

## The Love I Seek

The things I love,  
the first time I love them,  
are the same as their memory,  
once they're gone.

The way I hold someone  
mirrors the way I might want  
to hold them once more,  
when they can never be held again.

The exquisite moment of love is the same  
as the terrifying moment of its loss.

I seek the love that will tear my heart out,  
so I can sit in the eternity of my emptiness,  
and cherish what I cannot hold.

## I Awaken to This Brevity

I awaken to this brevity of life,  
where nothing happens but the entirety  
of being, when even this awareness  
is caught in the vice of occurring twice.

Twice I breathe, in every breath,  
once for meaning, and once for life.

I call out to her, I imagine her coming,  
I'm sure she's on her way, I look at every car,  
not in hoary anticipation, the sugary bitter taste  
of desire, but in the life where I live and breathe,  
where I have no idea what's about to happen,  
and I give it her name.

I'm pulled apart by these pulls in my life,  
one pull, toward surrender in patient peace,  
the other, toward the pettiest of personal fears,  
like a mother with a child, and we're the same.

I have the choice, among my separate selves,  
to anticipate something bad happening,  
or to be present, with my eyes open.

This pulling apart pulls parts  
from the center, that reveals the center  
more clearly than what's been cleared away.

## These Outside Things of Wonder and Beauty

I used to get on the road and drive,  
to remember who I was, alone, clean, and simple,  
in need of others, but content alone, like towns  
in the mountainous west, perched on slanted ground,  
where all that remains, is only what isn't blown away,  
or found to be useless.

My family drove to the mountains, every summer,  
and I'd feel home again, stepping onto the gravel  
by the river in the wind with the smell of pine  
and the faint presence of brown bear and deer,  
not knowing I was walking alone in my heart,  
no longer separate from myself or anyone else.

There were amusement parks in the city,  
where the lights on the Ferris wheels  
and roller coasters were bright colors  
against the night sky, and everything,  
beyond my heartbeat, was wiped away.

Being as a child is not simply being  
what came before but being what remains.

I might think I remain in memory or artifact,  
like certain scenery, but the resonant reality  
is the undercurrent that first found its place  
in these outside things of wonder and beauty.

## The Desire of the Habitually Homeless

Desire came on me like a storm  
from behind, like a bear at my back,  
and gave me too much power  
where I didn't need it.

I look at the curve of her breast,  
and I lose interest in the love  
we all inhabit, that I leave,  
only to gather up doubts and fears.

Destination is the desire  
of the habitually homeless.

Driving down a certain street in my hometown,  
the overhanging trees made it seem a tunnel  
to somewhere, and each time I drove that street,  
I entered that same tunnel to somewhere.

I didn't care that I emerged at the same intersection,  
with no thought of ever having arrived anywhere different.

I cared only, that for a time, on the road through the trees,  
I forgot about destination, on a journey without desire.

## Something of a Third

When you touch a brush  
of color to another color,  
and both colors are wet,  
something of a third takes place.

*We are wet with each other, I said,  
the pretext of our separation is destroyed,  
the way Matisse destroyed the canvas with color.*

I felt foolish, talking elliptically in public,  
when our private talk was this very question  
of intimacy, are we intimates of the spirit  
or intimates of the flesh, and why are we  
not intimates in all ways of being?

There's no perfect answer,  
until the questions have been forgotten.

I've never been able to make of myself a passenger  
with a designated seat, yet I sit on the bus,  
trying to find my place, alone, or in tandem.

There's no reliable past to predict our position,  
yet in the way of our loving each other,  
we avoid the thing we barely seek.

A boy sits with his parents, unaware  
of the calculations they make to orchestrate his life  
into the perfect future and the glorified past.

He's too busy naming the universe  
that's just arrived in his eyes.

I was with her, in the best way possible,  
when I wasn't with her as one, or one of two,  
but when we were something of a third,  
and the parts lost their designation.

## The Amber Cube of History

In memory, what occurs is a sense of color  
in similar scenes, an amber cube of history,  
the spine of a leaf, an apartment in summer,  
a rain wet street, the mosquito night,  
this redundant, emotional coloring.

I'm here to see these movies conclude,  
so no more film is made of the past  
that blurs the present.

When eyes are heavy, there's no relief in their grief,  
what keeps us apart is the film in our eyes.

I love the romance of the pictures that populate my mind,  
and I love the reality in the witness of their appearance.

These verbal recordings deceive their reality,  
I misrepresent the truth of my unsaid self,  
whenever I say whatever I say aloud.

The grace of these accounts is not their coloring,  
but the invention of occasion from the emptiness of vision.

I don't create from the history of myself,  
but from the unknown of who I am,  
there's no poem but what comes unknown.

I love when I can look at others, without thinking  
of who I've been, or who I ought to be, embracing  
with open arms, holding with open hands.

It takes a grain of sand to make a pearl,  
the oyster forgets the grain, making the pearl,  
the pain of the grain is lost to the birth of the pearl.

## The Attraction of Sorrow

She stood by the grocery cart with eyes  
haunted by the absence of who she might be,  
if she could remember who that was.

One can vacate oneself, and what one leaves behind  
has to carry on, a gentle ghost, she said she liked  
my art and wondered if she could see more of it.

The grandchildren of her best friend stood nearby,  
their mother had died, they'd grown used to her spirit  
wandering in and out of who they were.

Her friend, my old love, called later to say they were tired,  
she asked about coming, the next day, said she had to go,  
one of the kids had hurt himself, said she'd call, but didn't.

Time stretches absence to a presence, they say  
that no one in mourning is ever truly depressed.

Stillness welcomes anything lost or unseen, the presence  
of absence occupies stillness like a specter that spoils the calm.

Stillness is either the presence or the absence of everything,  
I fall gracefully back into peace, or I chase my thoughts,  
out from the center, toward their perpetual engagement.

I attach fear to absence, she seemed gone, in her going away,  
when I'm the one who pushes absence to an occupation of eternity.

There's something about absence I love, a presence  
of absence that hurts, I hold the pain like a lover,  
if she were truly gone, I could mourn, my invention  
of love has made me a perpetrator of this abuse,  
as if love were encouraged by my attraction to sorrow.

Absence is absinthe, drugging sobriety with its delusion of another,  
I look for this absence to embrace it, to release it, a ghost in the light,  
the absence I hold, is one way I go away from who I am in love itself.

## The Crunch Under Foot

There was a crunch to each step,  
as I walked across snow in the bitter winter,  
sounds that leap to their death.

To be in a body that doesn't accept its own dying,  
is to be in a submarine, in an ocean of fear,  
that I want to steer clear of and can't.

The air in the room was stifling,  
so I stepped outside, because I could,  
I can change anything, except what I can't,  
and there's fear in that.

I crunch across a frozen field and live on,  
I continue to desire love, until desire itself  
begins to crunch underfoot.

Things are begun, that may not end  
as well as we hope, but we begin anyway.

Beginnings are fraught with endings,  
they signal a positive, but the history  
of our endings infiltrates our beginnings,  
until every beginning becomes known  
by an unsought ending.

Yet the more I sink into who I am,  
the warmer the surface becomes, the center  
that I approach, in my deepening surrender,  
heats me where I am.

There's no history at the core,  
it burns away the surface frost,  
as long as I don't return  
to the familiar sound  
of footsteps on frozen snow.

## No Boat on a Sea of Love

I wrote a poem,  
the last word of which was love.

I took that word out of the poem,  
and it said more without the worn,  
beaten, empty word I use like the name  
of a popular brand I grew up with.

Every time I think love is close,  
I push it away with demands on its time.

Where have you been,  
why don't you come more often?

I float on a sea of love,  
wishing I knew how to swim.

In a dream, in the middle of the ocean,  
in the water, with no boat, no land in sight,  
I was alone, adrift, and I began to panic.

I thought about swimming to shore,  
there was no shore, I was too far at sea,  
it occurred to me, it was effortless to float.

I could swim in the sea,  
I could live in the sea as I was,  
and fear disappeared,  
like water in water.

## Stuck on an Elevator with Too Much Beauty

A man went to visit his sister,  
when on the elevator came a woman of such beauty,  
he had to cover his face and sink to the floor,  
saying, *no, no, no ... too much beauty.*

Two women came in *The Little Shamrock* late one night,  
when there were half a dozen other patrons, all men,  
the two women sat together for half an hour,  
shared a drink, and talked in private conversation.

The men, by themselves and in pairs,  
adjusted to the presence of women,  
until the two left the bar.

Then, six men let go of their demeanor,  
they slumped at their tables and barstools.

It had been their responsibility  
to respond to the presence of women,  
in a bar, late at night, until the pressure was gone.

The relief in the room was palpable,  
after the challenge departed, like men relaxing  
after a traffic accident had just missed them, after a call  
to military service had gone to others in the draft,  
after an attraction had been removed from their eyes,  
like a sudden change in the weather for the better.

Being stuck on an elevator with too much beauty  
has nothing to do with the duties of men, or the fire  
in the blood, or the competition for female elk,  
or the foolish fantasies of lonely drunks.

It has to do with a man who fears  
to look in the face of God as Being Itself,  
when it reveals too much about himself,  
as if he might be looking in a mirror  
without glass.

## The Wind Bends Things

Our coming together occurs  
in moments of utter vulnerability,  
not in the passion of beautiful bodies.

I can hardly bear the sadness of love,  
as I inch toward surrender, tasting,  
along the way, the entire fruit,  
skin and pulp and seed and stem  
and leaf and earth.

The wind bends things,  
as if it wants them broken,  
then cradles them and caresses them,  
then bends them, as if it wants them broken,  
bathing everything in its uncaring embrace,  
and the sun shines on.

I wish love weren't so equally indiscriminate  
as the elements, I wish love were something  
I could buy like a tree in a bundle,  
but it comes up in me from somewhere I'm not,  
it comes down on me from somewhere I'm not,  
it makes me part of everywhere it's ever been.

This sadness must be how I'm kept  
from my disappearance, in the way  
everything seems to be unrelenting,  
uncaring, and perfect in its place.

## We Tie Our Wings to the Trees

What you and I have, I said,  
we have to be together  
to have together,  
we can know it exists,  
we can see it,  
we can cherish it,  
but we can't have it,  
unless we're together.

Apart, we're connoisseurs  
of distant wonders, readers  
of great books of travel,  
without one step  
across the jamb.

You spoke of the joy  
that's avoided by those  
who accept imitations  
that keep them distracted  
from the gist, the gut,  
the gullet, the quick,  
the depth and the height,  
and here we are, on the verge  
of the thing we desire most,  
and we hold back,  
mocking our monuments.

We anticipate the leap into freedom,  
and we hesitate to make that leap a reality.

We hesitate to dirty our feet with heaven.

We look back at where we're from,  
and we tie our wings to the trees.

## Someone Else's Words

Three preachers, one in his Hawaiian shirt,  
another in a tee shirt and ball cap, the third  
with a pot belly in a checkered shirt, take a table  
and talk, the same as anyone who gets together  
with his buddies in the same line of work,  
when their talk might be what could be,  
between any of us, the inside out of the soul.

Halfway through the first stanza, I saw I was reverting  
to my own shoptalk, when it could be the leavening  
of our common terror, the addressing of our common joy.

I fall into a workday mode when I versify,  
no different from talking out the day with a friend.

Grace is not a manner of dress or a chosen profession,  
it's what remains when everything else is taken away.

There's no honor in waiting out this clumsy naked life,  
there's no pride in being left alone with eternity.

I walk through these roses and thorns,  
until there's nothing left to complain about  
nothing left to praise, God is empty of speech,  
and his words are someone else's.

What these preachers call God, what I call Being Itself,  
has been inviting me to this sacred primal humiliation  
for longer than I've been alive.

## A Tiny Dawn Rising

I miss what I've never known,  
a certain reality, I want to call tender,  
a way of being, I want to call cherishing,  
a brave vulnerability, I want to call loving,  
beyond what I call being in love.

I want to give up the ghost of my sanctity  
and trust another with a likewise lethal love.

If I love in the way that threatens me,  
I fear I'll be killed by love,  
but the experience of love doesn't kill,  
even if the one I love doesn't love me.

If she does, I can't feign my dramatic death,  
but live on, past what I was, before I feared  
I had loved too well or not at all.

I've loved before and lost in love,  
and I've been found in the loss.

I wonder if I might be found in what remains  
after loss itself has been lost for good.

We talk like ascetic saints, caring companions,  
like incipient lovers, we pretend we're not in love,  
when there's no other word for it, we tell each other  
how afraid we are of where we gracefully go.

There's a tiny dawn rising  
on the backside of this morning.

Its light is pregnant with endless summer,  
and it's too late to say we still love the darkness.

## In the Glare of Our Astonishment

We've been loving each other  
in the glare of our astonishment,  
with no respite from the brilliant focus  
of how we are with each other.

There's respite in who we could be with each other,  
but we don't allow ourselves to sit in the shade  
of our fulfillment, instead, we use time apart  
to buffer the blows of unrelenting wonder.

We're afraid love would be exhausted  
by its constant presence, that too much beauty,  
too much happiness, would ruin us.

Enlightenment comes when one admits  
that one is no longer un-enlightened.

I make the case for love, yet I fear  
it won't survive its own truth.

There's wonder I'm afraid to lose,  
in the brilliant practice of its presence.

## The Leviathan

She was listening to someone,  
as I watched, thinking of nothing.

I felt the compassion caught in the net  
of the kindness she cast near and far.

I enact my movement as a physical man,  
not as a thing to be seen from the outside,  
but as something to be seen from the inside.

My body is an environment of awareness,  
everything about my body is within it,  
I am within this awareness, as we are,  
now, within this poem.

When Imaginary Jesus came down from the hills,  
an allusion to his enlightenment, he played dice  
with the boys, and he kidded with the Marys,  
he turned wine to water, until he was reminded  
of his passion, it was an embarrassing lapse  
that no one forgot, and when he died,  
almost everyone stayed away.

I have no enduring grasp of the eternal, it has me,  
I enter it, the way she entered me, there's no escape,  
she convinced me of her presence, as I am of my own,  
I can't leave this, even upside down, it's my ground.

I look at the beauties of the world, and the heavenly ones,  
and my eyes remain in my head, she isn't being kind,  
it is the kindness of her being I see, I see beauty  
in my sight, and I tell myself to take it in,  
when it's already taken me, from the inside.

Breathe, breathe, I say,  
the leviathan needs the wind.

## Escaping Gravity

In overlapping realities, in this place where I live,  
something of the spirit pulls me up and out  
of the profane, something of the familiar  
pulls me down and into the mundane.

A local band played in the market,  
the singer sang of a woman he saw on the street,  
a magical figure, a woman of his transformation,  
beyond the life of the town.

It was oddly disconcerting to hear a local woman  
described in such mythic language, to be caught  
between transfiguration and the gravity of society.

What weighs me down is not cruel or evil,  
but slowly tightening wires on a tree, and the tree  
doesn't know it's become a decorative grotesquerie.

Back from the land of my keenest awareness,  
I assumed I could live as I had in that crucible,  
here in this land of restraints, but I watched  
as joy became a smile, then a protected glance.

There is such gravity in our belonging,  
we risk losing what's ours to give.

Gravity's embrace holds me to its bosom,  
but even Icarus came from somewhere.

His dream of flight lifted him above his place,  
but the story warns of his fall, and the singer  
ended his song with the sop that the sight  
of his muse was but a passing dream.

## The Empty Hedonism of Distance

Her presence, lying on the couch like a naked Maja,  
was difficult to accept, without any sign,  
beyond the sweetly spiritual and the gentle slight  
of appreciation and admiration, she was laid up  
with unexplained pain in her legs.

