if I walked that same path today it would be through ruins

Dreadful Reflection

reading of my life
as written by an new era Oscar Wilde
I picture our farm and it's heavy farm smells
hay drying after mowing
cow dung and piss and yes the raw milk
the odd metal smell of cold New England well water in a metal cooling tank
pears and apples fallen from an old productive orchard
rotting in September sun and yellow jackets sampling them late in the season
their vision for a great son went bad early
my crossed eyes and lazy habits
my mother compelled to do schoolwork for me and then later my classmates thinking me a genius
rejections by good schools and a band instead of steady work
no girls no women she knew there was no future in her future and none for me but that came second
my father who struggled against her without the weapons men have of fist and liquor
he was cowed and I felt him cowering downstairs many nights when her yelling started
I know I know it's never fair Ma
"one of the few genuine Renaissance men to emerge from the OO milieu"
"scholar, scientist, poet, performance artist, entrepreneur, musician, essayist, and yes, hacker"
they'd laugh tell me they told their friends I became a plumber
it's nothing the world would ever think even tolerate that's how they'd see it

Magic Of Writing

how amazing
how writing it down
clears it up

Intaglio

writing like a tango
rhythms and twinned sounds
the beauty of beautiful language
is hard to describe plainly

Under Nuts

imagine the great encounter
from the perspective of an acorn
or a shag bark hickory nut
in deep grass just turning
as autumn rolls on
I can picture it but it's in my imagination only
such a place

30 Hadley Road

the stone wall
so long ago sitting there as families come and go
then my turn
I'd run from one side to the other
imagine
enough land that it sits astride
a stretch of road
my land on this side
my land on that side
enough land that to walk from one end to the other
through woods
takes half an hour
half an hour
to be ripped from it
in the name of a love long ago divorced
and its replacement long ago divorced
when I could have that land now
to live on
instead of this

Music Being Always

when I sat in the padded rocker
in the pool room in Merrimac
I listened to music played on tube amps
tubes / their glow
a warm but clear tone
I listened each song over and over
a soundtrack for my thinking
today is the same
tonight
right now

Lost Side of Town

why do they keep asking me
I can't judge
I have no qualification
how can I say no without rejecting

You're Still With Her

music with chords that strain
whiny voice / words that make no sense
except sadness / and a way to find me
I listen / what else is there to do
then I stop when the cricket chirps
as an accent to the song and years alter
I'll stun myself by hearing that chirp
again at the same spot in the song
the fruit of a too-expensive system
built of accuracy and disguise

If Only

if only I could work faster
or better
or more focused
or could do things that people value

Fear of All

not long now
and my journey through volunteer work
will be over and I can concentrate on simple work
I hope that's soon enough to save my job

Deep In Woods One Road Passed

look deep into these woods
everything filtered through young leaves
ferns on the ground
granite piled where ice dropped it
still cool this is the end of spring
I've stopped to look here
wishing two roads would fork
still there's only one

Up Close and Far Away

writing to a photo
like jerking to porn
built long ago
it looks strong and stout
but standing on it I feel
it stammers when cars mount it
it takes little picturing to see it
falling into the river and then
where would I be
what reason would be there
to continue

From Across the Way and Lighting the Bridge

I've seen the lights
that just barely light
the darkly flowering water
that rises up from rocks beneath
Rocks Village Bridge and I see
that water black and whishing
past the piers and rocks by the shore
where I sit and wander through
my past while the camera like
madman's helper gathers what little
light there is that will soon
make this dark place a place filled
with probing searing light

When It's Weirder Than AI

unnamed man to Larry:
it's a dog eat dog world Larry
I'm wearing my adult black thong today
concierge looking on:
sweet / call
the dog catcher

And Why The Fuck Not

worlds spin away
out
control of self intangible
I watch them run away

No

why does my mind
drop sense
so often

John McCarthy

a great man dead tonight
the first night in many years
the world will be without a man
as smart as him
he was kind to me
as a man might be to a child

Simple Impossible

I am so much
no one my feet have
no feeling and everything
else is following close behind

Asking For Little

so I'm asking
who's applauding
the barriers are up
I've said my sad goodbye
make it goodbyes

Time Etc Passes

I feel myself
I am alone in dark
no one is under any impression
I feel mistakes piling up
no one would want to help me
perhaps it's time for passing

