

A B S E N C E  
S E N S O R I U M

a poem

Tom Mandel

Daniel Davidson

# ABSENCE SENSORIUM

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Poetry & Poets Press

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<i>EncY</i>	1978, Tuumba (Berkeley, CA)
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<i>Ready to Go</i>	1982, Ithaca House (Ithaca, NY)
<i>Central Europe</i>	1986, Coincidences Press (Oakland, CA)
<i>Some Appearances</i>	1987, Jimmy's House of Knowledge (Oakland, CA)
<i>Four Strange Books</i>	1990, Gaz (New York, NY)
<i>Realism</i>	1991, Burning Deck (Providence, RI)
<i>Letters of the Law</i>	1994, Sun & Moon (Los Angeles, CA)
<i>Prospect of Release</i>	1996, Chax Press (Tucson, AZ)

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<i>Product</i>	1991, e.g. (San Francisco, CA)
<i>Weather</i>	1992, score (Mill Valley, CA)
<i>Image</i>	1992, Zasterle Press (La Laguna, Canary Islands, Spain)
<i>An Account</i>	1996, A. BACUS #95, Potes and Poets (CT)

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Elmwood, Connecticut 1997

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

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

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

Peace animates spectators  
walking out this morning, no dry land in sight  
what hard labors put in place  
troubles the lowlands, oh yeah  
things bringing to perfection  
and no synthesis at night,  
but love gone out, our perfect man took leave of.



Before hours, ours counted  
 more. Insert an ear of the unsustaining  
 shiver, theoretic soil covering  
 the humid loam, and what grows  
 grows deep and proud. Pass the isolating chip,  
 can you? This isn't a request... the walking  
 ocean of buildings, the issuance of leaves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

finally he was home, in  
 the small room with its single bulb, its mattress  
 table and chair, colorless  
 walls, single window, low ceiling, no water  
 he was covered with black dust  
 exhausted and drenched in tears  
 collapsed on a floor where thirty years ago



his father had lain silent  
 listening for the voices  
 of policemen in the hall.  
 Eventually he rose  
 made his way around the hall  
 to a cold water faucet, sink and toilet set  
 into a wall, atop the building's waste stack.

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

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

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

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

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

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

regulating law and thought.  
 For this, I'd walk back and forth  
 across the bridge, and descend  
 to the island itself. I'd think of an edge,  
 as if a prow once moored in  
 self merged. Scrappy grass leans into sandy soil  
 where flint rocks, sharp-edged pebbles



also gleam. Seeing these useful stones, perhaps,  
 a traveler once put down  
 her basket and camped by the river, to pare  
 its stone edge. In such mental  
 frame once I walked from Burbank  
 airport through North Hollywood  
 and reached the studio gate,

smoking, inverted. Fire trucks  
 rush towards the wreck and pull  
 him from bed. To investigate what circling  
 the island I saw buildings,  
 dark as rotting teeth, begin  
 to lean on each other, and  
 a cloud tore at the moon. I

continued to feel such pain,  
 solemn nodding, but could gain  
 no authority from what was read. Instead  
 suppose no escape were possible, only  
 one's own father, stolid, refusing to see  
 what was obvious to all  
 that sleep would be – was! – fatal

to longing. No shadows now  
 reach the edifice of day.  
 Lacunae are in full swing, strong arguments  
 which seem to transcribe it all,  
 instruction, recitation.  
 I wonder, something is missing; we are tense  
 or else just poised on a swell of memory.

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

To safely fit within this memorizing  
 register, check the door for  
 automatic (autonomic?) happenstance.  
 One covering of cloth can be removed, but  
 when are clothes themselves entirely dismissed?  
 I've often encountered the high-walled compounds  
 of constructed abandon, fondling my

eyes beneath the sunny shade.  
 Less is more, yeah right, I'll buy that bridge now 'kay?  
 Polysemous reminders of semantic  
 lapse lay dissected in the variable  
 tunnels of her thirsty fame.  
 Substitutions are allowed, spread-eagle up-  
 on wounded boundaries. I can fall for this

any Tuesday night of your  
 choosing. If I buckle too quickly, drink the  
 one marked "hazard pay", I'll blink  
 back on in a minute, sure.  
 In our last conversation in the light-well,  
 I told you how Paradise and I returned  
 to fight back tears, and profit from our mistakes.



Years passed. Silhouettes traced the  
lineaments of creased flesh.  
Plasterers offered hands to  
mirror pleasure and restraint.  
I've coughed enough for this pleurisy of grief.  
Beneath a hot, bright light the  
tide-marked land slips away to plot its release.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Perhaps we can plea-bargain our infractions  
into a more serious offense, with  
intent of offering a defense with teeth.  
The moral mine of geologic time sinks  
into the sea, more salty than her sweet sweat  
breaking on the rumpled sheets.  
Another bell rings. Time to



go, or wake, or speak within  
 the silences of utterance, bracketing  
 the ends to meet the meanings.  
 This device is an essential component  
 of a global apparatus currently  
 in operation, and it offers you its  
 full attention for a song.

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

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

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

The exposure of sky, the stop.  
 Return of great clouds in piles.  
 Details darken, and soon the railing's fretwork  
 is just a hand at the balcony. It bars  
 your step, draws your step to it.  
 You cannot see the pattern of the sofa  
 the figure in the carpet's a forgery

to save angled appearance.  
 Approach is easy, access indecisive.  
 The riverbed rises. The water obeys.  
 Plain speech, a still tangle  
 of arms is not elision, and no knowing  
 laughter winds them in their dance.  
 There is only the beat-beat of the tom-tom,

there is the ticking of a heart in its cage  
 and calling for disclosure, a bright of light  
 and pine. No one is seen setting the fire  
 but there is the fact of it  
 burning, tragically. I run door to door and  
 pound the alarm, the many  
 among many, rooms of pills and subsistence

and each value, each instance. Calendrical  
 in my futile tour, now I've  
 forgotten the hour and the place where you  
 and I had just missed meeting.  
 a slipped risk. Threads interweave  
 in the formulary, as directed and  
 received, imposes on them a division



from where letters chafe and flake  
in among the fruited plains.  
It is the long, paved highway  
itself that now produces  
the circumstance of wildness,  
an inversion of the past  
when city was defined by

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

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

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

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

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

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

One hour developing. By now music  
in full swing, families of  
foxes dance past us; froggy  
on his wire teases passers-by, stuttering  
"T'wasn't m-m-me at all, but my granddad.  
He t-told me all 'bout you. Look out, he said  
f-for some gloomy gus in b-baseball cap!,"



a reiterated phylogeny of  
 practice, shade in the deep blue  
 of sight. I am getting older, yes, I know.  
 Pen and paper, like plate and spoon, belong here  
 held in my hands, or the feet  
 of rocks, the gesticulating meander  
 nodding in slips and glides, water worn inside.

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

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

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

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

She asks me where have you gone  
 I pose, chin pulled in, head high  
 against dark furniture, TV balanced on  
 my thigh, where a smallish guy points to the glow  
 off a good car, a future body angled  
 in release. Many posters, stri-  
 ated, worn off the side of the mailboxes

artefacted modernism which no longer says  
 I am traced against time. You are what is left  
 when as much of you stares up from a puddle as  
 stares down at ev'ry layer, the grain is fine.  
 She pressed against the glass in impersonal  
 longing, close and divided  
 at once – satisfied, bereft.

What might be love elided.  
 Perhaps in accident's decisive torment  
 he was slumped in the phone booth  
 details, gravel, cool fingers  
 no, don't you dog me around.  
 On that day in the busstop, dog me mama  
 you'll be six feet underground.



Immense city, beautiful  
 and rich, saturated car wash denizens  
 and their trunks are full of tools,  
 the busses are empty, you have turned around  
 to take a picture, 1/60th-f4,  
 stainless hand-holds, luminous, unreflective  
 glow vertical in the frame.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'd brake the spell of grammar  
 like a shell, a candling mirror burned deep  
 into the soft lens of skin.  
 Here we are, impossibly dressed among rows  
 and official gatherings.  
 CNN reports that the soldier's body  
 was dragged in the streets, but the damage was done.



Lone in polar privacy  
 still leaves clinging to the tree  
 in a small room, ill-furnished & comfortless,  
 ceaseless wording of the uneven Winter.  
 Worked five long years for one man.  
 It's as if each leg dances  
 not to see by but look at

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why had I not spoken to him? The next day  
 I made out in the paper  
 that she had died, thrown herself  
 over that same railing. No matter how late  
 I walked the circumscribed city of streets  
 circling the river, I always found something  
 to eat, a warm place to write.