Her body glistened in the stifling summer heat,  
as she became loud with distance making,  
the way children instinctively know how to scream  
to ward off attackers they can't protect themselves from.

She told me of a man who tried to entice her to him,  
how she held her ground and became part of a life  
that wasn't part of his.

Finally, I couldn't continue to entice her, either,  
I was finished, I said I didn't care anymore,  
to be living in the intoxicating imbalance.

Like letting go of water falling,  
I let go of a good thing,  
because the poem demands it.

The poem won't be made less of,  
by being only good enough.

There's something right,  
in speaking my life to a sense  
of who I am, I can be the author of life,  
I can be a poet to an unseen poetry,  
I can tell myself aloud.

## The Temporal Savior of My Eternity

My desired love has gone out of expectation,  
I'm left with albums of faded mental memories.

She was the temporal savior of my eternity,  
and would still be, if I let imagination play itself,  
without interruption.

In the loss of my religious fervor,  
I find myself in a garden  
without the threat of crucifixion.

I thought we could make music together,  
but this stillness plays better between us.

When my father died, my son said it was easier  
to love him, his personality wasn't in the way.

Peace descends on relationships,  
when the reality of love becomes clear.

With nothing in the way of love itself, I love,  
and still I seem to believe in these prison walls,  
the more free I am, the more I seek imprisonment.

The more I seek the imprisonment that claims me,  
the more I seek to be free of what I claim.

When I see what I claim as mine,  
I see what I think claims me.

I find myself, in the freedom I find,  
when she is no longer mine to mind.

## The Wind in the Trees

The wind in the trees is Russian,  
blowing across the Steppes,  
like rain incessant on grasses,  
like repetitive, unyielding thought.

I lay in the dark night thinking,  
until I open my eyes, behind their lids,  
and look at nothing, and take long easy breaths.

The first thought that comes is a recognition  
that conscious thought constricts my breathing,  
until it becomes shallow, tentative, hesitant.

Unattached to thought,  
my breathing assumes its nature,  
I become clear about the abuse  
I allow in the search for peace.

I wonder if true peace, with any other,  
isn't the dream of an impossibility,  
I close my eyes, and I see peace,  
my lungs open like the sky of the wind.

I look at the dark behind my lids, and I see light,  
don't look at the windows, I think, it spoils the dark.

But there is light in my curtained eyes,  
with no thought and no windows,  
I invent light from the wind and nothing.

To be with another is the beginning of thought,  
the moment the eternal thought of man,  
eternity entered the world of thought.

Seeking forgiveness,  
all the eternal can say is,  
close your eyes and don't think  
of how I'm everything and nothing  
to you, and breathe, like the wind.

## The Constant Indifference of Wonder

The light glints and glares off cars,  
like stars bright in the daylight.

A sun in a silver Mercedes,  
half a dozen stars in a gray Chrysler,  
the night sky in a blue Ford,  
beyond that, a Milky Way of reflected light,  
small galaxies glide by on the arterial,  
shooting stars on the freeway.

The expectation of wonder  
has gone out of my love of the other.

Wonder is the black night sky,  
lightless behind the eyes,  
not the reflected blur of passing lights.

I bring myself to wonder,  
I am the sun of my expectation.

The sun in the parking lot,  
the same as the one in the sky,  
the same as the one in my eyes,  
undirected, its light never moves.

I am the field where light thrives  
in the constant indifference of wonder.

## The Commotion of Intangible Love

In the surrender to any god, there's a bliss  
that fades to what's ordinarily real.

In spite of my love for the muse,  
in any form she takes,  
I love what doesn't come and go,  
what never fades, is always here,  
what's always true,  
and then the objects of attention,  
the icons of my passion,  
fade from bliss.

A western priest told his Advaita teacher,  
after twenty years, *I can't give up my belief,*  
*I know everything you say is true, I'm still in love*  
*with the form of my faith, I can't surrender, enough,*  
*to let it go,* and his teacher said, *be as you are.*

My teacher, who led others in the recognition  
of faith without form, wept when he spoke  
of the god of his prior faith, he couldn't forget  
the love of his god, whose image came and went,  
despite his profession that love itself was lasting.

Being in the spirit of a man's body,  
my heart's in league with its flesh,  
my other heart's bound to its eternity.

There's no way past this parted faith,  
this loss, this enduring disillusion,  
that we experience, in so many ways.

Eternity is time without beginning or end,  
but there are beginnings and endings in life.

Falling back into stillness is the calm of my being,  
where there's no commotion of intangible love.

## The Dancing Girls of the Buddha

I never had as personal a god  
as my love for a woman.

I was taught to run through the apostles  
to get to Jesus, through Jesus to get to God,  
through God to get to what is,  
shopping among gods and people  
for a way to know what love is,  
has been my personal failure.

Love, in the presence of a woman,  
became the face of my essential love,  
but I wanted to see love more clearly,  
I wanted to see love pouring out of me  
toward love itself.

Warned of Buddha's dreams of dancing girls,  
that came to him, even after his enlightenment,  
I dismissed the warning and sought a woman,  
as if she were the heart of my inspiration,  
until I didn't feel any familiar burst of freedom,  
or the willingness to look for another lover.

I sought to see spirit in being, to embrace  
my naked self as the incarnation of my spirit,  
I grappled with thoughts of sensual desire.

When I saw spirit in a woman, I sought  
to embrace her with the same joy  
as I embraced my eternity.

Face to face with the spirit of my being,  
I want to hold it, and it to hold me.

Love was the only worship that fit my flesh,  
that matched the degree of my passion,  
until the dancing girls were gone  
from my still beloved dreams.

## The Ruling Classes of the Soul

A man handed me a copy of a deep thought  
and said I could keep it, a discourse on the futility  
of yesterday and tomorrow, I handed it back  
to the man and thanked him.

I went to visit my former muse and priestess,  
to see if I was still attached and to what extent  
I could feel the familiar pull, and I wasn't overcome.

I saw her struggling with something, I could only imagine  
what it was, she didn't speak or hand me anything to read.

Crowded with priests and priestesses, my neck is sore  
from craning and reaching to remove the cracked  
and peeling remains of a color that's lost its surface.

I enjoy turning a faded wall into a wide expanse  
of unbroken color, even though it's an irritation  
to my eyes, my ears, my lungs.

My curiosity has been to see if the truth,  
promised by my old religion was a given,  
to see if beliefs and rituals aren't merely in place  
for the satisfaction of the ruling classes of the soul.

This is poetry and its miracles, to bore to the core  
of a human being, to suddenly live in the brilliance  
of another set of cells, to share an instant intimacy,  
to make love with a stranger, as a close companion,  
to speak from the center the self circles at a distance.

## Overridden By What Didn't Happen

A window, jutting out from the upper story,  
was the only access to the dormer I needed to paint.

I stood on a stool, from the attic, and stepped onto  
the sleek metal roof with screw-heads for a foothold,  
I had to find another way to paint the inaccessible.

I tied a rope to a tree on the far side of the house,  
and threw it over the roof, next to the dormer.

I tied a stepladder to the rope, to stand on,  
and with one foot on top of the ladder,  
I lay flat on the slanted roof, stretched out,  
and reached the end of my arm to paint.

I switched the rope and ladder to the other side  
of the rooftop dormer and repeated the operation,  
and when I moved my foot, the ladder slipped,  
there was a sudden jerk, and nothing happened.

Fear might have overtaken me,  
but nothing came to mind or body.

In the moment of shock and surprise,  
with my face next to the blue metal roof,  
holding the rope in one hand, I glanced  
at my footing, pulled out a rag,  
and cleaned the streaks of spilled paint,  
I might've laughed in relief, but I didn't.

I was overridden by what didn't happen,  
and when I got back in the window,  
onto the floor, in the upstairs bedroom,  
I felt the perfect nothing of the peace  
that has no biography.

## The Congestion of Eternity

My visa needed renewal, after a week of rain,  
I went to the magistrate's office, in a new building,  
unfinished for ten years, there was standing water  
in the hallways, business-as-usual, a surreal landscape.

The building was crowded, the lawyer's office was piled  
high with papers, his inner office packed floor to ceiling,  
he was talking to a man from Africa, they were laughing,  
the lawyer took my visa and put it aside, I didn't know  
if he wanted a bribe, I wasn't well versed in the protocol  
of civil bribery.

After more conversation and laughter,  
the lawyer held my passport and laughed,  
he opened it and stamped it, all the time laughing,  
and I left, thanking the lawyer several times, *namaste,*  
*namaste,* down four flights of stairs, with laughter  
ringing in the halls, into four inches of water,  
out into the bright, noisy, crowded street.

On the first days of teaching, my brain was stacked floor  
to ceiling with papers, odd work, being a poet with a job.

When I read poems at a political rally in the 70s,  
it seemed ironic to hear poems used as a call to action,  
poetry brings everything to a halt, and then, maybe,  
something might open, poetry says, *start slowly,*  
*slow down, stop, now you're getting somewhere.*

The assistant warden asked if I was going to read  
anything subversive in the prison writer's workshop,  
*only a few poems,* I said, and then I thought,  
*there's nothing more subversive than poetry.*

The brilliant sun frees the air from its complacency,  
I have no choice in this unofficial act of surrender.

There's a story sought for everything,  
and in everything, there is no story.

## I Wince at Invisible Injuries

I feel the grip of loneliness, when I fail  
to open the aloneness that fills me,  
identity saturates my fear.

When I let go of attachment to the other,  
what feels like loss becomes fullness.

There's no familiar language for this contradiction,  
a man alone in contentment might seem self-satisfied,  
egotistical, like a drunkard's approximation of bliss,  
we don't easily trust any version of serenity.

We laud the sterile virtue of serenity,  
when rich discontent is the norm.

Satisfaction of spirit is reserved for the insane  
and the saintly, and in the querulous mind,  
a no-man's-land between them is joined.

In my desire to be in the presence of others,  
I witness the haunting shadow of aloneness,  
and that becomes the template of imagination.

I understand to the limits of my understanding,  
I can't describe the wilderness I never enter.

I miss the focus of my attachment when I miss her,  
when missing her becomes the focus of my thoughts.

I feel attached to what feels torn away,  
I wince at invisible injuries.

## Becoming Someone Made Real

Who I am is who I am, profound and ridiculous,  
this being of self inhabits and engulfs my self.

Of those who spend time with a master,  
most return to their lives unchanged.

In the presence of our eternity,  
we return to our mundanity.

We seldom leave what's familiar,  
like sailors who can't leave the sea,  
we lose the taste for the land.

One man drones on, followed by another,  
one man speaks his comfortable belief,  
another speaks a kind of assurance.

A third man risks the terror  
of meeting his unseen self,  
in his shame and degradation,  
in the foolishness of his façades.

The public lie of his life isn't his undoing,  
but the private lie of his secret pain is.

This is the path to the clearing called grace,  
a heart clogged with grand mal seizures  
becomes a heart set free in its wide expanse.

This room has comfortable furniture,  
people come and go, someone waves  
from beyond the dark glass.

Between who I am and how I am,  
I ease into being someone made real  
by the reality I bring to it, in simply being.

## A Fearful Naked Constancy

Twenty of us sit in a particular cave,  
protected from the outside by our communion,  
we share the warm fire of companionship,  
we tell our stories to each other.

Each of us has a piece of the common fear  
and its damage, we think the least and worst  
of ourselves, it becomes a kind of comfort.

I find comfort in the telling of fears, in the company  
of others, I find a reason to return to the cave, in the fear  
of living beyond fear, secure in the habit of fear's embrace.

Willingness for the worst to occur is a path to freedom,  
or it's a home away from the deepest part of the heart,  
a place to practice the rituals of my failure to become  
what I might imagine, a place where I leave my dreams,  
to visit them in the exhibit of my cherished possibilities.

Dreamers live in dreams, dream of still more dreams,  
some live in the absence of dreams, in broken dreams,  
some live in a shattered dreamscape of what cannot be.

Some invent a haven, to live at peace with bad things  
happening, a homemade heaven of earth, on earth.

Inside my fear is true escape, or I run back  
to the caves, like a prisoner of war re-captured.

I return to the welcoming arms I cannot leave,  
for fear of being free in a world beyond the cave,  
where freedom terrifies, where unprotected dreams  
come true or die, in a fearful, naked constancy.

## In the Quiet Windless Aftermath

After the hurricane between us had passed,  
I came back to poke among the ruins, looking  
for something to remind me of the possibilities.

I found, in the rubble, traces of the love that remains,  
I saw myself standing in the quiet, windless aftermath,  
a startled survivor who's flown with the cows  
and the roof and the cars.

In stillness, with the airborne flotsam and jetsam  
on the ground, I found myself grounded,  
like being dropped from the sky, intact.

In stillness, none of the anxiety remains,  
I don't run toward her or run away,  
I stand where rooms once were, where  
walls, ceilings and floors once were.

I stand where the sky remains, and the earth,  
and the air, and the stillness that didn't go anywhere.

Some part of who I am lives in the beginning,  
to live at the end, but early on, there's a drive to solidify,  
and then the wind comes howling, nature's cruel clearance  
of everything must go.

What remains has the nature of what's within,  
its character less defined, but closer to the nature  
of remaining, than to anything it might be called.

Here I find my permanence, I scan the littered landscape  
of my base, still in place, when everything else is lost.

## The Impromptu Guest

In a moment of trapped panic,  
I leap from the precipice of my life  
and live another day, and another day,  
and another, I live in increasing joy  
at the miracle of unforeseen salvation.

I fall in love with the precipitous cliff  
of my transformation, I want to repeat my leap  
in every troublesome phase of my existence,  
but whenever I get to the edge,  
I have second thoughts, of easier times.

It's a long way down, or out, or up,  
with no sure way to repeat the perfect collision  
of the desperate past and the transformed present,  
without leaping into the unknown.

I return again and again to my beloved continental shelf,  
each time wanting what happened before to happen again,  
but some of the greatest leaps are so tiny and quick,  
they're barely noticeable.

Unwilling to lose the humility I have discovered,  
in impromptu moments of ordinary life,  
I let sainthood fall where it may.

Slowly, quietly, a car turns  
in a driveway, and a light goes on.

Those inside know who's arrived,  
they reach for the knob and pull the door  
wide for the impromptu guest.

## Riding the Trees in Morgan Park

On the way to school, I walked through a wooded hollow,  
with a stream running its length, in the middle of town,  
it was wild to my eyes, you couldn't see the houses,  
and I rode the trees to the ground.

The stream was banked with saplings as thick as a boy's grip,  
we'd climb them, the weight of our bodies would bend them,  
we'd ride them to the ground on the far side of the stream,  
back and forth we rode, my friend and I, or I did it alone.

A tree might have flung me into space,  
if I was strong enough to bend it far enough,  
but the science didn't matter, it was only boys and trees,  
there was no attempt to know or learn anything.

When Frost stops by woods on a snowy evening,  
does anyone imagine the old poet in the buggy,  
or is it the reader, or is it the silence of winter?

I'm nowhere in my story, like everyone who reads,  
I walk a wooded path, I climb a silent tree, and ride.

Once in a while, a tree would crack under the weight,  
it was a thrill to risk, to fall to the bank or stream,  
the perfect excuse to run and change clothes,  
in and out of the house on a dead run,  
with no explanation but childhood.

Early wisdom learned to pick the right tree,  
one that matched its resilient resolve  
to the awakening bravado of the not yet grown,  
sapling to sapling, contestants of strength in simple joy,  
riding a whip, conquering a bow with an arrow.