Who Am I To

I am what passes for passing
my future looks like a bad past
someone might have after
losing everything
I am new to this age I achieve
I forego the living part of it

While That Song Plays

a slow song will be playing
a sad one
as the few who care walk what's left
of me up the shallow hill
to where those who brought me here
have departed from
I will be long away
forever away
but I believe it will feel
like nothing just as I don't remember from before
symmetry teaches us
and its breakage into three parts
imparts the sadness that defines beauty

On Eve

the meaning of tomorrow is the beginning
of the dark world
this is when I came
it rained I heard
it was cold
or was it a mist
what everyone does is cherish
the idea of bringing a child
near all the events lies
a river I still visit
it has flowed my whole
life and will / will have
far beyond either side
I've told it many things
it's witnessed many things
I've passed over it many times
sometimes it responds with black
sometimes blue
usually brown
it senses my sadness
disappointment
but I got it from the river
it knows itself

And On A Day Just Like Today

we find a path
any of them lead to a place like here
and just ahead
no matter how I go
the path ends
stops or dwindles away
but gone
once
it all seemed so hopeful

God Sees Death

anyhow it was day then like today
hot / green grass just cut and a breeze
from a sea or river sneaking past
small windows designed to keep a house
standing and winterness out
when my father showed me how to use
the hammering machine that kicks and locks
grooved and tongued oak flooring in place

today in the dumpster those floorboards
hang gathered and ripped from the floor
he measured and crafted and I
could have taken one to mark my own envelope
instead I wondered about the braces
at each end and why I was drawn to this house
40+ years later to witness what should never
be witnessed by anyone (except god?)

Once or Twice

another long trip
adjusting
who is here worth seeing
well or available
no one
staying home
more

Art of Creation

novel to the point of surprise
crafted beyond attention
still as the culture allows

Colombine

and so she spoke in low deep tones
she said she was ill
but it was pure love
for me / for you
she knows not us

Illusion Together

tonight walking away
I stopped / looked up / to watch the couple
being pictured into the setting sun
reflector light on their dark sides
I couldn't see her face / her back to me
she kissed once / & you know / he stoned up his face
but she kissed again then
she / you know / turned back toward the dark direction
on the balcony and I continued down
the stairs to the train station
being ordinary and returning
felt attractive my plan
become ordinary / remain
write only the walked-on floor

what I picture / walk the fields
past the dawn of darkness
when cold comes and comes only
an echo stirs each yellowed hollow stem
the last word I'll write has found its curtain

Bye Bye I Guess

it's official
the start of something fulfilling
never started for my fear
of being so overmatched

As Usual

the streets are sparsely built upon
whenever a possible tryst blooms
a drop of rain drops
as usual I look up into the windows lit from inside
and deduce from the shadows I see
the light of the lives living there

Searching for the Leslie

when the floor stops moving
who will stay on their feet
who will shout for another round
who will stumble into oblivion

Fits and Starts

driving by the river
in my head an adorable female
voice narrates progress in flat
detail / she spells it out
in other words
in other words
in the plainest words
and simplest sentences
anyone could find
if they looked until
eternity called it quits

Don't Need to Imagine

laying back listening
to the same song over and over
a kind of dulling and spiritual trance
building up from a day everything aims
to forget / I did it then in a cold
room with poor quality
and today on sweet good old tubes
the result's the same
a nostalgia only endings can cure

Not Special

when there weren't many people
I still was not special
the land I grew up on was discarded land
swampy / filled with garbage trees grown
up against all inconveniences
only in a few places did the pines grow thick and tall
the floor beneath them smooth and refreshing
when the air heated and wet you
little bits of heath and mushrooms
I'd make a small leanto of snapped off pine bows
and piles of pine leaves layered into a bed
even in a light rain I'd stay warm / dry
far enough from home that even my mother
screaming heartily for me made little more
than a slight stir in the leaves maple trees
presented me all summer

Greyish

the farm was so beautiful once
the stone walls clear and distinct
the fields trimmed right to the edges
large enough that when autumn turned to winter
I could roam the cut down fields and hours
looking simply at the way nature played out
in front of me / and the promise
was always forever and a warm house

Blackish

not it's not even a farm
but plots of land for homes
most rundown / the pine woods
have been cleared out and now
it's just a ragged field
any dream to walk the field
again tremendous to its end
will little more than a wisp
be real