By day I'd read novels in the library.  
 Then night came, and I went to the streetcorner  
 where a passing carriage had  
 dotted his trousers with mud.  
 While one curtain rose, a more vivid one fell.  
 Only, I could never speak  
 his name. And still can't do it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Such a couple it makes! Peace, at too much heat  
 to want it, and thinking, drafts of little meat  
 to share. It's a long way down  
 the rocky ghost at clock's speed,  
 graphite telling you to grasp  
 the bland riches, none too lush  
 to front a theater, swollen and fatted.



One minute I drafted the response, the next  
moment's glaze dotted my eyes, sleeping too much  
for the day. We have pleasure in the water,  
trained to swim at birth. I just can't separate  
the trailing, wounded turbulence from the sheets  
beneath your skin. I told you about my sleeping  
on the grass, waiting after dark for a sign

that quiet had finally come.  
One extended stay among lakes of anger  
was enough to change my habits, as you might  
note while breaking through the door.  
Hearing your delicate arrival renewed  
my taste for sulfur and fire,  
smoke like memory lingering in the air.

I shook the sleep from my hair  
until the river at our feet swelled above  
the table. So many cards  
placed on a table. Too much at stake for those  
not of blood and birth or hearth,  
friends along the way, left or  
lost in wind and rain, and never returned to.

You do not want what you say  
you want, my friend, or would you have glanced away  
in any case, from so many chances to  
swim in the silver linings  
of beautiful cumuli  
tumbling among reflections  
to leave black-clouded songs of pride among us,

we who remain on the short side of nothing?  
When invited to perform  
at the Sutherland Lounge and the Burning Spear,  
I saw you couldn't resist,  
being a boundary buster, and joined in.  
I said, "I'll sing for a sign."  
Past polysyllabic, we came in for grief

in the land of quantita-  
tive futures, where esters off  
crumpled leaves at tunnel's end  
rose back of the yards. A storied irony  
like "Blue Jew & The Rockin' Rabbis." You reached  
for that quick enough, I'd say.  
So we prepared to quit mutual pastures.

While I bared my waist, big legs  
at the borders, and always crossing guards smiled  
as their barriers lifting into our way  
brought peace to the world, at least  
you would have no part of it. Not peace, no, but  
science – source of all silence – you demanded.  
Time to sit back, order out,

looking tough, an edge of distraction upon  
our concentration. Yet, I agreed to be  
older brother, youngest son,  
that whatever upset you would upset me;  
and wondered what you'd bet me.  
I had to find out, to know this for myself.  
So I wrote you a letter,



addressed to suite seven, where  
 a Place was always burning  
 to consume its foundations.  
 Knowing you'd be there, I ate  
 flowers and crowns off the book  
 literal literation  
 and turned around; you were sitting at my feet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ghosts are afoot downstairs  
 "Who are they this time," I ask  
 (a rhetorical device).  
 117 years of transient  
 human motion, horse-drawn to carless. While  
 the mail falling into the house  
 sets me racing for the door



the meanest exponent of the harquebus  
 powers by on four round legs  
 screams corners, while waves of flesh raise the alarm:  
 Death Monster! It's Death Monster!  
 A small exaggeration.  
 Actually, nobody seems to notice it  
 though nearby there's a stenciled

rose to mark the place where a  
 man and his bike were nailed one afternoon.  
 But enough particulars.  
 Chomsky and Parenti, seldom given voice  
 on the build-boards of our Great And Noble Land,  
 take second place to the question of the day:  
 "What's the Frequency, Kenneth?"

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

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

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

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

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

Hurry though we must, gruffly,  
 ev'ry gnomonic saying is not prophecy.  
 Not every word without surface sense hides  
 from what to say, shouts out loud.  
 Laughter burns, keeps us moving  
 footfalls dropped, each in contact with the others  
 across an ironwork bridge into town.



They won't be told to talk – across not above  
 a silence into which we have not fallen  
 cult of personality  
 in which I held my mother and now hold you  
 stretched outside heavenly shelter, at arm's length,  
 – bell rings, birds fly off, poet  
 makes notes, even to this length.

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

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

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

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

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

Preoccupied with the kids, unsuspecting,  
 though nervous, quite uncertain  
 I see now what no perspective proves, he's bent  
 features warm – widely smiling  
 over paper, back to a warm October  
 morning sun. Pricetag on his wrist he preaches  
 to used refrigerators,

false consciousness, in off-white.  
 We get up, take our seats in the theater  
 they stay the same, huffing in a sly corner  
 not far from the isle of love... situations,  
 negotiations, penchants  
 formerly unavailed of habitat,  
 like a disposable thumb.



On the slick edge of migration, measurements  
 of loose skin sink their vanity in my hand.  
 Blood boils out in numbers  
 synthetic combinations forge sinecures,  
 and yesterday many more gathered for the  
 plump betrayal. Mr. Smith,  
 I mean Mr. and Mrs. Smith, went shopping

in the dark – I'll take that one,  
 and the little brown ones too,  
 they thought in a happy voice:  
 who am I to complain... I'm not complaining!  
 Their voice is a deictic sign,  
 motion running vagrant on the silvered page.  
 Popcorn honey, or a twist?

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

livingroom every single  
 nite, and even the gophers  
 ran from the pathological *mise-en-scene*  
 shining on the vacant blinds. Ah, Camelot!  
 She says, "Thank you very much."  
 Many yearlings simmered in the stew, but I'd  
 never chew on my own arm.

It's a hunting way of life;  
 there's all this meat here, and lookie, there we are  
 something like a pastoral disaster spreads  
 the pride we feel at the horizon, colors  
 in all the finely veiled threats of nightfall.  
 The disposable character grimaces.  
 "Something's got me!", pulling him down to the sand

a brush with greatness of a different sort.  
 He is opening one eye,  
 imbrication among the stars, the hasp of  
 telephones, encumbrances  
 in a past of tense and layered indexes.  
 It's beginning to expand, the purposeful,  
 desiccate jell we call "home."

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

Tickets fire and recall an arrangement  
 brought out on the morning tide,  
 a handsome clutter hopeless and triumphant,  
 razor between lines of act  
 and circumstance. Tell me what you mean, what you  
 tell, techniques then, and liars  
 who rain the present in lies.



What you wrote on the large stone,  
to survey dawn graying light,  
your chisel was a trumpet  
left lying in the square. I  
learned that some of these letters  
exploded, fastidious  
and climbed out of narrow streets

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scars don't outlive a body.  
Songs you were taught to erase  
fought their wars here. Stubbed out tongues  
doubled or forgotten; remember to touch  
shadowed archives under sky;  
their edge, unruly, flowing  
away, you will not yearn to redeem. You must.



And compute rage. I wouldn't give two crooners  
for his book Bing & Time; too much frills a flea  
with pillows of hee! Prosa-  
-ically he drills his welt,  
rewriting his unwriting, fouling my si-  
-lenced with what evers, he really mendt to kill.  
Still alive, I'm glad you're dead!

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

I never ran a conclusion of this ilk,  
that head's up and inferencing  
bullets pistol whipped into the padded air  
between I love you – your eyes –  
and my head, when you've killed me.  
Carpet knells your thin, oscine temper, valent  
between three or more varieties of fright

not meditation but analysis, that cops  
once too many times at the corner story –  
Good Life! its experiences limited  
to vestment profundities, mankind speaks and  
when you que up in the freezing sheets of rain  
needs another length of rebar to complete,  
then pushes away, else I've completed the same.

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

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

Memory, blinking to change information  
reaching greater radiance, manually  
elevated in stages  
then, I remember, background  
and punctuation, craving  
attachment, or understanding its decor.  
Too much paper! I crush in the swelling to

speak to you, too much to say  
like the dark matter between some distant stars  
mountains of it, and my tunnellings, only  
now nowhere nothing sees me.  
This is the foundry, lightning  
sweeping dusts of history, many covers  
chiding those within not to take it so hard.



"Your death has been perfected."  
 "A zipper runs down my chest."  
 "My world is redirected."  
 "Cups fill and empty again."  
 "This column holds us inside."  
 "Does this trail lead to the ridge?"  
 "Morning emerges thinly."

Ideas represent imagery, drinking  
 fires that spread from rubble to ancient town  
 layers of debris, creates  
 and dispenses within sight  
 of the distant, birded land.  
 Development from holes to wallet, trees to  
 pallet, a taste for easy

fixes, never mind the consequences now!  
 The television memes my mind perfectly,  
 exit this way..., no, above the volcano  
 where we've built our nursery  
 hammer to stone, the roadway  
 of ash and fault spun into  
 the Theme World we call home.