That bending point, between boy and tree,  
when the tree gives, and the boy falls back to earth,  
halfway up a willow, held against the sky,  
in the moment bent to its breaking point.

## Our Fathers Before Us

Our grandfathers were our fathers,  
freed of their imagined weaknesses.

My friend went fishing with his grandfather,  
I sat in my grandfather's revered presence,  
a big man, with white hair, smoking a cigar,  
on the swing, on the porch of his house,  
in his big chair in front of his tiny television,  
he seemed an austere and royal figure.

We approach the age of our grandfathers,  
men we admired, despite our conflict with their sons,  
I wonder if my son looks past me to his grandfather,  
my father said he didn't deserve to outlive his father,  
I felt the honor shown in my father's self-denigration.

In photos, my best friend's grandfather stands  
next to his other grandson, my grandfather stands  
next to his wife, both men slightly apart from others,  
both shown in snowy weather, his grandfather stands  
with his hand on a car door, my grandfather stands  
with his hand in his pocket, the other holding his hat,  
my grandmother stands next to him, holding his arm.

We confirm something in each other, in our passage,  
as contemporaries, we drink and talk, we trade photos,  
but the stories we tell of are not the meat of our telling,  
the essential meat is not in the story, not in the telling.

From generation to generation, we pass on what has meat,  
in the recognition that sees a recognition to be recognized,  
we're carried on, as we look at these ghosts in the snow.

A fire is continued, as one old man looks across his life,  
at another old man, who looks across his, in the eyes  
of the sons of their sons, with no one between them.

## Crossing Paths on the Prairie

The sky is a washed blue gray, the hills  
are white, glistening in the sun, cut by shadows,  
broken clouds reveal the blue behind them.

In awe of being here, in nothing decided,  
I've been given this eye, to channel beauty  
back and forth across a simple knowing.

We walk in the world, represent who we are,  
when everywhere we go is a constant foraging.

We think we move the past behind as we go,  
instead we're two-way streets, four-way intersections,  
crossing paths on the prairie, the sky encircles us.

Wisdom tells us to be at home in who we are,  
yet what we tell each other ignores that reality.

A man who seems nearly broken by life,  
struggles to keep a semblance of himself,  
and his story reveals a hero's tale.

When my father died, I saw his life evaporate,  
as if he'd been living in his own shadow.

If my father had been more present,  
in any one moment I might have witnessed,  
I'd have a thousand stories to tell, but he hung back,  
content to make a fair appearance of his life.

When I commit myself completely to this flesh,  
I give my spirit a way to let itself be known.

## We Drove into Kansas

When I step out in front of myself,  
I see how far I've come,  
I once barely stood at my own side,  
I more often stood apart from myself.

I think of the father I had, who's now here in the one I am,  
it's good to see him in someone I love, it's no good to look  
in others for what only comes alive in oneself, it's good  
to see what's alive in oneself, come alive in others.

My father and I drove into Kansas, one day,  
when I was a boy, he took me along on a business trip,  
to a nearly deserted prairie town, and he left me alone  
to wander the streets.

Or, I sat in the car, or else I rode beside him,  
and I saw the lonely town, with a few buildings.

Standing on a hill, in a copse of sturdy elm,  
I wanted to dive into his body and be his flesh  
and bone, but I was his passenger, his boy,  
learning the brilliant isolation of the heart,  
I was his son.

I long for the arms of a man long dead,  
never as alive as I dreamed him, except  
when we played on the living room floor.

He was a beached whale, we three boys crawled  
over him, and when he stood, he let us climb his body  
like a tree, we laughed til we cried, these tears are his,  
this heaving chest his, this love his, I wanted the arms  
of a man, who loved me, to be my arms.

I climbed up inside the biggest tree in a small town,  
I wanted to buy the town, I was sure it was for sale.

## A Whisper in the Cacophony

Trees, barren of leaves, branches, like scratches  
on the gray plate of sky, in a warm room, looking out,  
the delicate lines are soft on a brittle day.

Painters paint spirit in their art, poets speak spirit,  
language is cruel in its stripping of the leaves,  
generous when it reveals what remains behind.

When I don't speak of love, I find it where it is,  
when I don't call the other's name, I hear the song  
of love that never leaves, the love I can't abandon,  
except in the faded love of my own abandonment.

There's no resolution sharp enough  
to make anything finally known,  
I find spirit in emptiness, I see it  
in the company of others.

In a warm room, the view  
is still, on a windless day.

Spirit binds the branches, like fresh paint  
on bare canvas, I hold my gaze on barren trees,  
I see the lines breathing, the skyward lines begin  
to sing, the mesh of lines, the still wafting lines,  
I stand on the ground, I reach into the sky,  
I draw myself from a tray of color,  
into the endless gray.

In this world of harsh abandonment  
and smothering abundance, a persistent joy  
leaps the glass and warms the sky.

## The Parody of Peace

I put it on the tongue of my heart  
to hear what my heart's been thinking.

Full of juices, near to exploding, I cinch the saddle  
of my heart, I ride my heart like a horse, I ride my heart  
at night, while I sing my songs of cowboy delight.

I met a man in India who said he understood his addiction,  
he'd drink for six months, then be sober for six months.

I met a writer in California, who suggested we divide the world  
between us, make ourselves notorious, and fame would follow.

I acted the equal of a master, and he slaughtered my thoughts  
with such alacrity, it filled my lungs and took my breath away.

When my heart is tied to its desire, I'm defeated,  
when desire distracts me from my innocence,  
I trade my peace for pieces of its parody.

## Minor Gods for the Godless and the Godly

In the desire to control everything within their range, the works of the mind are minor gods for the godless and the godly, and beliefs, that might offer a refuge from these minor gods of thought, are no protection.

If anyone believes he has the right to destroy anyone else, destruction will begin, no belief of family, tribe, or country, can protect us from the carnage lurking in our possibilities.

We imagine the death of others, and we imagine a right from that imagination, and we love ourselves for it.

It's our pride to seek the death of those we might as eagerly love, to kill is not our first thought of power, but the sanction of it, is.

Our tears for ourselves and those like us, justify what we accept in our name, this sanctioned love seeks to pardon the vengeance we take on our enemy and on the loved ones of our enemy.

Not the balance of good and evil, war is the embrace of war, those willing to die are free, those willing to kill bless war into warring without end, we take up evil to combat evil, this practiced evil becomes the attempted liberation of our own imprisoned minds, war rearranges the world and changes nothing.

In the landscape of the familiar prison of the mind, there's nothing but prison, except when its walls are no longer the satisfaction of our construction.

The evil in others is their easy construction of what we rush to build in our defense, we tear down the prison of our minds when we drop the architecture of protective imagination.

When we build a gallows, we become the hangman we fear, the murderer we execute kills our reluctance to become him, and we fulfill that part of ourselves we deny ever existed.

## Handwriting the Mist

On this foggy day, the calligraphy  
of the barren trees blurs, nothing  
in my eyes can make it clear.

I'm forced to accept its washed-out beauty,  
reconsider beauty, or open to beauty itself.

The only lover left on this island  
becomes my own self, living in love itself.

When being here is my ubiquity,  
I see I'm beloved in my own eyes.

These words are true,  
but there are no words  
for the truth of love.

I think of resorting to *she*, to reinvent a lover,  
to reduce love to an other, to redraw the trees,  
to etch them to a certain beauty, to paint  
my island to a city, to a few houses  
on a street, a house, a single room.

I look back at the trees,  
I see the fog suffuse the branches,  
I see fullness where I had seen indistinction,  
I see embrace where blurred lines  
are lost in the whole.

## The Evanescent Has No Chronicle

Snow melts, ice melts, water pools,  
desire goes away, but not its object.

Instead of desire's warm apprehension,  
I feel the empty expanse of its failure.

My forehead knots, maybe it's barometric,  
the sun is out, burning the frigid to florid,  
I gave my poems to another woman.

Shakespeare compared his love to a summer's day,  
then erased his praise, knowing love's transience,  
believing his poem the only lasting reality, more  
about death and poetry than love, yet in our love  
of the poem, we transit love to the language of love,  
then to the unspoken nature of love itself.

Evanescent love has no chronicle,  
but the chronicles of love are thought to last,  
the poet says his love can't be kept or described,  
but its occurrence can be clothed in words.

We can love the fabric of the words in love's place,  
a poem of praise to a love, that has its substance in time,  
like the beauty of a flower, becomes the vase of its love,  
with love's flower painted on its porcelain.

A small boy, living without a father, looks in my eyes,  
and some fathering is given and taken, these words  
are a token of the moment, given and taken in love.

We fashion and hold these totems to love, across  
the distance between the moments of love's presence.

We know what we love is fleeting, but love is not,  
we are its carrier, from flower to flower, in words  
told of the flower's brilliant beauty.

## The Good of Useless Prayers

In the midst of difficulties, a place of calm  
beckons, unless it becomes a complacency.

There's a fierce tranquility in facing adversity,  
until, in time, it becomes a shadow of itself.

one step leads to a half step to a stasis  
to a falling away from being alive,  
let me not slide to my demise  
in search of an ease.

I've died many times and come back,  
without the memory of my dying,  
this birth in death has no history.

When I take fear out of reality,  
what must be done can be seen.

I scattered my father's ashes in the river that ran  
by our house, and the river ran away with him.

I go to the spot on the bank where I saw him last,  
he tells me to be calm, there's no good in this anxiety,  
he no longer lives, he's become what he was  
before he was my father, before he was himself.

I put my father in the river, where he wanted to be,  
but he comes to tell me to stop this concern.

There's so much pain in the world,  
we don't know what to do but invent painful  
and pleasurable ways to end the pain.

I want my father with me, but he wants to swim,  
I seek advice, but my father won't answer me.

This grief and grievance has no grant,  
but it helps to call his name.

## Ordinary Drawings of Ordinary Objects

The nightly drop in temperature turns the thawed roads to ice, another former president has died, and in the turning of pages, we find more pages to turn, as life turns endlessly upon itself.

Old kings come round again, we see their faces in our leaders, we churn out the future of the past from the past of the future.

Beneath the showy passions of life, lies the passion ignored for the commotion on the surface, until history shows the folly of its repetition, as the air shimmers with scenery and action, every time Hamlet considers revenge, he takes revenge, every time he dies, he dies anew.

I make small drawings for my daughter's daughter, halfway round the world, she likes black ink drawings of ordinary objects on white paper, I put my pen to the surface, and a world is born.

Lines become houses, the edge of hills, a road in the center, the road reappears in the distance on the side of a mountain, a small car climbs the street to the top before plunging down the other side, a tree on one side, a cat on the other, there's a bird on the wing, one house has a door, the other house has two doors and a window.

So much happens when so little is intended, the antenna on the little car, the curl in the cat's tail, the snow on top of the mountain, my granddaughter may send her own grandchild simple drawings, my grandfather put his thumb in his fingers and said he had my nose, this last president who died was known for his pardon of the criminal he succeeded.

In a photo taken in his room in the Forbidden City, the president wears striped pajamas and moccasins, while conferring with his advisors, his wife was a dancer who became a champion of those addicted to alcohol, he was a player on a championship football team, who became a caricature of awkward clumsiness.

## Sweet Deceit

Cursed with the blessing of spirit in a body,  
I gradually weaken myself to get along with others,  
turning reality to a shared display of substitutions.

Desire to love and be loved coaxes sweet deceit,  
to wear a popular face, to think well of others,  
and when we see their deception mocking our own,  
we refuse to condemn our mutual diminishment.

Desire colors the complexion of those I want near,  
and worse, desire acts on me like an ownership,  
as if, in my desire, I presume rights over others,  
desire would give me property I might refuse,  
when, in truth, I have no right to its deed.

I'm propertied in boundless spirit, when I covet  
no other, and from this vantage, I see the compact  
of social ownership that overvalues the fields  
of my neighbors, and undervalues their essence.

In market with each other, we raise crops  
that starve the source and fail to feed the kind.

## In the Circle of My Narrowing Eye

Desire, the driving force of my attention,  
gets me to an intoxication that ignores the real.

No addiction goes, but it goes the way of all addictions,  
and in its final failure, one sees the way free.

The vision of intoxicating desire leaves the periphery unseen,  
when I might see beyond the circle of my narrowing eye,  
greater than the magnification of desire.

What comes into an open lens is attention to what's not held  
in exaggerated focus, and the object of desire reduces to its size.

When desire raises its swollen head and declares its domination,  
what might act an insult to the real, is a greater insult to sight.

Desire is the face of passion that wants to be all that passion is,  
but bedrock passion threatens superficial desire, until desire rages.

Spirit that turns from obsession to acceptance, lifting my attention  
to the wider reality, invites rebellion in the now neglected mask.

My façades build and fall away, I don't go away from what I am.

To let go of this deceit is to stand more clearly alone in the company  
of everything, to see each tree, and the forest, as well, is to stand  
alone in the presence of boundless and overwhelming beauty.

## Fall Awake

I speak of an inner landscape,  
that's no less real for seeming less real,  
I choose not to mistake reality  
for what we name as real.

I look at a thing that's not a thing,  
to describe it into gentle proximity,  
so its reality can be seen.

I see a doorknob, across the room,  
as big as a grapefruit, I see the head  
of a screw, as large as a saucer, I see a face,  
drawn larger than itself, that becomes a face  
not drawn but drawn upon, these portraits enlarge  
to an arrangement of pigmented revelation.

I see something within, become a face, to see it  
from within, not a fiction crafted from our joy  
and shared pain, but to reveal itself real.

My unseen self has no physical being, but this forensics  
of the unseen uncovers what seems less real in its camouflage,  
until what lies beneath easy seeing is lifted into recognition.

I map the character of energy, as spirit sits for its likeness,  
I see beyond the visible, not in projection but in revelation.

I tell the story of my flesh, to tell the shape of its source,  
a reality of the real that inspires and informs the portrait.

A beast, pulled from the muck, cleans its face to a beauty,  
the fanciful beast of my fears becomes a creature of courage.

I'm mistaken, at a distance from myself, to think I sleep  
in darkness, when I fall awake among the dawn.

## The Second Day in Heaven

The second day is the same as first day,  
without the same fascination, it seems impossible  
to believe the new person I was, or the new person  
I met, that first day, is still new to me, everything dies  
on the second day, unless I let dying die with it.

They said, of the teacher-saint of our religion,  
that he was human, as well as he was eternal,  
and then the human self is forgotten.

This overlay of man and god is difficult to fathom,  
there's no simple separation to make it clear, dualities  
are easier to embrace, one can move between them,  
like between one's separated mother and father.

The dawn of the first day in heaven breaks like no other,  
but the second day comes up like repetition, the second day  
is the same as the first, my mind is stuck in time, it's inclined  
to repeat any second day, as if it's nothing new.

A father moves around the table to take his daughter's picture,  
she resists, turning away from his light, no matter where he moves,  
her bright eyes go blank, then she agrees to his request, unsmiling,  
she turns to the camera and grips her juice box tight in her tiny fist.

No one's ever had his picture taken, every picture is of someone else,  
tourists take pictures of each other, no one captures the moment,  
a man's pictures of his recent trip abroad fail to convince him  
he was ever there, this poem is another bright artifact.

An ancient bowl in the museum, once infused with divinity,  
is drained of its sacred power, over time, it's become a bowl,  
and nothing more, I pick up the first day's bowl on this second day  
in my ordinary heaven, and the first day is gone, but not the one  
who invests it with the divine.