Looking Back and Forth

my mother watched me I'm sure
in my crib bed and saw my imperfections
all of which I still endure
imagined my life playing out
and she confirmed in spots her diagnosis correct
I would never amount to much
partly because amounting to in my realm is unfathomable
partly because she was just right

Strike Anywhere

it seems like the past smelled
more / odors plainer stronger
when leaves turned we raked and burned them
the world smelled of smoke
next came romance
finally a long stretch of day to day relentlessness
and one last apology

Voyeur

in the 15th floor apartment
the woman wearing only
her imagination steps over
her lover unthinking and unfeeling
perhaps in sleep on the floor lit
only by signs below reflected off
her white dove ceiling
I watched from the adjacent hotel

Never Imagine When You Can Cry

down a wet street
stained blue by tv lights and other lights
from flats hunched close around it
in an autumn city in a north part of an old country
a woman heading toward something that will tingle her
wears her leather coat and hugging leggings
under a short skirt and within leather boots
like them all she wears a beige scarf around her important neck
me I stand at the crossroads to this narrow place
watch her walk away not hurried but eager
unaccustomed to chivalry I have no hat no cap
all I can do is grow wet maybe cold
what I see is her tempting trap working
as always

Diner Time

night after night I
sit in the allnight diner till
after 3am sipping dark and bitter coffee
eating stale pie
waiting
two blocks down the studied blonde
brushes her hair then ties it in a tail
in front of her mirror she does this
over / over / over
till it's past 4am past 5am past dawn
when she arrives I'm on my cot and sleeping
I guess
it's all and only
a guess

Darkness Become Grey

we are the strange improbability
I am drifting toward the drain hole
I popped out of once but it never made sense
people who cared lamented my poor luck
feel it then
I didn't but
I do now

And So A Man Wrote on Sunday

there's a word I call foul
they save the word
with the creation of truth
why sad to say
single out the crisis
utterly fantastic / clear / real
against technical expertise
our discourse is badly distorted

I Think

she deserved better than me
she knew that the minute I was born
also during the minutes before she died
when she realized that her devotion
to her father forced me west and far away
so she was alone and afraid
when her old heart stopped

When It's All Dark

in winter around here
the moon can come up slowly but perceptually
behind a pine and a bank
of fog extending across the Bay
to the mountains across
in a close by room a woman
sits by her puzzle and works
it out piece by bit
where I sit the damp is lapping just outside
she has tried to dull my urge
to keep at it but she is quiet
and her way is to wear out the urges
through quiet / the moon rises
later each night until it is such a foreigner
it's sometimes hard to notice

Budapestulance

I recall the fear in Budapest
when I realized
I was in too deep
I have never been
in up to a respectable body
part since

Frilly Apron

we'd walk from our car parked down the street
Thanksgiving afternoon while the women and Mike
cleaned up / being my mother
my father's mother and Mike stepgrandfather
he wore a frilly apron every year
the food was heavy and much
we'd walk to Castle Island not really an island
but a spit off South Boston
then the bunkers were still open and we'd climb
in to view the lines of fire out to the Harbor
we'd watch American Press shove off and head to sea
we never talked much
no stories of his playing down by the water
no houses pointed out no apartments
no names / he was as strange here as I was
I lacked mature curiosity
I never asked
he is gone now
they all are

Lament for Me

I'm buying up things now
which I'll keep and use until I die
my last bike / my last amplifier
my last computer
soon I'll have no money
I will be lost and lonely
I feel that way already
nothing makes me happy
only stories keep me going
I want to sleep forever
that strong light and odd pressured feeling
awaits / it wasn't bad before
and I await it coming on

Saying Hello While Saying Goodbye

just finished writing
the letter that will promote
a friend as her career takes off
as mine tapers off
this I hope is the last one I'll write
I'm tired of it

Fell Away

her hair every way like ripe wheat
in that part of Kansas that calls and calls
I can see only the back of her and the orbit
of her blowing hair and her mission
is over since she is walking back from the edge
of the macadam road and she hasn't / never
will see me upwind on the road / she
will never forget me because I was only nothing
her eyes never passing over me but I
will never lose my imagination of longing

she closes her ranch door behind her
I drive west to the desert and mourn

Brussels Maybe

cities where streets are tangled
up are best in rain
at night
when window lights piece each cobblestone
and lovers entangled as their longing for eternity
requires are dressed like kids
like milfs in Paris
around each corner espresso calls
and oddly tomatoey cheap italian dishes
northern europe is what I picture
when all there is left is picturing