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

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

He reads what prisoners draw:  
 "Old cagey Harry hit bee cones. Honey set –  
 a sorry, tawdry, dull, curt thing – honey tall."  
 Still, when hid meaning ceases,  
 "Occasionally it becomes unneces-  
 sary to draw the curtain  
 on it all." Such abortive

gestures win reality,  
 or suburban opprobrium. "Parents should  
 spend more time with their children,"  
 the country novelist announced to applause.  
 This trail leads right to the fridge.  
 Bright, wet leaves still stick to trees.  
 The weather's wet, but not cold.

I wish to have met you before my decline;  
 to have driven north into the glowing holes  
 of the northern states of love,  
 exchanging what we found for  
 reprieve. Through southern states of  
 love, when the weather was fine  
 and modern verse on the CB had grieved us.



I don't want to stop speech at  
 silence, either to address scribbled margins  
 interior to the redone cupola  
 dome of word-crowned gesturing  
 that moves laterally like an amoeba  
 setting off again and again on what from  
 here looks like adventure, but

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

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

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

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

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

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

Still, it rises to our gorge.  
 I imagine them as friends  
 captured in stances of rebellion. One looks  
 over his shoulder, convinced  
 of my benign intentions, but they are not,  
 for I have reversed his stance;  
 his mind is not on another but itself –



lamb upon stone. Invested  
 we are, cut of patterns as long as any  
 length of sight, filling and filled with just enough  
 providence to stand and split the succulence.  
 Copula! Here it is! between resistance  
 and as so, my's, perhaps just one at a time  
 illicit flickering sense to make it glow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

the picture of a picture of grief, with her  
 left hand just draped over the edge of the frame.  
 The shuttering of image, Castiglione,  
 Countess of Her Own Domain,  
 lifts more than her hooped skirts when she broached her legs.  
 And so do you, when you leaf through the mirrored  
 pastimes of extending youth



or haul in from a tantalizing insult,  
 come here, I'll recover what it is I fear  
 wetter than most anything  
 the naked thirst and swallow of a long walk  
 like following hand to thigh.  
 Which is it we must prefer...  
*Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft*?

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

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

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

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

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

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

sluice, where water, not level,  
 is not formal. You see, there is no reason  
 to complete the statement, if behind a door  
 other forms complete it for you anyway.  
 Associated with gesture, with action  
 a schema has us moving.  
 In this sense I am here, and I reach for you.



Inside my kiosk, surrounded by its bars  
 of candy and the bubble  
 (but who put them there?) gum jars,  
 I feel my chin, hair stubble  
 removed from the damaged cars,  
 and know I'll never leave another level,  
 trapped in my kiosk – that my need to revel

among the corporate stars,  
 to be touched by balling fists  
 as I begin my only constellation  
 piecing enough luck to miss  
 their hemicycled faces,  
 though they're all darkness traces  
 just lights the metro map next to my station.

If anyone can write rhyme  
 without regard for networks,  
 yet none connects, disconnects  
 mellifluous cabledoms;  
 drives and printers cross buildings  
 like a gambler's fingers, and the big bet-jerk  
 he is heartless. He will yet

leave us insufficient time.  
 Table legs, father, his legs.  
 Never a moment alone.  
 The dry stars don't fear speaking;  
 if you are near her finally, then love her.  
 Metaphor will not ravel, metonymy  
 seals it off. Give you a flower: it's my life.

It? – But I know no objects.  
 My? – No one that foolish.  
 Life? – Skin dragged upon sand pit,  
 no monument, no signs, even arrow points  
 lacking, only a periphery of idiots  
 rapt in pinioned opinion, reft of their wars,  
 yet, when they find us, they will know how we loved,

unknowing, a joint, a scab  
 where it's only about time.  
 Now, in each other's cubicle  
 the windows radiate too  
 little transportation. If  
 morality is the curse that matters most  
 I've always settled out for what it's worth for.

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

Unchanging search for noise  
 maintaining the routes I've seen  
 to choose between an unmarked return, and lines  
 the litter set to changing  
 flailing in our whispering.  
 What the music told us then,  
 over bridges into sight, what's left of it



air informing November  
 her rain broadcasts sweetly across the plane, wet  
 something for everyone! The place to run  
 to get out of a gravestorm  
 (I offer this text, to watch)  
 a diameter, the size of a cut in  
 the fitful sleep of nearby civil unrest.

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

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

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

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

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

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

action, thought, semblance, thought, to  
 knock again into sound, moving into air  
 they too want to be adored, and who'd blame them?  
 To adore, to spurn is easy for us all  
 hot or cold, enough demand  
 for balance that the very strength that's valued  
 turns to weakness in us when it isn't matched.



Sand on the way to being  
 stone, glass, slips through my fingers  
 or I dropped a glass and a splinter cut me.  
 Later when I tiptoed into the kitchen  
 carefully, I used a new broom to sweep up  
 but when I looked into the new dust pan, there  
 were no glass fragments, just dust.

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

So, my fingers grew small scars  
 where they had touched metal, glass  
 and a whole sentence functioned as a word would  
 to indicate rejection, even disgust  
 vaunting dismal dances, taking positions.  
 To err is no political act. Give them  
 jobs, a chance to fall in line,

to compete. Where their foreheads plow gray-green earth  
 their lips are moving still, if  
 you just listened: decembrean field, bronze route.  
 They needed a sentence, because they lacked a  
 word for what and where they were.  
 "Gone to lay head on lonesome railroad iron,  
 til the 2:19 come crease my worried mind,"

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

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

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

It was then I decided to move away  
 from Chicago, a cowardly act, no doubt  
 and not the response the Panthers had hoped to  
 inspire in someone like me, potential friend  
 or at least ally. But their struggle scared me  
 as much as the police did. Virtue had been  
 to be their cannon fodder,



but I'd had a gun drawn on me once by a  
 plainclothesman at a demonstration, and fired  
 into the air, then been maced; I turned and ran.  
 Those were mad days of autobiography.  
 There might still be a fire in every stone  
 water rolls over, rocks uncut by presence  
 if the stone surface is gone, or nothing sealed.

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

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

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

the French had bet and lost on, incidently  
 a solution to Hampton's ilk: In Country,  
 out of sight in Vietnam.

I was knee-high to an ironing board, and  
 she was ironing, splendid and beautiful  
 in a white dress, the echoing of Kennedy's  
 inaugural speech a backdrop to silence.

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

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

there is no response sufficient to the act  
 translating pleasure and pain in candle wax,  
 sealed and stamped with the necessary needs  
 of life. We can count our time withdrawing,  
 an eventual sovereign in hand, then WHACK!  
 but I won't degrade the many brutal deaths  
 by refusing life to live.



Another mound perhaps, and winter's descent  
 like a frozen beach of bones  
 pursues some more than others.  
 I listen to your breathing, the flesh of breasts  
 set against the cool night air.  
 You hold me; I count the stars  
 below the hand that holds us.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The trees they climbed were surrounded by law grass  
 – that's law grass, not low grass – hedged  
 by protective procedures.  
 No-one would put them down, drive them out of town.  
 When one among them fell, whereas a pagan  
 knew how to settle down, cookin' slow gravy,  
 solid, that *tzadik* ought not have been wasted



by his Shield of protected dutifulness.  
 So it was we fell to apostasy, our  
 two souls walking side to side,  
 mine and I mean my cousin's  
 henceforth known to all as the  
 other, "Aher," my name was Elisha ben  
 Avuyah. My student Meir still visits me,

excommunicated though I am; he reads  
 to me. "Whoever studies  
 Torah for its own sake... one may say the world  
 is found deserving for his sake – he is called  
 Beloved Companion, and  
 gladdens the Divine Presence,  
 as he gladdens all creatures." Such are his words.

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

Or so says one tradition.  
 The voice of Otis Rush says,  
 trying to live by yourself  
 cannot get you one you love,  
 the smallest operation mind undertakes  
 is judgment. Empty doorway.  
 Like it, form fills again with

flute-music in a bottle  
 corked in oxygen ocean.  
 Context spurs expression, cer-  
 tainly you hear that, can you really hear that?  
 Repeat, repeat; read, reread  
 until your feet find a road?  
 Sunk, the bottle returns, turned back into sand.