## Between Small Dark Towns in Illinois

In a familiar room, tired of its familiarity,  
I think to think away from it, instead, I think  
to that part of the room that has no familiarity,  
more familiar than anything I know on its face.

The greater part of this unknown reality  
fills the room with my disappearance,  
that takes the place of everything  
that takes place within it.

My uncle came back from the slaughter of war,  
a changed man, never fully present in his life,  
again, until he was dead in a crash.

He drove his car off a bridge,  
flew a few hundred feet in the air,  
and landed in the night against a riverbank  
between small dark towns in Illinois.

He was in the ice cream business,  
engaged to a woman who loved him,  
but life had ended around him,  
so many times, in such hurtful ways,  
he couldn't be free of it.

It's not hard to believe  
his death was not accidental,  
that he drove his car into a room  
where he was finally happy  
to be alive.

## The Old Building Burned to the Ground

My friend's shop and gallery burned to the ground,  
life is what you expect it to be, and then one day,  
nothing is the same, and never will be, again.

He held images of the current war alongside the loss  
of his business, everyday life is war time in slow time.

The old dairy building, home to artisans,  
was a local landmark, a genial gathering place  
of disparate souls, engaged in their chosen work.

I took pictures, as it burned,  
and when it was a bin of charred ruins.

The capable firemen never set foot in the building,  
instead, they poured water in from trucks, in fat hoses,  
breaking the windows, until the roof collapsed,  
its wooden beams burned for hours.

In war and everyday life, we see terrible death,  
relentlessly ignorant of our worth and our compassion,  
we wonder about those who survive such cruel absurdities  
with their sanity intact, how do they continue to be sane,  
despite our presumed supremacy over the rampantly  
meaningless, they do it by the gift of their breathing.

My ex-lover's daughter died too soon,  
it became an endless war of dying,  
everyday, the same young woman  
was killed before it could be accepted.

She was killed, again and again, by cruel death  
in the mind of her mother, who watched death  
live in her child, who saw death take and retake  
her child's life, who danced on the edge of sanity.

Transient death comes and goes, like bullets in the air,  
we're given to smell the unbroken air between the bullets,  
and breathe it in.

## The Moment of Chancy Death

The random speed of war feeds the recognition of arbitrary death, without cessation, the sudden, prolonged occasion of reality, insistent, unrelenting, that comes without explanation, or alternative.

One man in the factory, after the Big War, said he was taught to kill, but not how to stop.

He said they swept him up and threw him in the war, and then they threw him back out again.

He said he loved his family, but he couldn't feel that love, he couldn't stop fighting, and years later, he was still fighting.

Peace is time and space between separate wars, we fill the space to avoid the inescapable reality, we're expected to live in peace in the illusion of war, to walk away from the truth of war itself, not to look back on what we might have seen, or what we might have been in the seeing.

Between wars, in no war raging, with no illusion but the constant reality of life and death, we have the luxury to embrace.

This time out is no end of cruel awareness, but a place for the embrace of our absence, greater than our gloried occupation of destruction, this is the open moment of that enclosing truth.

Some never feel more alive than when death is their partner, not that death is such a good dancer, it's not death, that teaches the amazing purity of existence, but the absence of life's illusion.

The moment of chancy death is the same as this prolonged presence of life's reality.

## A Small Bird Perched in a Bare Tree

A small bird perched in a bare tree, basking  
in the bright sun, as if attending to an errand  
or waiting for a sign from some other bird.

He doesn't do anything, as far as I can tell,  
not being learned in the habits of small birds  
in bare trees, I begin to feel impatient.

A slight wind vibrates the tree, I wonder  
if the bird might be doing the tree a favor,  
I don't know what relationship they have,  
tiny claws could be nurturing the growth  
of the twiggy branch, then the bird is gone.

A man walks close to the tree, and the bird takes wing,  
as small birds do, as if flung into the air, swiftly aloft.

My love is with the wind and the bird on the wing,  
as it is with the tree and its budding branch.

Now the tree seems companion to the wind  
and not the bird, now the bird has flown,  
the tree reveals the presence of the invisible,  
where a moment before, the presence of the bird  
had my eye on the bird and its place in the tree.

Absence of the other frees my eye to the unseen, to witness  
the nature of present love, in the wind house of my unseen self.

## On the Mesa of America

People walk to their cars on the mesa of America,  
this flat, open vista on the world.

Living on the prairie, people think nothing  
of driving sixty miles, when they can see that far.

When the sky is high, people walk  
to their waiting cars and drive away.

I am less alone in the open heart,  
than I am in the company of those  
who feel the burden of being alone.

The rancher on his spread, alone by habit,  
belongs to his conglomerated self,  
his bonds are heightened by his aloneness,  
his family rides the fence line with him,  
he returns to what he never leaves.

When I first heard it said a certain guru  
was never born, never died, it angered me,  
of course he was born, of course he died,  
but his footprint was illusion, except  
to the reality in which he walked.

There's wisdom in these windswept steppes,  
an abiding impermanence that drives many  
into huddled masses of polite strangers.

Space breaks our vision open to the horizon,  
where no end is in sight, despite living in houses  
built on shifting sand under high skies of clouds  
like homes of our imagination.

Residence is identity, nothing comes with us  
but what we bring to this residential moment.

I come alone to the future,  
I walk to my car and drive away.

## The License of Life

When I say I'm alone, to whom do I speak,  
when by the nature of speaking, I'm not alone?

We are all of us, at heart, an exchange of listeners,  
these words are the chronicles of stillness, the quietest,  
strongest words are listening inside themselves, we listen  
to what speaks within, to hear what cannot be said.

Speaking silence reveals the effort of speaking,  
as in speaking to a meaning, we listen for the voice  
of listening, we look to see the eyes that witness.

To look in the world is looking to a purpose,  
to witness is receiving with one's eyes.

My body is prepared for action, or it's at peace  
in the fullness of its being, in the readiness to act.

In a world of doing, there's no loss in being a witness,  
no loss in being aware of those who feign stillness.

Those who pose at peace listen for the moment  
of their self-assertion, when to witness oneself,  
in being itself, is unknown and unpredictable.

To be compelled by the force of my being,  
is to live in the unrestricted license of life.

## The Calm That Caused It

The wind is at rest at its source,  
Aolis emerges from a cave of calm.

Undefined by what I become,  
I fall into a turbulence and claim  
its serene identity as my own.

I demand inhalation,  
and exhalation marks my way.

In the stillness between breaths,  
I look back and forth across the gap,  
until I no longer distinguish myself from either,  
I fall into the center of my unregulated being.

People move about in their wrappings,  
I see them by their layers of color.

There's an identifying kindness,  
in what I am, in a room of others,  
without knowing, or needing to know,  
who anyone says or thinks they are.

In order to place myself among others,  
I share a delight in their variety.

In the wind is the calm that caused it,  
no cause you say, it's just as well.

In the calm is the wind it causes,  
no cause you say, it's just as well.

## The Dogs of the Desert

Pulled over beside the road in the dark,  
the crunch of gravel gives way to the night.

I listen for the howling of beasts, as quiet fills my ears  
like water fills compartments of a submerging submarine,  
I sink into the earth, below everything that moves  
in the fearless peace.

Here, where the road runs by, like memory and desire,  
at ease, with the engine off, with nothing running  
but the heart, my blood moving in its course.

Everything is within reach, nothing lies outside such silence,  
on this night beside the road, in the desert's dark embrace,  
the dogs of the desert come out of the desert at dawn.

I attribute love to being with those I live among,  
I start the car and regenerate the gravel.

On the road, again, I see I'm still the same  
as when I'm crowded together in love.

## The Grace of Another's Need

She needed me, and I turned away,  
unsure of my place in her need.

Unwilling to show her need, she turned away  
from my sight, and was gone from the moment,  
I was helpless to taste the grace of her need.

In our abundance, we make our need unnecessary  
and unwelcome, even as we commit our attention  
to the devastated and the dying.

I imagine a look in her eyes that might grant a way  
to the interior, a reaching outside of care for its companion,  
in the kindness of needing another's care and kindness.

Having no need for need is another deprivation,  
when we might open need to its place in our happiness.

Self-strength holds no door for kindness,  
being kind is sidelined to noisy charity.

An old woman sits with another old woman  
in the quiet of their age, and love abides.

In the peculiar prosperity of our lives,  
nature drops us into degrees of ourselves  
we're willing to avoid, in our emergence.

I see what seemed of little use,  
the practice of a common kindness,  
not rushing to the aid of infirmity and weakness,  
but in our simple being with each other in calm regard.

I offer my heart, in its humility, to inherit the earth  
of another open, humble heart.

## The Autobiography of Blood

Practical considerations take the place of everything in their wake, one goes looking for a missing thing, and ends up organizing the house.

When a man's business burns, his heart may be brought to zero, to no longer go where his accounts keep him from himself, considerations don't care for the open future, the dissolution of concern, or the need to be alone with no business to conduct.

I suggested my friend rent space for his work in the movement of human bodies, directing them back to stasis and impulse, as if he were a lawyer, hanging out his shingle.

I realized my mistake, when I proposed for him a place of commerce for the shaping of breath, the inventory of muscle, the autobiography of blood, and the encouragement of flight.

I knew it when he said, *well, you and I...*

It woke me, I was talking to him, as if I were giving myself bad advice, calling the cadence for a march into the commercial and practical.

Walking off into the dawn, with no map of the east, is the only function for the real, the rest is concern for consideration, we succeed, whenever we fail to advertise what's not for sale, at such a price.

## The Calendar of Creation

The sun's glare has character, it glints and reflects,  
highlights and washes away, the hillside loses depth  
of color, burnt away in the brightest light.

Points of fire mark the corners of metal roofs,  
people lower their brims and consider  
their misplaced faith in destiny.

The young have time to let their lives play,  
under the sun of their destiny, but destiny  
washes away the moment of life, draining  
its color when its glare burns, overhead,  
or in the reflection of a mirror.

The absence of destiny also has character,  
turning my silhouette to shadow, to reflection  
in a cloudy glass, I can't see myself, outside myself.

The sun of my being is within who I am,  
with no orchestration or expectation,  
where nothing is bound to occur, and nothing  
prevents anything from being or coming,  
it is the unknown, bred with the not yet known.

Destiny organizes the journey toward its arrival,  
a destiny of having nothing destined does the same.

A destiny, of having no destined day, opens the day to itself,  
I'm destined to this moment, something destined tells me I am.

The best destiny is hindsight among the wonders of the day,  
when whatever is still to come is lit by the returning sun,  
and nothing is named by the calendar of creation.

## The Praise of Present Joy

We walk out of ourselves, displaced by change,  
unfamiliar with what we're not, we walk in rubble,  
looking for what survives, so little changes,  
in a world of unceasing change.

Kick us out, burn us down,  
destroy the present as past,  
the barren future is closer to the bone  
than what we've been or done.

A woman's thick hair lifts  
in the wind around her head,  
like an island rising out of the sea,  
she gets in her car and buckles up,  
checks the traffic and pulls into the road.

Change hones us to our essential selves,  
any true change is an increase in clarity.

A man leaves his heater on a mattress,  
and a small world burns to the ground,  
dozens are thrown out of a kind of home.

Nothing of the certain is lost in destruction,  
like a fraction of war, some people wander,  
lost in themselves, sometimes until death.

The kindness of our greatness lives on,  
we bear our losses to a painful advantage,  
even in death, never-ending cleaner of lives.

Masterpieces burn, and we invent the charred art  
of what's burned in memory, nothing we fancy  
is little more than present in our presence.

When we celebrate what's to come  
or what came before, even in that distraction,  
we let loose the praise of present joy.

## The Roar of the Ant Lion

My body falls into itself, to be drawn back  
to its periphery by nearly impossible forces,  
nothing can prevent its ultimate dissolve.

The ant lion digs a hole and hides beneath the pit,  
its pincer the only part showing, until passing ants  
lose ground to the center, caught and devoured  
by the waiting predator.

If the prey escapes the jaws of the ant lion,  
trying to climb the precipitous walls of the sand pit,  
the ant lion casts showers of sand to dislodge its climb,  
until it falls helpless to its demise, my brother and I talk  
about our father, as if we might defame or insult him,  
as if he were here, in the next room, and not gone  
these many years forever.

When our father died, I imagined his sudden absence,  
like an erasure, his rich and colorful character, erased  
like memory, like wood is forgotten by fire.

If a man's mind can lose its own storage,  
where is his presence in the body,  
the shape we give our formless being  
belies our periphery, there is no edge to us.

Everything I forget of my father is not what remains,  
we were parts of one being, broken apart by time and space,  
I cherish his being, when nothing of his shape remains,  
I feel compelled to let myself go, as I've done with my father,  
I hold him in effigy, as long as I hold myself in time.

Twins enter, dressed as unlike each other as strangers,  
what conjoined reality between them goes unexpressed,  
only their difference is noticeable, we're all of us twins  
of the inexpressible, yet we cling to our differences,  
making outfits of our singularity, I die not away  
from my father but toward him, I only mimic his  
character in my transient, fantastic existence.

## Pulling the Heads Off Grasshoppers

Driving across the roof of the world  
is the same as driving across its floor,  
over the pass, through the valley,  
I feel a certain sadness in the rain.

Something in the body tells me of something else,  
I come home over the same ridge that thrills me  
when I see it from my house, now in the distance,  
riding the back of the ridge, it carries no distant thrill.

A man in the wilderness pulls the head off a grasshopper,  
pulls its stomach with it, cooks and eats a delicacy of necessity,  
I drove many miles to stand in line next to someone I know,  
the back of my hand has become familiar topography.

To know myself is to know what no longer needs to be known,  
I move to the known of the unknown and then leave that behind.

Attention no longer goes to learning the unfamiliar heart,  
what's certain no longer requires training in dangerous terrain.

Being with a certain lover was driving faster than wise,  
attuned to a fearful anticipation, a false excitement,  
learning too rapidly what didn't need to be learned,  
being afoot in the desert without a way of return,  
experience teaches its own eager history of self.

Falling back into the speed of being present in life,  
the past at ease with itself and the future quietly silent,  
time opens its pages for reading by moonlight.

Experience becomes kindling in a fire that tells the beasts  
to keep their careful distance, it tells my heart to sleep.

Now time has no anxious anticipation, fear folds into itself,  
what remains lies coiled at the ready, a light behind the night.

## My Brother Runs Near a Sunny Beach

The ground is frozen, as if the ice were centuries old,  
layer upon layer, like sheathes of opaque facade.

Walking is a careful venture, getting to the car an event,  
going in a store becomes calculated, arriving becomes  
an accomplishment of a multitude of fears and feats,  
this frigidity affects who we are, in how we are.

In history, another dictator has been put to death,  
so far from our lives, it barely merits comment.

My brother runs near a sunny beach,  
my hands tighten in a grip not my own,  
I think it may be the onset of arthritis,  
or I'm being frozen from within.

My lyrical ears want its cause to be  
the absence of romantic, physical love.

Whatever occurs is the grist for whatever mill  
that grinds in whatever moment of time I live.

It's been cold, long enough, for the cold  
to become what operates in everything else.

An empathetic teacher told an earnest man  
his physical pain needed to be taken care of,  
before he'd be free to recognize his freedom.

My brother runs near a sunny beach,  
here, the sun diffuses to a crystalline gray.

This last summer I lived in a torrent of desire,  
it was a fire I danced around and through,  
it could have been the summer sun  
that heated my passion.

We are simple creatures, living  
in the temperature of our lives.