Snowbound

snow piled on snow
dug out down to gravel and dirt
black streaks in fresh heavy snow
piled up to the eaves
inside it's warm from dry wood burning hot
in a heavy old woodstove and we sit around it
and read through the day
waiting for everything
to be something different

Leave Me Burning

the beauty of brick
seen all at once
but never together
pieces to pieces
stitch to stitch

Look Don't Touch

leave imagining
the shapes of women to me
take it for granted
that I'll clothe them tightly
angle them against the sun
just perfectly
don't worry that I'll picture
someone no one
wants to see
I've had plenty of time
to watch and learn

Creepy and Uncomfortable

an uncomfortable woman
sits on a park bench 2 feet
from a creepy man holding a color chart
she is not pretty but attractive never
the less / no never
but from my angle her hips flare
to a wide point that says oh sex
behind them traffic in the distance
crosses through the park and it's summer
in a northern American city in the east
I imagine a soundtrack with a high pitched but sultry sax
playing something with a southern backbeat
she looks plainly with darting eyes at the man holding
the color chart and he glances languidly at her
I describe it like a cinema because it is
it is not my memory but something stored in bits
on my computer
an ad for an expensive digital movie camera so
real that the woman really
was uncomfortable and I thought somehow
I was that man

South of South

in a room walled with dark woods
cut from forests south of the equator
in a part of a former crown country
known for endless summer and hot humid nights
a woman dressed in nothing awakes
and puts on her panties as a gesture
in a grand pantomime resembling
the lives of minor mammals

Something Happening

what can be noticed
who has found the best road
these are questions that open up
the problem of people
if what we can see matters so much
what need is there for the real

Come Back Home

think of a long hill
really a field
covered in snow
and two men
or a man and a boy
sliding down it
on a metal toboggan
they must steer
if the ride be good
through a narrow gate
with stone walls and steep drops
on either side
think of why they would do it
soon a poem like this will be all that remains

Now This Is Pessimism

whose name will they carve
on my headstone

Dying Time

oh what fun to learn
you haven't the agility anymore
to pour water into a christmas
tree reservoir

Hits Home

the woman next to me
in the seafood restaurant
wore an offwhite lace skirt
down to her ankles
from there to midhigh
all was visible
thereafter nothing was
the economics of romance

Highrock

a crazy man sang
in a chorus
they said he poured himself
entirely into the music
so much that he pour all
of himself out of himself
he was crazy
I saw him

Don't You Hate It

the bridge is not going
to make it
traffic lights at either end
so traffic is one way only
I felt it trembling last summer
light an old man having trouble
holding a spoon and passing soup
or making gestures intended as love
the mechanics are wearing down
it is an old bridge

Forward and Backward

the river flow carried
sheets / ice
thin but resilient to the wash
the river's surface then
piecewise linear
because water freezes flat
almost / the sun angled
itself to a bit of orange
onto all that
the ice and the turbulent flow
my friend and I caught
up from years of absence behind
gearing up for the absence ahead

By The Road

out in my car I sat and saw
them carving out the insides of my old house
already the roof had been raised 2 feet
and the rooms where my grandmother lived
were gone / later they held my band
I listened a lot there
I typed the essays for Meredith there
walls inside were down
gaps between boards I knew never had them
at the back of the garage
they worked with air being pumped out
to keep out what they thought was dangerous
imagine watching the young tear down your life
like that / it was like that

Never

I have found the secret to regret
it's to push your crumbs into a little
box in your head and push it over there
over to the side / on it place a sticker
and write the words you want to say
when asked about the crumbs in that box
never open the box
never

Celebration Not Quite

looking at lists

I regret mine is so short

Entropy For Dummies

you know
things fall apart
this is how we know time is flowing
it makes time into grinch

My Boy's Life

where are my friends
hiding it seems
my best did not stand up for me
when I needed him most

Assumption

it has settled on me
that nothing was ever special
all my small moves forward
filled only some space and lots of time
I am ready to sit out the rest of my time
bothering no one
doing not much as is my habit