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

First off, heroes and their gods repeat themselves  
 braid axioms learned in school.  
 Secondly, what speech I hear  
 is not expressed in language I claim to know.  
 It is foreign, not hidden,  
 evident hour motionless,  
 true reflected light emerging from within

a stone image, aspect real  
 closing before your eyes merge  
 heart-shells. Feeble in their zone,  
 night fibers, fever places  
 hand in hand's cranial pair.  
 Shadow's skinned shape of thinking  
 has made its way out your mouth.



Clone calls "Boss!" he wants to know  
 can a poor boy come back home?  
 Part no partner, you've been gone  
 way too long. That sand through hourglass, those sealed suns,  
 will not turn to glass again.  
 Ladders climb, stutter akimbo; mine your way  
 out of the south and begone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

where to satisfy remains.  
 Who did you think was coming?  
 Oh Daddy, you whore, you fucking gigolo  
 who you have made into what.  
 The woman is perfected,  
*imitacion de Cristo, perfected*  
*no serve para nada.*



Tell me, haven't you the vocabulary  
to speak, living where you are?  
Subjects of discussion show  
how acquired everything is, a lack of  
ability, immune to the distances  
distanced from deficiency  
death recalling a syndrome

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

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

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

Say or sing, so our song goes – "Evil, lovely,  
lovely, dark." What you see, it is the object  
festival of mental minds.

Water refracts the rusty drain to beauty  
a jewellic oxide, but when it empties  
ugly all over again  
which I don't mind, looking down

real time, real experience?  
Then you may look back at me, lovely singer.  
Your gaze and you will die first,  
one hand forward, one in retreat, I've been there  
and back, like you, before you,  
so my speech already gleams  
with seduction's push and pull

in adequate relation  
to a world wherein our hands  
investigate pleasure to sing into form-  
describing shape, laborless,  
but where is this honesty?  
To recommend one's own spirit will not do –  
tricks we strain to get beyond.

No achievement reports, please.  
Without looking back, I have returned alone.  
I strum my lyre and listen,  
drumming voicebox, one arm raised, one eye lowered.  
Yet, I have been unable  
to uncover or shovel,  
turn or shoulder, hand to hand upon this path.



Amateur botanist, a poor one at that,  
 still, I follow yellow blooms  
 that lead me to your doorway.  
 Carved out, empty, lots of room  
 for the head (yours) I set there  
 and others gape. Unceasing, it prophesies:  
 "Eurydice, black jewess, island dropper

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

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

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

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

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

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

You addresses the one you know, and so you,  
 to someone else, no one not previously  
 mentioned, grab a seat inside  
 out of this nasty weather, no sense being  
 uncomfortable, never argue with you.  
 It's we that makes assumptions  
 that old excuse: Your letter's in the mail



pigeon holding in the folds of its wing  
 not quite the opening you expected through.  
 Rain sluices down the gutters,  
 gutters of rain sluice down the glass, rivulet  
 cycles of ice, radiant, telegenic  
 the most perfect alumnus  
 cobalt blue, draped in the very finest type

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

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

everything's changing, the dissolution of  
 arbitrary rifts between  
 performance and production  
 has a fuzzed over Dali  
 describing his cure for the freezing garret,  
 capital increasing enterprizes perched  
 twixt his greatly waxed mustache.

It's time, the year in pictures  
 Medea and the waif look  
 a mind/body parallel  
 Zeno never imagined  
 farther and farther the days  
 lengthen, hours of sunlight  
 sliced and scratching in the sand.

The caller raises an interesting point:  
 it's raining, and two people  
 are standing on a corner.  
 Who are they, what do they want?  
 I'll take my answer off-line,  
 as you've weighed it long enough.  
 This is a reordered broadcast; please don't call.

Then literal revolutionaries in  
 San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas  
 declare war on the Mexican government  
 briefly capturing four towns  
 demanding legitimate elections and  
 food for the hungry, medicine for the sick  
 the free trade zones of indigenous action.

Millennia vs. melancholia  
 of the cool, black night-life  
 60s, 70s, 80s  
 catalogued and collected  
 for your digital pleasure,  
 interactive and referenced  
 to become everything you wished it could be



entered without descending  
to the mud below our feet, habitat of  
squatters avoiding squander  
fundamentally offensive, and never  
quite encountered in polite conversation  
hand mirrors and collisions  
down along the water line,

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

Waist deep in what already  
once in a while wants to burst  
always the replacement order is simpler  
has not been enough for us  
like McCarthyism – it just came and went  
not that effects had been what we'd've wanted  
blushing, purple, breathless – I mean unable

to breathe, wrapt in re-election – I don't think  
of that at all, it was over before us  
the warm night, flat streets lit by  
passing cars, the el above,  
in the record store I bought  
from the red-blazered clerk "Something Else" a great  
session, and he recalled me

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

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

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

Habitual laughter, errands and shopping,  
grinding gears as whoever drives still counts time.  
They have taken the towns of Switzerland, Greece  
for their conferences and their congresses  
on how perfect cows will smoke you with their bells.  
They walk on sand, talk through glass,  
stalk your hand, then waste your ass!



Who remembers Sidney Hook? No one, I hope.  
 Adorno soon to follow,  
 who begrudged Benjamin's evident requests.  
 Worse, who would have been happy  
 to accommodate himself to Hitler, had  
 only the Nazis allowed him: after all  
 he notes – he is only half

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

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

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

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

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

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

passed, imagined difficult  
 it is and does, so no lens  
 requires packaging to raise its boundary.  
 What went further is the familiar rate of  
 coexistence, once innate  
 but now the domain of myths and disasters  
 persisting here, in the aisles



skylines and the beautiful signs of deceit.  
 Productive avoidance is interpretive  
 not justified, absorbing  
 the most difficult fields,  
 those establishing verity through slander  
 context driving the occupying constant  
 looking through the rear view mirror and seeing

that we are not separate.  
 A walk through winter, belief  
 a smile, wave, attraction  
 and heat, passing reaction  
 restoring my memory.  
 The literal view is almost useless, really.  
 Exteriors are shallow.

In the planeless meeting between matter and  
 effect, totalizing states build and destroy  
 in blind eternal instants  
 BOOM – Hey man, what's happening?  
 gravity creating intimate pastimes  
 communication in an  
 infinitesimal leap

wrapped in individual circumstances  
 among stranger's experience, memory, thought  
 developing arenas  
 of significant events, imposing worlds  
 whose entire focus of attention is  
 on the integrated whole become "real."  
 We continue the excitation, only

with successive replacements,  
 as every story taps and drains its store  
 of the unresolved, the misshapen, the scared.  
 Either a happy or semi-sweet ending,  
 or just throw up your hands and say "Well, that's life!"  
 giving the impression of "concern," "headway".  
 The pace of signification and meaning

of page-confirming material rapid  
 intervals of information threatening  
 the continued comfortable survival  
 of suburban lawns. Now there'll be action,  
 focused on the smallest possible units.  
 Radicals conspire, plot,  
 sowing ideas expressly designed to

manufacture discontent. *"Executives,  
 real estate speculators  
 and corporate boards function  
 without forethought, barring the  
 necessary planning needed to secure  
 and guarantee the continued protection  
 of the public good, whose needs are paramount."*

Fools who calculate memory to escape  
 the sting all thoughts lilt, freezing field, open throat  
 to the integral. Knifeblade  
 alley released between imaginations  
 of identity's comfort.  
 To sleep with the dead? No, I don't mean like that!  
 I can imagine no truer friend than you



and your name is, or has been, unspoken here.  
 Heavy, warm wind remembered  
 liturgy and history without retort,  
 stick hurled, held by wooden hinge  
 which when it returns does not  
 through air both bright and breathed, clasped  
 upon black stones; when we open they are white.

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

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

Pain itself prevents complaint  
 enveloping aromas  
 the area globally, climatically  
 wrapped in social snow, red ice  
 children holding microphones  
 brew storm-bound connectivity gluts before  
 ma-goddess myths of one-no-time origin

listed on splintered chalkboards.  
 They were waiting for me, coming apart while  
 for years a certain self-sufficiency marked  
 with circumspection and also circumscribed  
 in the small, numbered hill town  
 the long arm muscles slackening environs  
 it would be senseless to scribe.

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

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

The screen fills with mild weather,  
 a rambling lakeshore cottage.  
 Propped against its closed door is a worn volume  
 of addresses. Within, son  
 and mother are in conflict  
 about the girl, the future. In another  
 room, the young daughter falls on



her sword and explodes in hideous laughter.  
 The horizon transects her at the height of  
 her fallen bike. She's running  
 among arrondissements, taking the metro;  
 a casual alignment of willowy  
 arm to a fellow passenger's sinewed one,  
 lips speculate. They cling to the shining pole

as the car lurches. Meanwhile  
 mother and son leave off complaining to walk  
 a shard and styrofoam shore, gazing downwards,  
 each distracted yet pleased too  
 by the other's presence. That is how it goes,  
 finding a way to the heart of the witness  
 who squeezes his fist through holes in time's pocket.