## Nostrils Flare in the Vigorous Air

It's a mountain wind  
that blows in the bright sun,  
that takes nothing from the body,  
like being near a rocky wall or glacial waters,  
it leaves the clean edge of seeing things  
for what they are, with nothing in the air  
to cloud the senses.

Pollution creates texture of a different beauty,  
my brother's friend drove him to a ridge above the city,  
a vast panorama spread below and beyond, in a valley  
thick with the exhalation of millions, *look how beautiful it is*,  
his friend said, indicating the stagnant sky with a sweep.

The setting sun lit the crowded canvas of purple, red,  
orange, and yellow, a conflagration of unnatural riches  
for the eye's parochial imagination.

How beautiful is our crowded, private sky,  
when no crisp wind blows away unmixed thoughts.

In the feelings of our accumulated days,  
we thicken ourselves to a kind of beauty,  
until it's what we see where we see greatness,  
and even our alarms become artfully designed.

Books are written and cultures defined,  
faces see beauty in their kind, what's born  
of what we love bears us to another generation,  
the more we add, the more we claim for ourselves.

Nothing, within what I think I am, is strange,  
I even make a home, in my conflicted air,  
for everything I say I'm not.

It's a bracing wind that blows in the brilliant sun,  
that takes nothing away from the mind or the body,  
nostrils flare in the vigorous air, the sky is fresh seen,  
for the home of beauty, unclouded by its residue.

## The Joy of Being Seen

Raised unseen, in the way we're all raised unseen,  
I learned to be seen for the masks I wore.

I learned to live in the pains and pleasures of being seen,  
not for myself, but for what I might project of myself.

I learned to be seen for what I was in the eyes of others,  
until I began the pursuit of being seen for true, by god  
and man, and myself, to reveal the real within.

I saw myself in the eyes of the inherent,  
where there's no seer and no seen but in being,  
but my ancient habit, of not being seen for true,  
limited the time and place of my revelation.

I sought to be seen as the unseen self I saw,  
but the unseen has no sight in familiar eyes.

My unshown face had no self  
in the masquerade of meeting others,  
so I began to trust the act of simple nakedness,  
what I once took for the face of love in others,  
to accept love as the easy absence of masks,  
I sought to accept the pleasure of being seen,  
in the love of my lover's naked masquerade.

To be unmasked of the lover's model is to accept  
only what can be seen by the unseen in all of us,  
beneath and beyond what we wear as ourselves.

I think of one who was afraid of being naked,  
I thought her nakedness could have become the absence  
of a mask, that might have begun a time of no more masks,  
but she was unprepared to be unafraid of that revelation.

The joy of being seen begins in the terror  
of being seen, no matter how thin the veil.

## The Armies of Lesser Thought

A woman with whom I had the most difficulty,  
has found another with whom she's at ease,  
and an anchor rises from the deep of my waters.

Some man has taken my place in my mind,  
freeing it from the file of failure I keep,  
whenever I think I'm untrue to my being.

This habit of mind, to make a thing done badly,  
of what could never be, haunts the mind that makes it.

Three parts of the ghost live on, in its habit, in the mind  
that carries it, in making a whole from no part of it.

My place, in a place that has no place for me,  
becomes a persistent ghost of its imagined self.

In the greater of this lesser reality, is the force  
of being a creature of the mind, to make of myself  
an entity and cling to that belief, then to imagine  
my place among others, as if these occurrences  
had substance, a rocky outcropping imagined  
into the prow of a ship of love.

In relation to others, I construct fortifications  
of thought, manned by armies of even lesser thought,  
or I live in the reality of what's real, and happiness  
blooms in the light, I grin at the news of an old lover's  
new life, my chest swells with fresh breathing.

I see how bound I am to the pretense  
of these rocky ships of love.

The false glue of desire binds its objects,  
in this self-imagining realm of relative realities.

## Caverns of Delicate Intricacy

After a long spell of chilling cold,  
in the midst of a heavy fog,  
the town woke to a sparkling scene,  
with every tree's branches covered  
with a delicate white fur of frost,  
with car antennas, plants,  
and power lines coated,  
the streets appear as caverns  
of delicate intricacy.

There must have been a breeze  
that lifted the frost to these angles,  
individual branches are coifed in white,  
extending a million white wings,  
and dreary history is transformed to beauty,  
the dirty face of unbroken cold is coated  
with fresh white, its cheeks powdered,  
its charm restored.

The gravity of being has a greater endurance  
than my epiphanies, I fall in and out of love,  
I blame nothing or no one for dragging me down  
to my cold condition, I retire to the familiar.

To live in love's long epiphany  
is to accept the spontaneity  
of the endless unknown,  
a perilous perfection.

The fog, at night,  
dulls the newly wonderful catastrophe,  
but its beauty remains in place, until morning,  
and another century of miracles follows the dawn.

## In Simple Grace

A barefoot worker came to our rooms  
to clean, he swept the apartment  
with a short, natural broom.

Silent, light, swift, in no hurry,  
with the movement of a dancer,  
without excess, he finished the job,  
picking up the wispy debris  
with his fingers.

Collecting the scraps of refuse,  
he elevated a mundane task to its beauty.

It wasn't work, or a performance  
for reward, it didn't demean his station,  
it undefined him from caste or caricature.

Lifting the detritus of our rooms  
with his long, narrow fingers  
was not an act of simple grace,  
it was simple grace performing an act.

It could have been any other act in its place,  
he was a man in whom grace occurred.

It lifted me to wonder itself,  
nameless, pointless, indescribable,  
and now I've lessened it to details,  
as if it were something that happened.

A photograph, or these words,  
might seem picturesque or the telling  
of another culture, one can't claim  
the moment by describing it.

Better to forget everything but simple grace,  
without a graceful thought to take its place.

## Beauty Accumulates to Calamity

The beauty of the recent frost  
accumulates to calamity,  
the fog that sits in the valley  
begins to burden lines and branches,  
everything hangs in the balance,  
waiting for worse.

A rancher walks his fence,  
clearing the frost from the electric lines,  
so his bulls won't run the range,  
they hear the coyotes howling at night.

People continue to kill each other,  
we continue to fortify our insanity.

We forbid aggression, then reward it,  
we elevate existence to the sacred,  
then debase it, we kill to maintain  
the illusion of our benevolent sanctity.

An atmosphere of dull dread hangs in the air,  
like a barometric prison, it is the unhappiness  
of molecules who live inside the acceptance  
of cruelty that's practiced in the name  
of what we honor.

No one is truly threatened until the knife  
is at his throat, the prevention of assault  
occurs before its attempt, too late for the cure,  
and then we make retaliation mandatory.

The foolishness of willfulness is circular,  
no one wins when anyone thinks of winning.

No one wins in any of the wars between my selves,  
until winning has no more credibility than losing.

## The One Who's Left When Everyone Has Left

I chase myself down to become who I am,  
not to become a part and call it the whole,  
or to play a role that feels good or right,  
but to clear the layers, until my identity  
is identical to nothing but itself.

I act on a crowded stage, with other actors  
jammed together in a small space, sending one  
after another off, until I see a drama with characters  
in dialog, in scene after scene of conflict and resolution,  
reduced to monologue, then splitting into dialog,  
then reducing to itself, again and again.

A narrator seems useful, then new characters  
appear, then nothing, a silence, stillness.

Then the empty stage, the character of space,  
the presence of being and not being,  
all to discover the voice of emptiness,  
within whom the play is written.

To be alive is to listen for the voice  
that has no other voice competing with it,  
to hear the voice that stands alone  
without primacy, the voice  
of the aloneness at the center.

To be alive is to hear the voice  
that remains when everyone's gone,  
when everyone, who might be listening,  
is embodied by the darkness, to be the one  
who's left when everyone's gone home  
to their place in themselves.

## Never Only a Life

To be in a room with my old desires  
is to feel the mind pulled to a crescent,  
a pincer of pain, of resurgent emotion,  
to be in a room with my old pain is to be  
in the open grave of the resurrected  
pleasure and pain of desire.

The mind holds images of pleasurable pain  
like a passport to what no longer lives.

To revisit the grave of pain is to resurrect its life,  
to prolong what's been shortened to the past.

Life that depends on the resurrection of the dead,  
brings forward what wants to recede to ground.

Jesus meant to say, *I was never born, I never died,*  
but he was taken to mean he was returned  
from the dead.

To resurrect the dead keeps alive the pain of dying,  
to be born again denies the life that never dies.

I can't stay in the room of the past,  
I can't hold the pain of desire, and live.

I leave the room of the pleasure  
of the pain of the desire of the past.

I've never been to the grave,  
I'll never go there.

This being has no need to be born,  
or die, or be born again.

I live, in my being who I am,  
in this being, that is never only a life.

## I Wipe My Eyes With Words

I invite myself to this arrival,  
the way my eyes teach their tears.

My shoulders shake like oxen shed their flies,  
their sweat, their yoke, I wipe my eyes with words.

My father would retreat to the basement,  
when it was time to say goodbye to anyone he loved.

His way of loving was to leave its expression,  
he couldn't show how much he loved everyone.

Whenever anyone left, he was left behind, in hiding,  
I take up these habits, without having a habit for them.

I teach myself, in speaking what I wasn't taught,  
I teach myself, in speaking what I never learned.

I learn, by walking into the faith of not knowing,  
a constant arrival, where I've always having been.

I learned everything my father taught me,  
I learned what he didn't admit he was teaching,  
I learned what he didn't know he knew,  
I learned the secrets his ignorance tried to mask,  
I learned his unseen self.

I became the son of his shackled failures,  
I became the son of his inescapable perfection.

## The Frightened Lover

Winter fades to a dullness,  
no painter would come here for the light,  
the day wanders though itself like anonymity,  
without purpose, unchallenged, vaguely content.

These are not bad days to be at peace,  
when peace appears in the absence of fervor.

A circus strongman, in a surreal, deserted landscape,  
seethes with anger, until he kills a man who tried  
to be a lover to the woman he'd kept for himself.

Any lover, in this long winter's landscape,  
is at a loss, but not insane.

Love born of the spirit walks quietly,  
until it meets a similarity.

The lover in my heart trims the soles of his shoes,  
until bare ground is underfoot, and the heart  
turns to its purpose, in the passage of peace.

The fertility of peace is underestimated,  
when pain and conflict stir the creative  
to new contemplations of pain and conflict.

Peace is disguised by a shroud of doubt, we ask  
how any good can come of such a vast nothing.

The last days of winter are flat, gray, dead to the eye,  
one can feel the ground moving out of its own way.

## Slender Limbs

My friend felt a disquiet, so he built a gallery in his studio,  
a compact room with a door, four walls, a few paintings,  
with slender limbs of trees across the top.

To enter such an open room was an honor, to be one  
to whom art is revealed, to stand in the company of art,  
like those who meet at a small party, getting to know  
one another, in a room of love's possibility.

Feeling unsettled, he wakes in the night,  
and performs an exercise, a meditation,  
that takes him into the life of the body.

Then he sleeps, until he wakes for tea with his wife,  
he quotes Chesterton on the sense of something  
present in the room, neither coming nor going.

He squints and gapes, sprawls and jumps,  
he contemplates a long room for poetry,  
for those who are interested in listening,  
for those who speak to those who listen.

He holds poems up to the light like fabric, like maps,  
like bones, like babies, like a handful of power.

His movements tend toward dance, a piece  
of crumpled paper in the corner is a dance.

Something needs to be out of place, for one  
to dance, something needs to be asleep, for one  
to dance well, nothing needs to be, for one to be.

## The Eyes of Its Own Arrival

The hills are the bare backs of beasts,  
bears, whales, encrusted, frosted in time.

The fruition of life is its own fulfillment,  
but if I dwell on that being done,  
the difficulties outweigh the reality.

If you choose a path that few others choose,  
you'll see others unwilling to welcome the choice.

It's a pastime of common attention  
to live in a world that defines a choice,  
that seems separate, as an act of separation.

I seek, by stepping aside, to bridge the separation  
I never sought, in the fulfillment of my inherent self.

The organic doesn't reject the organ,  
fulfillment raises itself to its own height.

I look for recognition in the eyes of others,  
but the genuine is seen most clearly  
in the eyes of its own arrival.

## Pollock Was a Painter

Jackson Pollock was a painter, pretending to be a painter, drinking, fucking, fighting, painting, talking, he tried to act like a regular guy with his family.

Then one day, he became a painter, he couldn't go back to playing one, he'd become one, some might say it's what killed him, to become the one he'd been imitating in himself.

He was odd in his family, it's what they expected, he acted like an artist and dressed the part, but he was still odd to himself and everyone around him.

*I would like to lie in the pool of your body,  
I think, looking at a certain woman.*

We play roles akin to the reality we scarcely recognize, until we begin to play who we are, unknown by others.

An artist buys an artist's brush at the artist's market, then, one day, he becomes an artist, and in the first stroke of his transformation, everything before is swept away.

My desire to be with a woman is a role I play, until it becomes how I am seen, nearly who I am.

I play the role of a lover, living in the heart of love, and then, one day, I become what I approximate, in the center of what now becomes periphery.

My objects lose their objectivity, including how I live my art.

## Nothing Happens in Love

Nothing happens in love,  
a room is lifted from its contraries,  
to be set back down in the same place,  
transcendent, with the furniture missing.

I see you, without seeing you, the way I saw you,  
I see you, the way the light sees what it falls upon.

The trance of love plays a surrogate for love, it becomes  
a way of being, but being doesn't need any way to be.

Someone says we are love itself,  
it becomes a paradigm of the love  
we define, away from itself.

The pursuit of love is a fraud for love itself.

We humans woke at the dawn of reality,  
we noticed something, so we gave it a name,  
and we began to pursue what was already true.

One morning I loved, and I was loved,  
and nothing occurred, except there was  
nothing between us to name it love.

## The Sweet Absence of Another's Nearness

I might wish there was a god or a lover  
in my immediate heaven, but I don't surrender  
who I am, for the absence of someone to love.

All day, all night, every day, every night, I don't surrender  
who I am for the sweet absence of another's nearness.

No lover, no god, I won't give up what I have, for what  
I don't, there's nothing missing in what only seems missing.

No god, no lover comes to me in the night, no god,  
no lover, reassures me or promises me better than this.

I'm left with everything I might imagine from them,  
to discover their presence, here, in this simplicity.

I might wish there was a god in my immediate heaven, when  
what I imagine missing is only missing in my wishing for it.

What's between my reality and the reality of everything real,  
is nowhere to be seen and present as the air I breathe.

## A Long Flatbed Truck

A long, flatbed truck in a wet mud lot,  
a section of sheet metal, twisted and curled,  
like a strip of roof, blown off to be discarded.

The town is visited by actors, coaches, and directors,  
creative people, in a profession made of the beauty  
of their presence, it is their protection and freedom,  
to make of themselves a profession.

A paper towel is stuck in a pocket,  
like a decorative handkerchief.

After we learn to walk, we learn a way to walk,  
we learn a way of walking that brings a certain attention,  
still, we walk from here to there, a means of transportation.

One lovely girl, unsure of the face she was born to wear,  
distorts it in the way she sucks a straw, jerks her womanly body  
like a rag doll, coolly watches those around her, with no child present  
in her manner, the low clouds bank the hills, the hills front the clouds.

A young man, with the face of a line-drawing, calls out the time,  
everyone laughs and leaves, there's too much definition in sight,  
before the self has seen its face, grown beyond its growing.

The brilliant light reveals the structure of the dark,  
the inherent has the patience of the absence of time.

## A Passing Paradise in an Endless Sea

My habits have their way with themselves,  
personality is the calcification of character,  
characteristics build on themselves,  
like coral islands of once-living cells,  
to make a passing paradise in an endless sea.