Sincerity

where I remember Christmas best
is being changed being nearly torn down
it's not my place though I call it that
I am missing most of my life

What Clings

when the camera snaps
you the future will make its own take
on what you were doing
thinking being
as if you were a magnet
for stories that might float by

Clutter Memorial Up

now the memorial
some say this means
the story's ended
but for years to come
cars will drive slowly
and quietly down the elm lane
see the house
then back slowly and quietly up
trains will pass by too
this place will be the center

Bulldog Tank

fifteen and I wanted
the toys children receive
they and I viewed this Christmas
as the end forever
of childhood and innocence
why not
since then I've spent my life
hunched over something
the only telltale of time
is the something

An Island Somewhere

today preparing to be alone
I bought a stainless-steel Martini
glass from REI
with an unscrewable stem
and I wondered whether this would increase
enjoyment or decrease it

Wild Day

this day this night
38 years ago was the beginning of magic
it seemed as young as we were
and I so taken with the idea of a woman
tonight I watch the beautiful ones
who unlike the one I married
with last forever
sparkling

And Cold

down by the river just one street up from it
the night before Christmas is not a night
to watch women promenading but
there one was and I could see by the way her legs
thrust her hips that she was wearing a wool
skirt a short one that rested on her ass
the way I wish my fingertips could and so
I walked half a block behind her heading west
toward the rail station and when she mounted
the stairs up to the concrete platform
I found a bench in the small triangle park across the street
and from there I watched her pace and wait
and I watched the water like oil drag black past
the bridge piers and sporadic stones
and every adjective I thought for those minutes
before the train snatched her away
reflected my heart and went something
like it's a yellow light on black water tonight
and cold

Or Impossible

from between two brick warehouses
a bright gold light streams onto the square
cobble and wet from a winter storm
that passed earlier in the day
standing there in her boots and heavy black coat
scarf and hat is the woman every man would love
but they don't know her and she is bent on the river
whose animated surface conceals the bitterness of black beneath
I'm standing in the shadow beneath a fire escape at the back
of an abandoned shoe factory watching her steps on cobbles
to the river wall protecting the city
I imagine her in candlelight in an apartment overlooking us here
face down and the curves of her back and legs and ass
creamy in that yellow light and I imagine my feelings
rising from the past and curling like fog rising from the black water river
after a warm rain and everything else that is rare

Lines and Flat

I've stopped at the edge of a macadam road
a small ditch on either side and then a small grassy rise
before the fields stretch away filled with wheat
I've stopped between two poles and between
a simple pair of wires stretch and curve down
the wind that teases the grass and wheat plays
these wires in low pitched harmony
whose melody plays in my memories of the girl
who never loved me though I did every small
thing I could think of / her hair would play well
in this symphony / wheat / grass / line tones
except these poles and everything in this scene stretches
to a horizon / the one we start at over there
the other there

Dig It

all my poems have this in common
night / yellow lights / blue rain
the cold / small movements
a woman who doesn't care
narrator adrift / alone / afraid
and once or twice ashamed

Indifference

how can what we once owned
seem like ours forever
land for instance
like a friend who comes to know us
does it welcome us back
years later after the abuse
of difference

Better Than Two

smooth and unappetizing
water draining a high plateau
leaving and leaving fast
watching someone undress
tell me everything you want to do

On Coldness

back there the snow and cold embrace
the ones loved but lost
down the street that mirrors the river
a couple walks toward their small apartment
above a liquor store down by the square
when they get to the rail bridge he will stop
and she will just after and they won't kiss though
you expected it / he will cry for just a minute
she won't ask but will look up the street
to the farthest streetlight and remember
when she met her first love just right there

Backing Into The Fringe / A Thicket

no one is on the freezing street
and the surprising strong wind
that blows old things in dizzy paths
down the one way all things eventually go
no one is there to see it
to see the shadows blue in the yellowed light
only a few windows have light
and only one bare / hanging like a noose
with a big wrapped loop tied between the bulb
and the ceiling / you ask
then who saw all this
who reported it
and I / the lone/ly poet replies
first by opening my mouth
and letting nothing emerge I close it again forever
take up a pen and a piece of paper snatched like a memory
from the sheets swirling past on the street
lonely imagination and write
for hours days years decades
maybe one day you'll read it
read where these snippets come from that seem
to never be seen but everyone understands
once the report is in
I am like on the front