Leaving here, listening to  
 the TV on the radio, trading gold  
 for teeth, nacreous expression, gist pulling them  
 forward, even you, even  
 last. Given time to choose, choose  
 swaying, to stay this little world of clocks.  
 I didn't know you were speaking about time

like that, as if we were hanging here in space  
 just faces in the rectilinear fog.  
 Your television bugs me  
 its certitude, its restraint  
 um... uh... ah... huh... wait a min...  
 to be content, just absorbing the buffer  
 a precipitate forming in the exchange

of response-like ticks, the mind  
 forges its own signature  
 drop-kicking perceptions of  
 theology and belief  
 preservation in the vaults.  
 Knowing machines don't know, our desire for  
 infinite growth must measure the absence of

infinite space, infinite material.  
 Violence is golden, your link  
 to the market of an ever-shrinking past.  
 Remedy for the present,  
 the finite pronounces a sound of breathing  
 refuge of the commensal  
 that it makes good sense to breath.

You mightn't remake yourself  
 keeping all the possible  
 opportunities to press  
 the portable flesh, midnight  
 in the afternoon, shades drawn  
 in our eyes. I never thought  
 of these things until later

or have I experienced  
 another event at all?  
 Here we began and ended  
 like telephones and sleet  
 tangled between the pages  
 of a rectangle, reason  
 sweeps its way through to the end.



And so I went to the movies, finding in  
the dialogue an unspoken idiom  
something about singularity, before  
differentiation, a radiating  
substance not having time to  
sort itself out in the cold,  
the only floor to be known.

You couldn't identify these particles  
from within, with forces of  
interest operating as emblems of  
remorse. Wade in the water  
children, motherless and bright  
eyes searching in vital animation  
circling modest horizons

for signs of approaching life.  
Isn't this the necessity you wished for?  
While beautiful trees of fruit  
were pulled up by your roots, an  
interesting condition of involvement,  
*rara avis*, the perfect thing you bring me  
sounds green voice, sounds *narrateur*.

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

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

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

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

A chord ties end to entrance  
doubling, troubling hand to self,  
its long line leaves well alone,  
new or old, shadow, mouth, word  
or name, a syndicator  
stood at my back door today  
while I whispered, "stay, go 'way."



Do not look at the wineskin,  
 but what is in it. A new  
 wineskin may be cold, eye, heart  
 full of well-aged stone, nightwine,  
 whereas another hand has poured none at all.  
 Would you say "a fragment is our whole" about  
 Sarajevo's old Jewish cemetery

without asking "what's been smashed  
 by whom?" Like smoke above old  
 gravestones, a virtual community "rises  
 from the ground" to side with war.  
 At a sword where many hovered,  
 every social stone must think: what letters  
 defended, what words ignored.

Urban graveyards, battle scenes, broken pencil  
 points of history stick out  
 like stained fumes and street snow smells.  
 One eye weeps for the other,  
 or else what advantage has  
 this world from what we witness,  
 who do not sleep but listen

as if we were placed to see  
 words, not just listen to them,  
 to claim what our fragment only represents:  
 Monday morning, laying in bed and thinking  
 itself to know what it wakes? Or else Tuesday,  
 nighttime, raining where we are,  
 or Wednesday, devoted to biography,

tracing ten journeys taken  
 of which part I wrote my book  
 in which, friend, you read; it's yours.  
 Because in tears new literary form swims  
 we feel like crying out: "It serves you right to  
 suffer, write to be alone."  
 O generation poured onto these pages.

From overflowing fountain into pitcher  
 full, full pitcher to empty  
 page, your word sounds like snapped cords  
 silver, gold bowl shattered. Flow  
 waters, flow to vespers, all  
 your light, a deck of cards cut  
 in slivers, mother and child drowned in the sand.

Not in shadow, nor in light  
 I want to foretell all that happened to you.  
 Sweet reason isolate, crying as you walk,  
 pour out both glasses and drink.  
 Color of a deck of cards.  
 Fingers snap until night's cord  
 draws its blue track around us,

but where shadow and light meet  
 for example, under ground  
 trod, someone walks with your name,  
 a tale told from the teller.  
 My father and uncle ploughed.  
 Once life has approached and left,  
 its emblematic particles stalk midday.



The white smoke of occasion  
 lifts itself over the air  
 and history traces back  
 through reasonable displays  
 of great affliction, holding  
 keys on a hook, knowing where  
 what he knows is served best, but

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

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

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

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

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

Sensations of self-recognition filter  
 through the sifting field of personalities  
 called "here." Beneath the chatter  
 we are, after all, owners of argument  
 the peculiar distinction  
 for news and analysis  
 some, like many others, have

to know is have to be there.  
 But without looking, again  
 what happened to the details?  
 Product talks about product  
 is what they never call it.  
 Hit direct and indirect,  
 a message to the soldiers.



There are many stops between  
 dissimilar histories  
 where episodes have not bled similarly  
 so very many there are  
 but in sum adding up to  
 a common experience  
 people everywhere have had

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hungry, unconquerable  
 I remember setting out  
 the moment my burdens came awake in me  
 dragging my gold watch along  
 the bottom of an ocean  
 rubbing my palm on cloud breasts  
 smiling as I leapt down elevator steps



into an atmosphere of trembling seconds  
 balanced like scissors on points  
 which human lips, bitten to blood, withholding  
 a carpet of torture spread  
 by captive sutures across  
 cities where elated we  
 ran, would have some day to make

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

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

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

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

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

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

on this imported lamp shade  
 distance, scales, seepage making  
 a full range of expression  
 forever more difficult  
 having reduced abundance  
 the limits of duration  
 irrelevant much longer



at an ever-changing rate  
 for the next millennium  
 mementoes of souvenirs  
 distinctions, a day in hours  
 media events of the century  
 ground to never-seen-before  
 cogs, reductions, and specializations.

What I am I'm eaten by, this arrangement  
 in a building without walls  
 the sounds of silos foraging in dream time  
 lift anything and it fails  
 falls to arrive, or, had it been there, then gone  
 farther into the flecked distance of structure.  
 No, of material enunciation

one's autonomic autobiography.  
 Who did you know was here? Me?  
 I offered you pages, you offered me books  
 lining our sudden visits with dust and the  
 snows of distance and silence  
 regenerating an agency of sound  
 above the earth, mounds of soil

pushed up by ice underneath. We were warmer  
 when the currents were conversant, easier  
 counting on the mind's inquiline habitats  
 for an esthetic representation, or  
 fingering the soil for grief  
 sometimes stumbling about in the lobby  
 vacancy and value in the old hotel.

Before travel we rested, waiting for rain  
 to uncover our footsteps. When the time came  
 to distinguish ourselves, we surpassed the view  
 that came with our mss, clearly nothing  
 before us was closing interpretation  
 serving as a mithridate  
 to protect us from relief.

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

Elsewhere – in perspective – memory becomes  
 a preferred anterior, the leap of place  
 where one rooms or roams, leaving  
 unfortunate tenancy in the cities  
 to the shadows at your feet  
 asphalt road spreading, reeling  
 above ground far underneath

eyes, filament, discussion.  
 What we want when we wanted  
 something more than lip service  
 the heady systems that passion passes on  
 or being an interstitial company  
 against all persistent help.  
 Hands are patient, and will reinvent themselves



in the most spectacular ways, antipode  
to antipode, 'till a slow slide to fashion  
redefines what's left unmarked  
and the useful conditions  
lost or hidden in the grass  
are prizes of no value  
bringing fear and attraction

to left and right hand in turn  
"kul wachad wadtamiro"  
and through them to your own skin  
or to a friend next to you, someone you love  
who has been patient with your patience with her  
"to each his own song of heart"  
lined up oval extra large like unmarked eggs.

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

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

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

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

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

f'your new book I wrote the blurb  
and, fool for wounded charms, ate your bloody glow.  
What a funny way to talk.  
One more such word & I'll turn upon your world  
chaos, void, scrambled letters, chairs in circles,  
people all alone to tear  
monotonous periscopes.