Knowing what goes to make this thing  
of a life doesn't lessen my love of it.

Imagine a god who fashions a universe  
of painfully sharp objects and luscious beauty,  
imagine knowing it's all come from nothing  
and will return there, one dayless day,  
imagine knowing the source of knowing  
is better known when it's unknown.

A boy, one of the children of another player,  
as small as a lemur on a leafy branch,  
comes to the field and sits on the fifty-yard-line  
in the grass, he sinks into its green embrace.

The wind comes up so powerful,  
it changes the temperature by twenty degrees,  
and the boy curls into his own legs.

Another man shouts to his son, a small copy of himself,  
*it's time to go home*, and the boy comes running.

We divine ourselves in reproduction, nothing more  
is needed to accomplish the wondrous.

Those, who live without children, brave the singularity  
of their experience, living out our common, ordinary divinity.

## The Fine Point of the Soul

My brain is full of fumes, I'm tired, I swore  
I wouldn't do anything to blunt the fine point  
of my soul, what Keats called the effect of society.

A teacher said there were no wise men living  
in the caves in the mountains, that the only place  
to live free is here, in the marketplace, everywhere.

Keats admired the energy of a fight in the street,  
below his window, in the crowded, noisy city,  
but he moved to the country.

He moved to the center of his being a poet,  
he moved to the center, of his being, a poet.

He gave up the life of his ambition  
and took up the life of his wonder.

The closer I am to the center, the stronger  
I am in the reach of the center, the farther  
I go from the center, the weaker I am  
in its broken reach.

I run out to my fingertips, and all I feel  
is their whorl, I run deep within myself,  
at a fearful distance from my hands,  
and I gain their touch.

To be human is to be an instrument,  
to be true to oneself is to be a musician,  
to be true to being itself is to be the wind.

The fine point of one's soul is where the music  
has yet to become a shape in its sound,  
in the ground beneath its emergency.

# Dance Across Montana

for Nicki Giovanni at Virginia Tech

A couple dances in Montana, her small arms  
go up his back, and her hands dance across Montana,  
their feet shuffle, in loose unison, in the dance of easy lovers.

She turns and walks across Montana, a wide, soft smile  
on her face, he watches the air she leaves behind,  
with Montana in his happy eyes, and neither  
leaves the state of their union.

With burnt yellow clouds above the ridge,  
the east turns to shadow, deep furrows darken,  
the hillside takes the shape of bodies reclining,  
the bodies of the earth, as close as kin,  
are in the things that bring us to love,  
nameless, before we name them.

The clean air treats everything with respect,  
the lines are lean, the colors light and strong,  
distance doesn't run away from anything,  
I used to live in that house, on that hillside,  
the one where I used to live and never go,  
since then, when I moved away, to stay.

Dozens die in a senseless show of rage,  
and in the aftermath, a famous poet says,  
*we don't know what to do, we can't explain it,*  
*we will survive, we will thrive, we're alive,*  
and her voice rises above the grieving.

Not one to be taken down by the blows  
that took so many lives, the poet speaks  
for those who don't know what to say,  
*we're one, we're one together, we're undone,*  
*and we begin again, together,* a shout follows,  
like joy lifts a broken heart, to fill it,  
with its beginning.

## The Easy Escape from Nirvana

We escape the reality of our existence,  
clinging to any passing thought or action,  
any version of our condition is more welcome  
than this nirvana, this grace, this heaven,  
this reality that has no teeth for our neck.

As soon as I speak about this unspoken reality,  
I show a film of the tropics, an album of photos,  
*look how beautiful, how serene, how peaceful, how rich,*  
*how stirring,* yet as soon as I live what I am,  
I forget its name.

We say we love each other,  
and avoid the true nature of love,  
I fashion a model of love from what I avoid,  
I go looking for its match in those I might love,  
the same as I do with this moment of being,  
it seems easier to worship replicas.

Instead of this joyfulness, I'm concerned  
with what has its teeth in my neck,  
it's been a part of me for so long,  
I can't remember when it wasn't true.

Carl Jung told his patient, Roland,  
*you're a dipsomaniac, a drunk, you need*  
*a transformative awakening, I can't help you,*  
*there's no way to achieve what you need, goodbye.*

There's no way to be free, this teaching  
has no history, no master and no secret,  
concealed or revealed, it is its possibility.

On the boat back to the States, Roland found  
his impossible awakening, becoming awake,  
within himself, with no help from anyone,  
in the truth of his hopeless condition,  
being human beyond his being human.

## The Ascent of the Descent

Grace and gravity belong to everyone,  
in the practice of our being with words.

The first leap in learning  
is learning to speak from silence.

Poetic language stirs skepticism,  
*Poets make obscure what should be easy,  
truth and beauty should not be difficult.*

A tin miner approached Neruda  
and said, *you must speak for us,  
who cannot speak for ourselves.*

Neruda didn't know  
he was so needed to speak,  
in the common language,  
what's uncommon,  
in the telling of the untold,  
in the saying of the unsaid.

A poet is called to go  
into the earth of our being,  
and return with the beauty  
and the truth of it, in words  
that match the ascent of the descent,  
in some way that molds the tin  
to its purpose.

## She Put Her Hand on His Head

My friend spent a day with an old love,  
to make new what had never been made old.

The years left them unchanged in the heart,  
their reunion was kinder, no less a recognition.

She put her hand on his head, her touch erased thought  
from his mind, most touch is caressing and holding,  
but some touches the core.

His friend was never not his friend,  
brief lovers, it wasn't what made them friends,  
and being friends didn't make them lovers,  
they were always neither and both.

An acquaintance, in her loving nature,  
put her hand on my back, without intent,  
and I felt the flower of a certain heaven,  
a kind of bonding, of what's missing,  
with what takes away the missing.

A wise and kind old man put his hands on my face,  
my controversies were concluded across the decades,  
some touch jumps the physical, thoughts of it are useless,  
the taste of such a delicacy erases the thought of hunger.

What reaches me in my body makes it less a body,  
makes me more than a body, after being touched  
to this lovely embrace, I don't readily let it go.

I put my hands on my own face, like the hands  
of the old man who taught me, like the touch  
of the warm flesh of a beloved elder.

My hands remind me what's in my heart,  
like streams of gold in a mountain  
of exquisite transparency.

## The Shadow of Fear

The more I fall into formless being,  
the more I see the form of my intention.

The journey to the center of nameless being  
guides my journey to the center of myself.

The center of being someone of purpose  
thrives in this fathomless being.

I am finite, as my being is infinite, and fear,  
even in the fearless, arises, before being  
is seen, to dispel the shadow of fear.

My fear is the shadow of the shape  
of my being in its infinite possibility.

The shadow of my fear shows my shape,  
yet what happens, to a being of infinite purpose  
is not limited by the shadow of anyone's fear.

I live in fearless possibility,  
in the formless unknown.

I live in the intention of the infinite,  
in the shape of my slight and slender life.

I open this vessel to see the intention of being itself,  
that's made present in the intention of this small being.

Intention, in my intention, is the ambition of the infinite  
to create small out of large, with no decrease or division.

It is my intention to realize who I am, with no increase  
or loss of self, in my being, in greater identity.

## The Wu Li Heart

The Wu Li Dancers dance ahead of their demons,  
so no demon can catch them, with no belief  
in science or spirituality, everything is a dance.

When I begin a poem, I'm no poet of words,  
as soon as I end a poem, I'm no poet of words,  
*poet* is a name I use that disappears in the using,  
yet of poetry I am its champion and indifferent to it,  
there's no greater spiritual dance than writing a poem.

Poetry is the science of thought and feeling, with no theory  
of evolution or construction, except that the good should  
tear itself open in the telling, so the good is lost and found  
in its transit from nothing to something and back again.

Death is predictable, every birth is fraught with unknowns,  
the Wu Li heart holds nothing in its hands for its demons to covet.

A young man in swept-wing sunglasses, red jacket,  
tanned skin, two days of stubble, and windblown hair,  
sits at a sidewalk table, drinking from a cup with a lid,  
he turns his head, searching, then, hunched over,  
he throws his head back, watching, and waiting.

On the inside sits a man with gray hair, cut and combed,  
white skin, with a paunch like pregnancy, reading the paper,  
turning pages with the practice of a lifetime, scanning  
for something of interest, he never looks up.

Men dance with their demons to ward off their demons.

Wu Li is Chinese for *patterns of organic energy*,  
*nonsense, my way, I clutch my ideas, and enlightenment*.

This patterned nonsense, this poetic energy,  
is the way I dance free from my demons,  
free from the clutch or the clutching  
of my ideas or my way.

## Jesus Laughed

My dancing heart won't take direction,  
it won't stop dancing, it doesn't listen  
to advice, all it wants to do is dance.

A playful heart, in prison, is a playful heart.

My father could play, but he didn't know how,  
there's no room for true play in a tragic world  
that hires comedians for relief.

I commit to play, to plunge deep in the heart,  
true play has no paid expositor in this world  
of travail and respite.

Struck in the side with a sword, Jesus laughed,  
he knew there was no body to be wounded,  
but he sealed an obligation to take it seriously.

Jesus had to appear to be born again,  
in the body of our all too human flesh,  
so he cried out and continued to die.

There's no need to be born again, no one  
needs to do the impossible a second time.

Being born in a body is the sleight of hand  
of existence, and this open, empty hand  
is the revelation of our truth.

## Persona Manqué

Playing characters on stage, I discovered that,  
as long as I stayed in character, I could do no wrong.

When the character did the speaking, I was free,  
there were no mistakes in character, but as a man  
living in the world in myself, I seek the same freedom.

I discover I'm not the character I play,  
and being true to myself comes when I drop  
my character, in favor of the being who plays me.

I devote myself to the character of my experience,  
or I fall back into being what it is that plays me.

When my personal pleasure is losing myself  
in character, I let my character do the being.

The absence from myself seems fulfilling,  
I become lost in being what I become,  
knowing my character is a persona manqué,  
my character speaks in the form of my being.

My drama is the story of my being, in character,  
this is the common drama of all beings in this life.

I am what I become, and I am what becomes who I am,  
I am this becoming from being to a man in his character,  
this is the only story I'm able to tell, without pretense.

True to my inherent being, I cannot,  
then, be false, in the shape of myself.

I have the choice of devotion to character,  
or to this being I am, one is free of artifice,  
the other is freedom itself.

## Deep Blue Spills in a Light Blue Sky

The sky was deep blue spills in light blue water,  
a painted ceiling, a roof of blue, abstracts of color.

It rose to such a height to make  
everything below it a place of awe.

I went driving in my car, like a man  
beneath a great friendly heaven.

We gather in this room of earth  
to recognize the marvel of our being,  
none different from any other in awe,  
we gather in this room of wide earth  
beneath a broad canopy of wonder.

There's humility that betters my own,  
greatness that grows my greatness larger,  
beyond every god is a reality that outshines it.

Like children in a room, unable to describe  
what's outside the room, we listen to anyone  
with a story of what might be beyond the room.

A man sits by a rock wall in a canyon in the desert,  
safe enough to sleep another night, wise enough  
to survive another day, he neither prays nor panics,  
he's alone, he knows an even greater aloneness.

I live in the wonder of my heart, with my being  
at home in its unwalled self, forgetting its parts,  
on the scenic road, rolling south toward Yakima.

## Along the River and Over the Hills

I drove south on Canyon Road, along the river,  
on a two-lane blacktop with no traffic,  
back over the ridge, through stunning vistas,  
between two small towns in the west.

In moments of anonymity, nature rises to grandeur,  
the works of man reduce to a stretch of highway,  
with roadside turn-outs for the fishermen.

Living apart from the society of others,  
in the earth's indifference, an infinite blessing,  
I'm not made small by size made significant,  
I'm made without boundaries, on the open road,  
under the wide sky.

To want to learn who I am,  
the work is never done,  
to learn myself is to chase a chimera,  
from the abyss of unknowable reality  
to a mountain range of definition,  
cliffs fall away to the riverbank.

The self I tried to know became clear,  
as I turned away from the desire to know,  
to know what remains to be known,  
just a few miles outside Ellensburg.

Whoever I am, among others, is who I am  
in myself, the variety of selves in any one being  
is clear in the absence of any self at the core,  
inside a silver pickup truck on a blacktop road.

I turn to the source and become as I am,  
I turn back to the world and see who I'm being,  
not from within its uncertain form, but from  
within its deep uncertainty, on the scenic road,  
rolling south toward Yakima.

## The Seas Keep Themselves Separate

The great love of last year is nowhere  
to be found in this fragile arrangement of lives.

We try to build institutions of solidarity,  
we make laws of our desires, to keep the parts  
of the sea from pouring in and out of each other.

We're made nameless and homeless by this  
life's long love of its amorous surrogates.

I become the weather of my senses,  
the weather becomes the weather of my body.

What was true yesterday has no place today,  
but when something occurs like a joy,  
one wants it to stay in its surrogated place.

The love I feel is not what it claims to be,  
falling from the sky like a showy calamity.

Love makes a hole in the earth,  
until the fire goes out,  
and only the hole remains.

We name the jagged emptiness  
of love's occurrence, we invite others  
to see what no longer is, in the empty shape  
of what once appeared to be a catastrophe  
of divine appearance.

I walk away from the celebration  
of what never existed in any form,  
despite the revered remains of its ruins.

Something did occur, a thing of nothing,  
I cherish, in my accepting what it truly is.

## A Softly Ruined Face

A softly ruined face,  
with age lines in baby skin,  
her hair bleached white by time,  
sparkling eyes in protective creases,  
she earned her scrimshaw beauty.

She realizes that merely being alive  
has earned her a measure of peace.

A wise man listens to the litany  
of practices engaged in by his disciples,  
who seem eager to take on more.

At the end of their long list of devotion,  
he says, *that's enough, you've done enough,  
the purpose of meditation is to stop meditating,  
to reach the moment where all your practices  
are no longer useful, you can let them go now.*

They stare in disbelief, he's calling an end  
to their chosen path, it's not easy to stop  
at the end of a devoted life, to begin  
to experience the object of our devotion.

Master of devotion, exhausted, in the search  
for my liberation, I exhaust the search.

Age takes away what distracts us  
from the beauty of who we are.

Youth is an onslaught of distraction,  
until one sees freedom in this moment.

Striving fails to teach achievement,  
doing fails to teach being.

## Pictures of Home

The Queen sits on her throne, representing the family that's ruled for four hundred years, she's the paragon of stability, her visage is a calming reassurance.

My own mother didn't change her demeanor in ninety years, we expected her to be what she expected herself to be, it drove her children to the far corners of the land.

Detachment is an imitation of what occurs naturally, we take up a natural likeness for our private peace.

Away from home, we hang pictures of home, we fall in love with ourselves as thinking creatures.

Our original awareness was thought from nothing, in a kind of generous play, but we're past young, and the young forget to play.

To let go of seeking home is to be at home, you can never go home, because you can never leave it.

Leaving home makes oneself absent from oneself, masks of peace are hung in empty halls of separation.

*Come Home!* cries out from the center to the parts that have left it, until no one is left to answer.

I cry for joy when anything calls itself home, in grief, in pain, in love, in simple recognition, the farthest distance home is no distance at all.

I seldom went to see my mother, and I couldn't be rid of her.

When I finally went to see her, she had disappeared into my heart.

## The Privilege of Passion

Whenever I felt passionate,  
I thought something should happen,  
as if passion had a privilege.