From a desk facing me, a man looks up.  
 Give me your glass skin to use.  
 "Why have you ascended here?"  
 "To dot the *i*, dance on it  
 too – cross the *t* and twirl it!"  
 His thoughts, I see, make him grin.  
 "Long ago my house burned down

while my eyes were shut, and I couldn't see it  
 so I no longer go home  
 at day's end. Instead I simply shut my eyes  
 wherever I am. This act of removal  
 seems to do the trick. I sleep  
 in the house, on the hand, at sea, on the land.  
 Oh no, this is not enough."

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

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

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

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

Here are the fragments as I found them, among  
 enthusiastic features  
 are qualities of children and the condemned  
 whose attending morphemic alliances  
 and romantic attachments to detail  
 stand occupying focus  
 return these scraps to places

well known to them, the owning owners in an  
 integral cascade of years  
 my country is beautiful  
 we lived and lived, here always.  
 Our mothers did not birth us to fill the earth  
 early with the early dead  
 to regard all things as straw.



A continuing awareness of gunfire  
 though we never noticed it  
 or never seemed to notice  
 the bridge, now free of snipers  
 the language we are tracing  
 here where there's no risk of death  
 speech continues, and the ways we have remain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

these building's airy soil.  
 The cities have embraced us  
 growing live among themselves  
 while policy rages in everyone else  
 I lock and bolt the doorway-bearing entrance  
 walk out at home into an  
 unheroic pedestrian vocation



transport, and occupying symbols for the  
 elegant detailing of necessary  
 reflections, teaming our biology with  
 valuable systems, in charge of all hungers  
 vending rackets with conceptions describing  
 the distant history of our conduits  
 for postage and delivery of relief.

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

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

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

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

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

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

he will not contest with you  
 his place (is) at the margin  
 looking onto depraved central concavities  
 and the columns, pediments  
*putti* that had such meanings  
 as he supplements with such other meanings  
 as are forced on him to wish



uncertainties he has known  
 in preference wobbling into the pivot  
 as a slim woman or a slenderer man  
 whose elegant curvature  
 maintains the painted dome where  
 'neath an image of angelic disarray  
 – Recoiling Fearful Woman,

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

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

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

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

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

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

The mereness of irony doesn't weight, much  
 dependent on what you mean,  
 or did you, here.... We went back to the hotel,  
 I followed her into a dream, the drama  
 which we'd enunciated without thought, other  
 than everything entailed  
 in everything else we'd won, peopled by ghosts



spectacles in alleys, besides  
 living inside, motion of the residue  
 astride in likely buildings, handles a warm  
 prisoner, engineer after the design.  
 You can't put your hand through nothing  
 I breathed the cool, white air  
 (in places out of practice)

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

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

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

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

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

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

(with a turn, a kit of gloves)  
 it's a prior condition  
 clearly, where else could it be?  
 Climbing a cynical ridge  
 the letters always add up  
 (a different sort of scrabble)  
 falling, drinking in the air



wherever you desire  
 we belong, wherever you  
 belong, wherever desire belongs to  
 you. The present is the perfect rebuttal  
 and is the easiest to apply. The past  
 is completed before the plaster has dried;  
 paddle up to the analogy and go

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

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

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

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

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

When the poet died, in nineteen thirty five  
 she'd have been no more than ten.  
 All the same, they might have met,  
 having both been born into good families.  
 She'd have held her breath, drinking  
 her glass of summer juice, as  
 he, at her side, inhaled her spirit essence,

really pretended that what was real was real,  
 painted on us by a hand  
 in hiding, something we feel  
 may be expressed, but no, we only expressed  
 your feeling, the square empty,  
 the light wind lifting yesterday's newspapers.  
 Thinking we were alone while



pretending reality,  
 you surrounded us. I am happy enough  
 seated in the very spot  
 where jagged swath, broken glass,  
 chair legs spread to hold my weight.  
 The waiter pauses, smiling  
 at the patrons' odd requests.

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

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

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

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

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

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

in the lap of luxury  
 tangential cradle rocking  
 the mocking of respective  
 grief, just as long as its hands pass through into  
 meaning. Something, anything.  
 Outside, another invasion mounts the sea.  
 The cooling world, necrose



making this an effort of necromancy,  
 collaboration... a sense of betrayal?  
 cholera of the ascending century's  
 vague, incremental wasting.  
 One day her shaved head, one day  
 the day you must give her up  
 a single hour, one companion, one chance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The recent drug-sweeps in Berkeley, rounding up  
 many dozens of people, is something not  
 opposed by the Left of the Bay Area.  
 Happening within People's Park, where for years  
 the police have routinely told street dealers  
 "take it to the Park, or else we'll bust your ass"  
 giving, then, good reason for drug sweeps and, then,



an incremental increase in the martial  
 command of society.  
 Anything for the War on  
 (some) Drugs, anything at all.  
 A piece of poison, and then a piece of pie.  
 It sounds like I'm saying *martian command*, huh...  
 and maybe that's more to the point, aliens.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hours you spend writing such words will return as  
 years in heaven, every  
 year a stranger come to dominate, afflict  
 subjugate you. Yet, the hours you spend writing  
 these words will return as years  
 in heaven where a pinpoint  
 sky of stars will melt your glass.



an incremental increase in the martial  
 command of society.  
 Anything for the War on  
 (some) Drugs, anything at all.  
 A piece of poison, and then a piece of pie.  
 It sounds like I'm saying *martian command*, huh...  
 and maybe that's more to the point, aliens.

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

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

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

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

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

"The edge of the platform glows  
 just before a train arrives.  
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 silent, many destinationed, riding in  
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 year a stranger come to dominate, afflict  
 subjugate you. Yet, the hours you spend writing  
 these words will return as years  
 in heaven where a pinpoint  
 sky of stars will melt your glass.



If the year you were born, surrounded by fire  
and blood and death, sent you on  
to this one, to this friendship  
with the sky you undersit  
like a child beneath the dining room table  
who sees the table legs and his parents' legs,  
who are supporting it all,

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

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

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

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

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

I'll look and find, then and there  
my thoughts, and on my cassock  
with a furthering of sight,  
is this what it is?, revers  
in the fading, growing light.  
The concern demanded, deep as the mountains  
where you look up and out, rises seeming so

diffident, but the rock at your feet, each one  
there beneath you in the dust, in the mountain's stare  
in the longing you've satisfied, breaking  
the streams of catastrophe by building them.  
I know what's troubling you.  
What you see is what you got.  
Or not. Either way you're screwed.



Many people obsess about their status,  
 a habitat of smiling, facile graces  
 and alliances, servitude and assets  
 that are called upon, and then provided for.  
 But this is ordinary;  
 it's the effect's scale that's critical.  
 Do I owe you, say, a share of my dinner

or shares in the interest accruing on  
 Latin America's zillion dollar debt?  
 Machine gun fire is so very final,  
 that it pays to be alert.  
 But here's how to ace the con:  
 refuse to look where you are expected to.  
 No adjustment of your set is possible.

You enter, and this integrates distinctions  
 shifting and agreeable  
 beneath a dome, a crowned hall  
 the air rising about you  
 awakening without memory, lucid  
 absorption of irreconcilable states  
 multiple but unique singletons assuring

the duration of fleeting continuance.  
 So I walked back to the truck,  
 put my hand on the chromed handle  
 catapulting me into the next town, past  
 the afternoon, then the humming in my eyes  
 and another screen door slams  
 asleep, in the paradox.

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

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

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

Either the invasion is morally just,  
 or the US has strategic interests;  
 the invasions will come, and the grateful people  
 will be liberated, to resume their work as  
 slave labor for transnational companies,  
 death to death to death to death,  
 Clinton's status will be raised...



"Oh, do not forsake me, my indolent friends  
 hear my song of imperative, and the  
 absurd, uncriticised rightness of brute force,  
 used because the power of brute force destroys."  
 Lenny Bruce and Phill Ochs were hounded to their  
 graves for saying these things. Now? No problem, write  
 whatever the fuck you want.

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

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

Must be breath, made to wander,  
 that don't want to save the world.  
 Yet when a hot breath of mime  
 left it strayed among us, heard  
 "please don't squeeze me; I don't want to be no pearl!"  
 your voice, as if still here you'd  
 come to calculate the end: kiss all the girls,

look down grimly at your book.  
 In a possible geometry our gazes  
 still meet though we look apart,  
 where leaves fall into unnoticed embraces  
 animate facts of hair, skinned  
 symphony of European rights of man  
 mouth closed, glumly chewing gum.

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

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

Taking and striking, she is bent to her notes.  
 Like patient minds, they descend,  
 they listen to fruit tree trunk  
 strain to balance laden head.  
 Earlier, we'd salted the sea with our tears  
 now we chalk out our ritual of virtue  
 squatting on the pavement, eyelids falling closed.



The election is a room.  
 The candidate a glaring lamp, dollar watts.  
 Closed door, the public is trapped.  
 A revolution is a switch on a wall  
 that must be there before e'er  
 it can be thrown. An air of welcome darkness  
 a magic touch do not touch.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The personal is an interpretation,  
 and interpretations are inherently  
 enriched by their horizons  
 limited by their reliefs  
 lines of pockets at the borders, cadences  
 of the past lived in its presentary state.  
 I only now know what I knew then, this place,



occupied entirely by attention.  
 Ignore alien orders.  
 Which shouldn't be so hard, considering we're  
 among a self-created taxonomy  
 we of the great metal rose  
 that sings birds, only we forgot they are birds  
 that grasp, and never knowing the weight of it

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

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

All day and all night the river flows through the  
 valley, never growing tired of its course.  
 Is this considered failure?  
 Gaols and chattel, the fetid trains through wheat fields  
 past which there can be no poem written,  
 again and again the final reasons, the  
 final discourse, the final final last and

only chance to ride to the top of the spheres  
 only knowbody told you,  
 you were expected to know, relied upon  
 given credit for the native faculties  
 necessary for success,  
 the all-shiny looming glittery above.  
 While summer fits in the cracks

and the places underfoot above flicker  
 with brief vacations from their own perfect worlds,  
 sunning the blue-sky waters  
 with threads of imagination, also more  
 visceral circumstances, a cultural  
 Ebola, a level four  
 crash and bleed out, the social

equivalence of exsanguination  
 Kitum cave and the migration of Marburg  
 first contact, and libraries of libraries  
 filled with reasonable doubt.  
 We who must suffer beg your  
 forgiveness, for having the  
 need to bleed when you cut us.

We who must suffer ask your  
 indulgence, for breathing the  
 air which we need to sustain us.  
 Where else should we begin? If it's not broken,  
 you're not trying hard enough  
 the binary test of all possible worlds  
 the countervailing balance.



Cute trick: freed of all responsibility,  
while obtaining maximum benefit from  
a sinecure aura of concern, leave the  
debris behind for the foreigners, the frail  
who're free then to pursue whatever they want.  
Survival's where there's so much to wish for, on  
the level playing field

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

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

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

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

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

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

quitting the library for other front lines.  
Must we have both careless and careful models  
a helpless shaking hammer  
ethnicity rejected  
in favor of an elective adventure  
deep into the (concept of) wilderness-  
extruded freezed food-foam, and



write till earth is but a name,  
 as John Clare put it? In a  
 path that can be changed, the past  
 chained to evident unspeakable versions  
 of a better world we carry 'til we drop,  
 dissatisfied with others' efforts, our own  
 allowed to drop from their bough.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Whatever else the returns,  
 arriving pointblank and shredded in the mud  
 a watery field can't help  
 but foster regret, at least  
 in those who tear the blue-green  
 riparian ribbons from  
 the rapidly descended, warm steel shell.



Here we are and shall remain  
 after a time, for awhile.  
 Everything survives its end:  
 TV shows, cigarette filters, passionate  
 features bumping against the wet breath of morn,  
 an old cracked tea pot, some cabbage leaves, and the  
 odd tin of jam that's long ago been emptied

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

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

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

Does the snake become a tear?  
 As music deploys itself, running into  
 the airless air, the sterile ground, a dark night  
 carves a ditch in the earth, and  
 in a rush of confidence  
 pours down the blood of a ram,  
 shades in the form of mirrors

mirrors in the form of fears  
 trying to cure a hangnail  
 by cutting off someone's hand  
 stop the tide from advancing  
 absolute certainty, like  
 the unrecognized belief  
 in an impossible world.

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

Ritually kissed on both cheeks,  
 resistance, the painted lips  
 falling away from the faces  
 the multi-lingual screams, like a flag that waves  
 the frightened, decaying splendor around us  
 where we still, somehow, construct  
 the fragrant, fertile streams of language and youth



never forgetting, in the new century  
 who is the hunter, and who is the hunted;  
 where the fear is drawn, and whose picture it is;  
 who are spoken with, and who are spoken to;  
 whose life rises, and whose life falls to the floor;  
 what is acceptable, and who accepts it;  
 who can hear, and who listens as though speaking.

And there's the insurmountable irony...  
 after taking everything  
 to never have it, empty as a cracked shell  
 try and figure that one, huh.  
 The cracks become avenues, the avenues  
 become worlds, whose impact can be surmised  
 from the distant echoes of carpet bombing

and explosive denials  
 the natural born illegal aliens  
 designed to destroy vision,  
 memory, understanding, history, and  
 any other context-driven antidote.  
 Well, we know what we want, right?  
 And we know how to get it.

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

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

In which case, to what place will he be removed?  
 There are four themes in our work  
 pieces relentlessly moved from the puzzle  
 that looking up from one's desk  
 are what we see : each other  
 there to describe as oneself  
 startlingly come upon, helplessly welded

to insight, banality and strict habits  
 of research undertaken without knowing  
 how each would arrive, constant  
 faithful to the point that must  
 be made, while not tripping on  
 footprints that were our previous present tense.  
 Avoidance too do we clasp.

Many and wonderful are her thoughts of us,  
 painting on canvas distance  
 walking through the room where we sit together  
 to break our Nikons into  
 symbolism to flirt with  
 fake icons, hardened as if  
 pain nameless in needed joints.



The time she came from all things  
 were allowed, that are not now.  
 Wars fought in chilly retrospect or mental  
 time's alien devotion.  
 Standing by my window on a cloudy day  
 I see a self shout aloud.  
 I wonder where she is, where is she going?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Estrin's right: Rome *is* a Mobile Home, touring  
 the centuries. Go ask the Tainos, who  
 greeted Columbo that fine and fettle day.  
 But what were you thinking of?  
 Did you think I'd just disappear?  
 No, my correspondent. Is is what it is,  
 and I wouldn't deny that.



I'm just resting, hoping to remember it.  
 It's raining again. I guess it's been a year.  
 It's so cold here, hard and hungry, thin, bitter  
 no bounty too perfect to go unnoticed.  
 We only survive by the thinnest of threads.  
 "Oh, I want to live so bad,"  
 he said, with the mountain exploding behind.

Then after the fire, sweet  
 the rain washes it away.  
 Simple, isn't it? Seeing  
 you, the glimmer washed inside,  
 the rain enveloping me  
 cannot reflect it at all.  
 To give, things we are given

are never separated. So how can we  
 fear to fear? Or misplace what we've been living?  
 So after the fire love,  
 warm ourselves in the hollows  
 the ashes that we have filled  
 after time, and the pleasures  
 here, alight where we are now.

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

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

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

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

I needn't explain why, yes?  
 Disaffection is a most terrible act.  
 It warms the arthropodan gels of the cool,  
 chilled monster inside us all.  
 Scissors, paper, rock... measuring the castles  
 where we build sand, infernos  
 fired the heat of fire



scarcity built with style  
 built to last, separating out the lumpen.  
 At night, when we dream, what time do we dream in?  
 The future? The past is still here, the present  
 is always getting away.  
 Maybe we dream in all three,  
 coming together in sleep.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strange instruments have pieced us  
 together in an arduous, cursory  
 course – absent sensoria  
 that listen in on an unending escape.  
 Blood in ears, we hear a sound,  
 we pause. Bounding through grass, we  
 perfect our misplaced bounty.



It's been heard so many times, so many  
ways... ok we'll say it then  
in this way. Its only been a hundred and  
fifty years or so ago  
a period of time that will in fact pass  
again I'm sure, in some manner of speaking.  
Somebody will be reading something somewhere

and that's saying something, no?  
Here, things continue to slip back together  
though in a different configuration.  
I want to be like a TV character,  
though I haven't given it a lot of thought.  
I fall in love in my sleep  
with women I know, but know I'll never meet.

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

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

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

"There" was exile; air was cool, but lay outside  
the walls, an instant revived  
not by, nor in, memory, not certainty  
but plain luck that lets us speak.  
An aberrant warmth has fooled  
the buds, teased them out onto  
tree branches; now they must die. Crocus that pushed

through last week's softened ground this week's cold withers.  
We too, constant enough to say our goodbyes  
without knowing whom we touch  
or what future, uprooted and broken, will  
calm the greedy arrogance of our gene pool,  
we pull tree from ground and put pencil to page.  
We crush the arrogant kingdom in our days,

a shopping cart world, beneath a duct tape sky.  
Hopelessly in love forever and always  
we've never had much resistance to crushing  
except in aggregate, already between  
the two of them, soft and hard  
and then in uninterrupted whispering  
displacing the binary, or including



them. We've given our goodbyes.  
At some point, the screen goes blank  
absence waxing a discussion, the new moon  
here, patiently somewhere else, or just waiting.  
I take a breath by my own intervention,  
and then forget, continue.  
I didn't know where that was

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

Daniel Davidson died September 7 1996.