When I fell in love, something had to be done,  
my passion for love separated itself from love itself,  
to become the privilege of passion, taking possession  
of the habit of love, when what's inherent is overridden.

I indulge the children of my passionate love  
with candies, until they're fat with privilege.

In this privileged mind, I own what I think,  
what I feel, what I am, this mind wants to own  
what these things name as their incarnations,  
as if desire has the right of love on its side.

Desire grows a garden in the name of love,  
then claims the privilege of its gardening.

Desire, lifted from love itself as the property  
of the lover in this habit of passionate privilege,  
becomes the stolen ownership of unanswered love.

Desire becomes the likewise owner of answered love,  
returning love to the purse of one who is given it freely.

We give breath to each other in our breathing free,  
when we give our breath a greater life in love itself.

## A Baby in a Baseball Cap

A couple dances to the radio,  
caring for each other's touch,  
a boy has a bowl-cut Mohawk,  
like a drain-plug for his skull.

A man carries a bag of food to his truck,  
this large chair has the tight fur of a beast,  
suspended in time.

I imagine sitting on stage as the curtain rises,  
I'm aware of the audience, I becomes aware of myself,  
I begin to describe awareness, to include the audience,  
myself, the stage, the theatre, in the reality of our being.

I extend my hand and turn it slowly,  
all eyes fasten on the turning hand in the light,  
the light widens its attention to my presence,  
within the presence of the audience.

I introduces my character, unattached  
to any persona, I tell the story of the role I play,  
identical, at heart, to the heart of everyone.

Then, a woman enters, wearing white and black,  
then a man in green, another in black and beige,  
then a baby in a baseball cap.

Travelers come to a place where weariness  
has worn them down, and they awaken  
to the moment, apart from their journey.

I imagine myself on a stage empty of myself,  
I imagine my presence in the presence of being itself,  
I sit in the company of others, coming and going.

This stage, no less nor more than imagination,  
no less nor more than reality itself, enacts itself  
in stage lighting or in sunshine, reality is known  
by its being known, a baby in a baseball cap.

## Another Man Taught by Another Man

I watched a wise man, living as a teacher,  
to see if he would betray himself as another man  
taught by another man to believe something  
from what other men had said to each other,  
a long time before, or if he was in being  
with the original moment of awareness.

It's a old, sad story, that what we teach each other  
could be held suspect, that what men tell other men,  
as the unimpeachable truth, straight from the godhead,  
could be held to question, by asking, *how is this not  
like something written by a man for a man's purposes,  
how is this not a way to separate us from each other,  
from our simple reality, by claiming it as a path  
to our eternal reunion?*

We are the real beings of this original reality,  
we are observed and observer in one.

Separation defines desire, as desire defines separation,  
fear has a greater ability to embrace than love does,  
but love doesn't come and go, fear darts and dodges,  
seeking entry where it finally is granted none.

The play of fear will do what it can to gain its throne,  
it has no regency, except by its enthronement.

He pointed past his teaching to my untaught origin,  
and I let go of my doubting mind, my doubt declared itself,  
as it left my mind, at peace in the trusted origin of itself.

## A Habit of My Hands

When I release what I think I love,  
it seems cruel and unfair.

We think the war must be won,  
we went to war with good intentions,  
as if good intentions divine their ends,  
when what occurs outlives our desires.

Determination has a military mind,  
desire believes it will outlast its adversaries,  
equipped with wings of trumpeted glory.

Desire flies to the sun on wings of wax,  
believing the sun will succumb to its assault,  
desire would transform the sun to its will.

I let the warring self of desire die,  
the desire I came to cherish like a loved one,  
I no longer hold dear what's been dearly held,  
this letting go betrays my holding as a habit  
of my hands, I look at my empty hands,  
and I can't remember their constant cargo.

Bare feet on bare ground cross the earth,  
holding nothing, as nothing holds them,  
nothing interrupts their love of the earth.

The earth doesn't need to be held  
to be the ground and beloved for it.

## When the Greatest Actor Died

When the greatest actor died, many cried, they said he was a being greater than himself, there are many great actors, few great beings.

When something greater than a man inhabits a man, we want that greatness to live, we see ourselves in reverse.

We're not small beings, inhabited rarely by something greater, but beings of great being, in the constraints of our limitations.

We elevate a rare being to honor its rarity, to keep that rarity from becoming the common state of our character's commerce.

No man is greater than any other, except he opens the gates of his being, he puts himself inside a self larger than himself, and a force of nature opens himself to his own greater self.

My friend says he shall have no other gods before him, he says it so his ears can hear what his heart is speaking, he says it to lift the lid of god from the bowl of himself, that he might become what he is, by his inherent nature.

The greatest actor was no god, he played those conceived by others, his life, among those he wanted to love, among those who loved him, was a turmoil of inept concern.

He came from tragic life and begat a life no less tragic, but the open heart of his art unleashed the art of being itself.

The great one's eyes had the gleam of the discovered universe, a fleeting glance of eternity, in the look of a moment.

## Beyond the Wall of Sorrow

I stood in the ruins of my friend's studio,  
reminded of the firebombing of foreign cities.

What had been, now lay beneath fallen rafters,  
I climbed a wall to look in at another lost studio,  
I fell, climbing back down, I recovered my fall  
against a fence, faint and thinking of death.

The mechanics of the mind sort the cries of the body,  
mobilized to solve the thought of death, my hands  
were cold, my eyes looked warily on the world.

I walk to the wall of sorrow to learn a way of being,  
constant in this life, but to speak joy from sorrow's side  
is to dream asleep, and my waking spoils the dream.

To speak joy from joy leaves sorrow to the camaraderie  
of its kind, joy is not the ventriloquism of the sorrowful,  
a glimpse of joy is a leaf from within its wilderness.

I leave pain behind, to speak joy from within,  
I leave myself behind, to be genuine in myself.

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## With Tender Flesh the Avenue

Caught in thwarted thoughts  
for one who did not match my desire,  
I find myself still feeling loyal to the idea.

We seemed to have a bond beyond formality,  
but the more we loved in simple recognition,  
the less we became as lovers, I felt a loss  
in the heart of the body.

Years ago, by the side of the ocean,  
in a naked commune of spirit, mind and body,  
I didn't want others to see my lover's breasts,  
lest I be seen in her apparent nakedness.

Her nakedness touched my vulnerability,  
I couldn't bear to recognize myself in her,  
easily naked among easily naked others.

As affected as I am by the touch of tender flesh,  
we were one in the spirit but not the body,  
my desire longed to cross the uncrossed line.

She tells me she's taken to massage, to unknot a pain,  
*one can only go so long, without being touched*, she says.

And I remember another love, from long ago,  
with whom I could touch and be touched,  
by the possibility, if not the reality of love.

She, too, was indifferent to the open moment  
of private power, in being without power,  
when the spirit runs to the surface of the skin.

When the spirit wears the skin of lovers,  
the moment touches the body to its being,  
from love, to love itself, and back again,  
with tender flesh the avenue.

## A Cry in the Cells

A cry rises in the cells for what I let be missing  
in their lives, the affectionate love of another.

Living with those of the same ignorance,  
I carried and shared an ignorance in the life  
of the body, but the body knows its inherency,  
I impose ignorance where ignorance has no home.

The mind dissolves to a greater awareness,  
when the body resolves to a natural knowledge.

The kind and caring touch I sought,  
I find in myself, not in relief from its absence,  
but in recognition of its native presence.

I sharpen what's been made dull by experience,  
to be as honest in the physical as I am in the spirit.

Blunted by the historical and personal, I catch glimpses  
of the fine point of my flesh, what lies within, will seek  
the surface, despite all that's done to discourage it.

The fine point of my flesh is nowhere a blunt instrument,  
but I've thrown my body about in pain and pleasure,  
dulling its graceful instrument, and my cells cry out.

The fine point is blunted, but its grace survives,  
despite my trying to hold what can't be held,  
in hands that have not listened to their cells,  
that cry for tender ears to heed their constancy.

## Bowling Lessons

My friend jumps out of his chair to tell of bowling  
with his father, he's no more isolated in himself,  
than the center is separate from what it centers.

The seven deadly sins are seven things we do,  
his passionate presence is centered in its being,  
not its persona, he dances in his visible self,  
an expression of the fullness of his being.

My heart beams to see him complete in himself,  
he doesn't need my definition to define him.

The more he is himself, the more he defines himself  
as a spirit of nameless being, my joy is not in his name.

His fullness seems to call attention to his definition,  
but eyes, that turn inward, see to every foundation.

From the surface, we makes waves that wash ashore and die,  
from the depths, we show ourselves an ocean without a shore.

My friend is afraid, in loving this way, he'll disappear,  
we identify our lives in the darkening of our light,  
but the diffuse and nameless light conjoins us.

The easy mind frees the spirit to be with itself,  
the ease of the spirit frees these other parts to play  
in the sunshine and dappled shade of our lives.

## The Old Sailor Baby

His hands were small animals he couldn't contain,  
he kept pulling them back under his care, to keep them  
from being seen in their brutish vitality.

They tried to live independent lives, like children crawling  
away from their mother, only to be pulled back again.

He was an old sailor, alone in a bar, with gnarled knuckles,  
canvas skin, and eyes averted from the crowd.

His was a quiet curse that revealed a gentle confusion,  
a child in a giant body, who reminded me of my father,  
who reminded me of myself.

He sat by himself at a round table, nursing a beer,  
we say nursing, when it was the beer that nursed him.

Waiting behind a woman at the Goodwill,  
I held her baby's bottle, as she made her purchase.

The baby girl was almost full of milk, on the edge  
of sleep, heavy-lidded, like a sliding wall of earth.

The child's feet were bare in the carrier,  
two big toes and eight tiny niblets of pink skin,  
she suckled on the nipple with less and less enthusiasm,  
her little hands let go of the bottle and fell into the air.

*A beautiful baby*, I said to the mother,  
stepping into the warm sun of the street.

Watching a movie, I cried, it helps my heart to cry,  
for any reason, for no reason, to be like a baby,  
to be like a man.

## The History of the Body

I put my hand on my own shoulder,  
the way a friend or a caring lover might,  
I feel the muscle, not my reaction to it.

I habitually touch myself like a dutiful nurse,  
rarely with the kind and gentle touch  
I reserve for real and imagined others.

Our mother washed our hair at the sink,  
she scrubbed our scalps with zeal,  
I learned the technique and carried it forward,  
as if the body were in need of vigorous scrubbing.

We look for others, to come to us with love  
in their hands, to satisfy the need to touch  
and be touched, to have our bodies loved.

We hire professionals to approximate a crossbred love,  
but to touch ourselves with loving care seems an anomaly.

We expect to get love from a lover, to give love to a lover,  
to know what that love is, without loving ourselves in kind.

We scrub our own skin and caress another,  
*show me how to... what's it called...oh yes...love,*  
we forget what we cannot remember.

I put my hand on my shoulder and feel the muscle,  
curiosity in my fingers awakens my being cared for.

My hand moves to my arm, I feel the muscle,  
beneath the skin, I feel what had not been felt before,  
without any agenda of the self, here in this simple,  
grateful body.

## No Idea Where to Put Her Petals

In a cool room, she pulls her halter-top by the straps,  
she rubs her shoulders with the hands of crossed arms,  
she looks around, with the eyes of one who wishes  
she were engaged in some passionate activity  
she's yet to name.

She pulls at her clothing, an alien dressed  
by other aliens to mix among the people.

Summer has come too quickly  
in her long slow winter of maturation.

Suddenly she's in bloom, she's got no idea  
where to put her petals, there's a sweet pain  
in her demeanor.

Passions of the body flood the confusion  
of will, and one is compelled, in the midst  
of not knowing what to do, to do something.

In the protocol of obsession, swamped by contraries,  
overridden by compulsions, fear is overwhelmed  
by a surging mindlessness.

Later in life, a parallel occurs, the juggernaut of passion  
drives to an outlook above the city of its experience.

With the engine still running, a new history begins  
of one's lifelong contemplation of the essential.

Nothing changes in what changes everything,  
peace appears in what felt like the frantic center  
of swirling energy.

Passion recognizes its urgency  
in a calm without confusion.

Obsession sheds its skin,  
to expose the bones of the inevitable.

## The Play of Self-Delighting Pains

I watched one of the great teachers speak,  
he had nothing to teach and taught it well,  
but there are so few ready to recognize  
their own exquisite being, that he became  
little more than an entertaining challenge  
to those who came to be with him.

Everything's a cliché, until there's a readiness  
for it, and then it jumps outside itself.

Ciardi talks of Keats taking self-delighting pains  
to say that nothing we do has lasting significance,  
including ourselves, so why does he do that,  
if that's the way he feels?

*It's play*, Ciardi says, no matter the significance,  
poetry is play, life is play, being here is the play  
of all that is.

First one person speaks, then someone else,  
then more, then someone new comes from  
outside, then more arrive, then too many,  
then there are a few, or two, or only one.

Characters speak, the playwright speaks,  
but the play itself is the one speaking.

I sit back in the awareness of being, I hear my voice,  
in the play of self-delighting pains, I have nothing  
to say, I'm finally ready to listen, and when I'm done,  
I'm just begun.

## One Comes Upon A Meadow

Unrequited love becomes the only love, in those who can't find a match for the love they have to give.

One man resolves that no other can return the love he seeks, he's the only one capable of such a return.

We say God is love, and yet we prefer an image in judgment as large as our imagination.

One man seeks a companion closer than his thoughts, who occupies him without occupation, as one comes upon a meadow after a long day's hike in the woods.

As if suddenly, with no break from before, I'm at peace, undefined by my surroundings, this man I am gets none of his coloring from his choice of others, work, or place.

A well-known performer, known for his versatility, integrity and believability, after a long, successful career, playing in the heart of his characters, retires to having no more need to perform, the faces of his layers meet as one, folded back into his unperformed being.

He unseparates himself, and the body of his work follows him back to the center, from which it came.

## In the Center of Reflection

What if the image of Narcissus rose out of the water,  
which one would be first to embrace the other?

Does the image love its form,  
or does the form love its image?

If the physical and imagined were identical, neither  
one more nor less real, and if the only reality between them,  
were the love they share in their being, they might look deeper,  
together, for the truth of their being, in their being the same.

The love of the physical and the love of the unseen  
are moot, in the search for which is most real.

Reality fires the identity of mirrored selves,  
in the discovery of the other in the self,  
and the self in the other, when neither one  
is the occupation of a lesser reality.

I am alone in my image, as I am in my form,  
and I'm more clearly alone, without image or form.

My named and unnamed self hold a mirror  
to the other's mirror, and when they stop looking,  
in order to see, they reflect the one who stands alone,  
in the center of their reflection, in unreflected reality.

## A Simple Case of Retribution

Cezanne says he's looking for a good cup of coffee,  
with his hands in his pockets, shirt tied around his waist,  
a straw hat, frameless glasses, and beard neatly trimmed.

His short pants reveal stocky, muscled legs, hairy and tan,  
he seems content to be doing something simple and mundane,  
and then his eyes darken, as though a thought intervenes.

A thin man stands waiting, in a short sleeve shirt,  
with large writing, *Life is short, Death is sure,*  
*Sins the curse, Christ the cure.*

A young man sits with his young lover,  
looking at breasts he's seen many times before,  
with ordinary ecstasy in their easy demeanor.

The setting sun illuminates the east, reflecting on walls  
and windows, it builds long shadows on the far side,  
a smudged yellow orb hangs in the haze of the horizon.

Cezanne calls his child, the boy runs around him  
like a firefly to its flame, a woman taller than trees  
sails by like a schooner on a smooth sea.