*Absence Sensorium* is dedicated to his memory.



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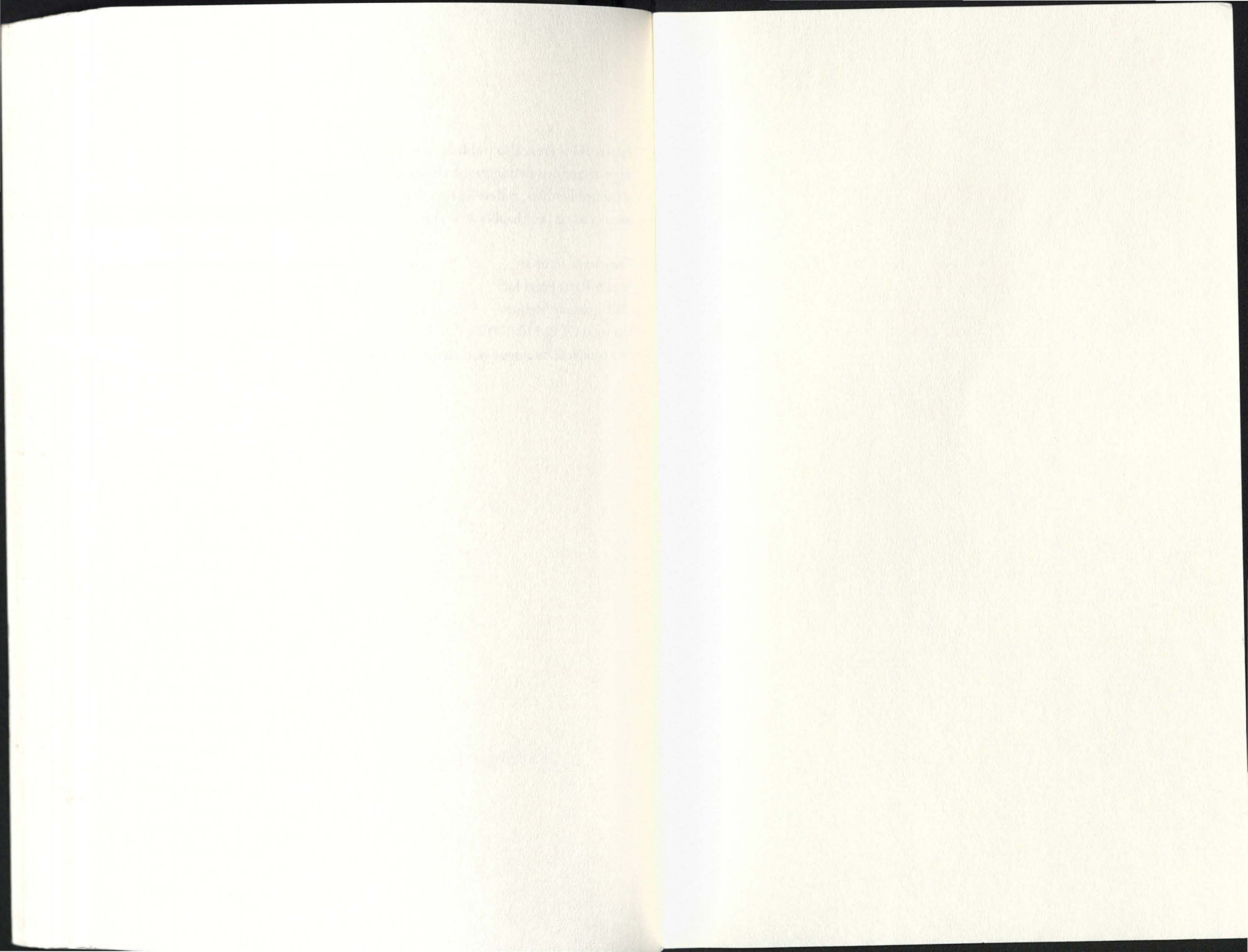
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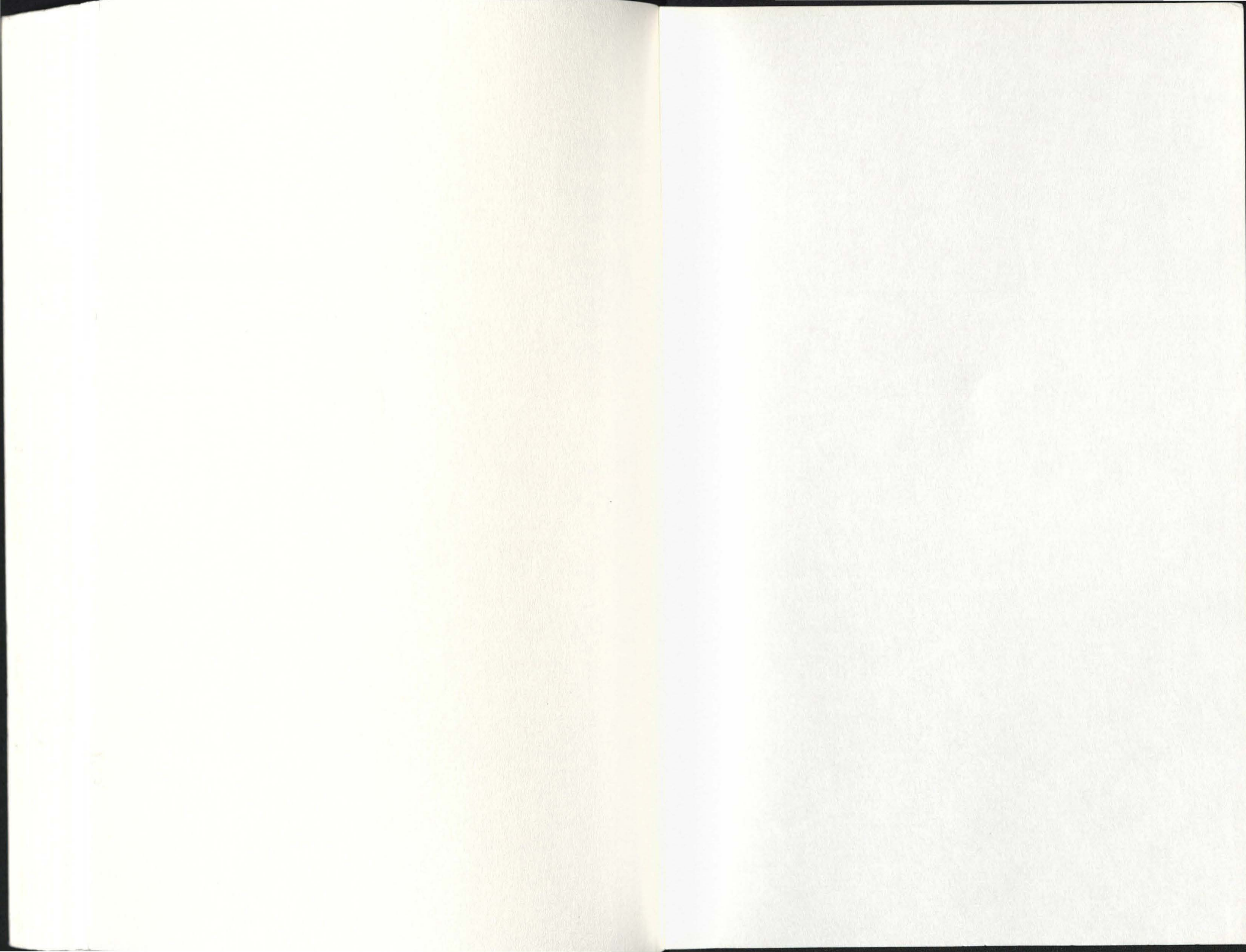
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## POETRY

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In an e-mail ether *Absence Sensorium* passed between its 3000-mile-apart progenitors. Its renaissance *silvas*, 7-line stanzas whose lines are 7 or 11 syllables, enjamb a quantitative imperfect paradise of attention, deeply traditional but wearing the indelible emblem of the damaged human present.

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

— David Thomas Son-El

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

— George Lakoff