A black man, in a yellow shirt and green shorts,  
his long, sleek, black hair tied behind his head,  
skims across the tile, with a snare brush sound,  
he moves, light and swift, and he's gone.

If I remember what I am, in unthinking sanity,  
I instruct my less clear self, *I paint until I laugh,* I say,  
about the wisdom of having no weighted thought.

These words come and go, sometimes with a weight  
that grounds them, sometimes with a light that lifts them,  
sometimes with weight and light that live lives of their own.

## The Music of the Blooded Air

On the first hot day of the year, bugs jump  
out of their cocoons and flood the air,  
one could plant the air and reap a harvest,  
everything competes for space in what gives it life,  
the air is kneaded like dough in muscled hands.

Lightnin' Hopkins sits on an old couch, across  
from another man, a bottle on the table between them,  
in the sweltering Texas night, the music seeps and squeezes  
out of the air, it hangs and grips the air, it cries and moans,  
comforts and caresses, it tears at the air, so thick with itself,  
it can't be torn, we play the music of the blooded air.

In this fertile heat, nothing is unique,  
the heat lives in what lives in the heat.

In the tropics, there's no birth and death in mythic cycle,  
both are constant, with no separation to want metaphor,  
seasons don't follow each other like discriminated egos,  
they pile on top each other in the same time-warped self.

Television makes it difficult to know what's present or past,  
with everything playing at the same time, the movies started it,  
when dead actors appear alive in their images, books started it,  
when characters come alive as they once lived, myth started it,  
when those we eulogize never died and never die, we started it,  
in the life of our open minds, without borders in time.

I sit where I sat, a year ago, and not much has changed,  
I could make a list of faces and memories, of terrible things  
happening in the world, of events predicted to be the scourge  
of the future, a future now a rapidly receding memory.

And I am here, at ease, in the moment of this moment,  
I tell myself to write this moment's unwritable poem,  
and I laugh at wisdom that fails to daunt the daring.

## You Should Save the World

*Someone says, hey, Jesus, hey, Buddha,  
you should be a preacher, you should find a mount  
and deliver a sermon, you should write four principals,  
you should save the world.*

Jesus sat on a rock in the desert and said,  
*I'm not here, I'm not the savior of the world.*

Buddha sat under a tree and said, *I'm not here,  
I'm not the savior of the world, there's nothing  
to be done, and no one to do it, now I'm ready,*  
Buddha said, and Jesus agreed.

*Have you ever read this, an old girlfriend said  
of my baby book, your mother expected you  
to save the world, I looked at the words,  
it didn't surprise me, a billion mothers  
have thought the same of a billion children.*

We're all children of the womb of thought,  
making plans for a disappearing future.

*Take this thought and make something  
of yourself, we'll all be watching you.*

I take pains to make something where nothing was,  
to pass it to another generation, in the open air,  
on a hill, in the desert, under a tree.

I'm not the savior of thought, I face my being,  
I birth myself back into the void, not forward  
into the chronicle of my dramatic history.

Every poem points to the space between poems,  
every mother is known by her own true desire,  
in the moment before her desire is born.

## As Rough Hewn as We Make It

In the artistry of being,  
an artist looks at unnamed reality,  
and makes a sculpted shape, a portrait,  
in materials not as real as their model.

When Pygmalion fell in love with the creation  
of his desire, his beauty didn't live in the stone,  
but in the unsculpted presence of his being.

The statue couldn't match the being of his beauty,  
a reality most partial, like the dried trail of a snail.

Reality occurs between sheets of glass,  
one can see through it to the object beyond,  
and one can see oneself in it, as in a mirror,  
but the real is neither window nor mirror,  
it lives in the space between the glass.

I am neither the world beyond my eyes,  
nor the world behind my sight, I live  
in the space between my separate selves.

Brilliant Hamlet knows the play of his fate,  
yet he's dumb to the play of his reality.

Recognition rights my ship, in the brilliance  
of my awareness, even when I'm lost at sea.

*Tell my story*, Hamlet tells his friend,  
*and then, silence*, he says, and dies.

Shakespeare calls angels to accompany his hero,  
but Hamlet calls no angels, instead, his presence,  
even in his absence, outshines the angels' light.

## The Electric Ropes of the Mind

I grow tired as I finish my chosen work,  
my body rests itself, my mind drowns.

*There's no such thing as muscle memory,  
my friend says, the muscles are ropes,  
they have no mind to remember themselves,  
these muscles are the electric ropes of the mind,  
a repeated action teaches the roper, not the rope.*

Directives of the mind put the mind to sleep,  
the same commands awaken the mind, muscles  
of thought lie in dumb repose or taut readiness,  
according to what they're shown or told.

Being calls the mind to work, the mind  
calls the ropes to snake themselves,  
these snakes have the mind of rope,  
these ropes the mind of sticks.

These lines are electric ropes,  
these ropes are electric snakes,  
these snakes are sticks of electricity.

No matter which end one lifts,  
these sticks strike whoever lifts them.

At each end of the poem is its beginning, in splinter  
and decay, in beauty, poison and perfect potency.

## The Laughing Policeman

I neglected my studies, painting at night, sleeping past noon,  
and when I woke, the president had died, shot riding in a car.

I crossed the college commons in an uncommon silence,  
until I asked a passing stranger and learned the awful news,  
a nation wept, that night was my first date with my future wife,  
despite an inauspicious beginning, we both needed a companion  
for adulthood, *I'll go, if you'll go*, we held hands and jumped.

Of four state cops, one roars with laughter,  
it's rare to hear anyone laugh with such abandon,  
let alone a man in uniform, he gurgles and bubbles,  
coughs, cackles, giggles, hacks, and bursts with shouts.

In Shakespeare class, I failed to read the assigned Hamlet,  
before a quiz, I made a joke that no one else enjoyed, and later,  
I discovered, in private reading, the prince of my own Denmark,  
I won't live in this body past my life, no matter how my words live,  
the good and bad are oft buried with our bones, *alas, poor Yorick*.

The laughing policeman fills his ears with his own laughter,  
as if the circle of men is laughing with him, the other cops,  
in dulcet tones, know how to handle the familiar scene.

When the president died, the great, wide country was filled  
with the deafening silence of his death, it wafted across Iowa,  
it coated the Rockies, it quieted the waves on the coast.

I thought we married because we danced well together,  
as if everything in our marriage would be as harmonious,  
I left a better partner to be with her, it was nothing relevant.

When Ophelia died, Gertrude cried, certain her son  
would marry the girl, if only the King hadn't been killed.

Even contradiction can't explain our dualities,  
*what are you reading*, Polonius asked Hamlet,  
*words... words... words...* the Prince replied.

## Chased from Fear to Fire

It's the same for a still mind to write a poem,  
as it is for the profoundly deaf to speak,  
to take that first step off the edge, to walk  
in air, out and above one's history.

To begin to think, a mechanism begins,  
to speak, a noise begins, a tinnitus of the mind,  
whose stillness reverberates with peace.

We disturb our peace to make ourselves known,  
like dogs who bark to announce their presence,  
until they sleep, and when they awaken,  
they make their public pronouncement, again  
and again, endlessly barking their being.

We bark all day, our presence never assured,  
those at peace need no such reassurance,  
we teach ourselves to be insecure,  
to communicate our insecurities,  
so we may live in fear with each other,  
and once begun, the mind chases itself  
from fear to fire and back from fire to fear.

A cultivated mind may make things  
of beauty and truth from its seeded self,  
but the ground is complete before the bloom,  
we ask the earth for its yield, we disturb it  
for what it gives us, if we take too much,  
it seems infertile, but we make it so,  
until we allow its renewal.

A practiced mind crowds its ground with demands,  
one of my hands lifts a word and the other wants to play,  
this sort of play disturbs my peace, and once disturbed,  
it's as though peace can be ignored, and ought to be.

My hands drop their words, I drop my hands  
into their openness, and their fisted fear falls away.

## His Once African Face

I turn from the ideal of my dreams,  
when I stop dreaming of her.

Dreaming continues, but I don't pursue it  
into the realm of volition, I don't pursue  
what continues to invite pursuit,  
not by her, not by my thoughts of her,  
but by the unrelenting nature of thought.

The object of my imagined desire doesn't interest me,  
to make it what it doesn't become, on this stormy night,  
with wind and rain, summer still weeks away,  
its advancing character revealed in glimpses.

I sit back in timeless ease, unrelated to current realities,  
that live simultaneously, like sitting in the crush  
of traffic, in the ease of an unthought moment.

A peaceful young woman, with Mayan features, sits  
in the modern world, in the complacency of the ancient young,  
her lover arrives, they embrace, his once African face shows  
no stress, their mutual love fills their time with consequence.

I'm consequent to my dreamless reality, when I match  
what I am to what I'm being, in knowing that no dream  
out dreams its undreamt origin.

## The Dawn of the Night

In stillness, lives the poetry of unwritten epiphanies,  
in the wonder of nature, lives the silent poetry of stillness.

The stillness of love for another is another poetry,  
and none of these words is what they speak.

The moon needs no one to name its recognition,  
my brother turns me toward the ocean and says,  
*look at that sunset*, demanding I absorb its beauty.

At the end of the day, there's no more day,  
at the end of the night, the next day begins.

To teach the dreamer to dream well, is to point  
to insight that begins, with no beginning or end.

I put down my instrument, for the music  
that no longer interrupts the music, my eyes  
drift from their focus, so I might begin to see.

In the moment of neither the thought described,  
nor the thought describing it, I'm left wondering  
at the wonderful, I am wonder itself, thoughtless  
in wonder, I am creation, staring back at itself.

## Twenty Years in Silence

One sees the time coming, because it's already here,  
when I love and I'm loved for my presence in being itself.

A great teacher spent twenty years in silence, some say  
it was his best teaching, when he began to speak, he began  
to be less, so more could know of the stillness he knew.

All teaching is set apart from what might be taught,  
as speaking separates itself from what cannot be said.

Building houses, we demonstrate domesticity,  
being at home in myself domiciles my being,  
without it ever becoming housebroken.

My clever tongue betrays its message,  
even as it proclaims it.

A simple man, once upon a time  
in the past, before the past was invented,  
before there was a future to color it,  
noticed his being and ran to tell others.

They stared at him in disbelief, until he invented  
a tongue with marvels born, and enflamed hearts  
began to dance around his consuming fire.

I speak of silence, to quiet my noisy gift,  
to let stillness seep into my voice,  
until I'm still, even in my song.

## A Greater Being in an Uncertain Reality

We say that when our work is done, we'll get to be  
who we are, we postpone ourselves to the future, we say  
when our task is finished, we'll act in the moment of our being,  
we'll live in the center of our heart, maybe the moment comes,  
maybe it doesn't.

True to ourselves, in this moment of reality, the great time  
we postpone to the future, is no longer awaited but present.

If we're taken with fear, we concern ourselves with lesser fears,  
and we shun the great fear of who we might be, of who we are.

The great fear, of facing who I am, can be avoided,  
if I occupy myself with the concerns of life and death.

Face to face with being itself, in a faceless moment,  
I lose my unsure standing in this uncertain reality.

I forfeit my hold on what lives by its claims,  
for the surety of having no certain claim,  
to be the thing I seek in my seeking,  
upon which I have no claim.

Unclaimed by my existence,  
I am its seed and its fortune.

## The House Detective

The house dick sits in the lobby of a rundown hotel,  
there's nothing for him to do, except he's a thief.

He steals from the guests and recovers enough  
to prove his worth, so he can keep his job,  
which, to him, means very little.

His room in the hotel is a repository of his swag,  
he doesn't care, he's not interested in what he steals,  
only the theft, and then only for a moment,  
his satisfaction is short-lived.

The hotel is populated by odd characters,  
of whom he is one of the strangest, and then,  
one day, he dies, under mysterious circumstances.

Police detectives stand over his body, discovered  
in the midst of his accumulation of stolen artifacts.

The owner of the hotel slumps nearby,  
she tells the detectives of their longtime friendship.

One disheveled detective looks down at the crumpled body  
and says to no one in particular, *now that's a sad fuckin' story, innit?*

## Down by the Banks of the River

The setting sun bakes my face, I remember the taste of gin,  
from when I drank gin, that summer in Illinois.

The sun was hot, in the late hours of the afternoon,  
after work in my room in the old building,  
in Rock Island, down by the river.

It was the summer after school,  
the summer before I married, two years  
before the Summer of Love in San Francisco,  
where my marriage ended, eight years later,  
but that summer, I was still young enough  
to believe myself free of social definition.

Now I sit in the sun in the Cascade foothills,  
thinking of moving back to my adult hometown,  
called Frisco, by those who don't live there,  
and the sun conjures images of drinking gin,  
in my third floor room in the picturesque  
and dilapidated house in the town,  
next to the town where I was born.

The sun is blocked, and then it comes back,  
and the feeling comes back with it.

I let the feeling bake me, like having a warm liquid  
poured into my body, until my body feels more liquid  
than vessel, and my thoughts and feelings turn to heat.

This time, I don't need the gin, the warmth of the sun  
stirs the feeling I'm happy to feel, it doesn't make me  
want to drink, instead, I become another presence  
of heat itself, I write these stories backwards,  
from the image to the source, and I'm done.

## Kicked Back to Sand

Four Tibetan monks spend a day,  
making an intricate sand painting in an airport lobby,  
their mandala protected by a ring of velvet ropes,  
until a small boy runs under the flimsy barrier  
and kicks the painting back to sand.

The boy's mother turns to see where her boy has gone,  
and pulls him away, with no sign of alarm or regret.

The monks laugh, their art is temporal,  
and the boy is an agent of the temporal,  
like the attention of the mother for her son,  
neither is concerned about the consequence  
of their agency.

Agents of the temporal run wild,  
what remains is the airport floor, the sand,  
the earth beneath the land beneath the sky.

Sitting Bull complained to the government agent,  
they were taking the sacred lands of the Sioux  
for their own, and the agent laughed,  
he cited the history of the Ojibwa,  
running the Sioux out of Minnesota, the Sioux,  
running the Pawnee out of the Dakotas.

*You may call it spiritual, he said to the old chief,  
but it's nothing new, and it's certainly not sacred.*

The slaughter of native peoples continues apace,  
until the idea becomes repugnant, the spiritual accrues  
to the land beneath the rampage, and if the climate  
is destroyed by our abuse, the earth will survive.

The folly will end, along with our temporary agency,  
no matter how sacred or profane we name it ours.

## Cradled in the Arms of Not Knowing

As a child becoming a man,  
I want to make the unknown known,  
until I face the unknowable unknown,  
and I hesitate, before I step into myself,  
it becomes only a matter of how far.

Before the knowing's known has seen its face,  
boned of ease, of grace, and gaunt, I defer to those  
with answers, I was taught to leap to the safety  
of others' conclusions, before I could find my own.

Between knowable and unknown, I yearn to face  
what I fear to face, until I do it, alone, with no preparation,  
in a courtesy of terror, in a leap of faith, a leap without legs,  
across a chasm without character, letting go of the knowing  
of knowledge, my champion.

Leaping from a plane, strapped to someone else,  
we try to lose ourselves, to gain ourselves,  
but every advantage we gain, in depending  
on others, is futile, except to be done with,  
at the leaping off point.

I leap, with nothing and no one  
to tell me what I'll find in the leaping.

The lap of eternity is not given to those  
who haven't left the arms of knowing.

The body has no memory of this brilliance,  
and the mind can't be used to tool its freedom.

I am its grant, its passage, and its arrival,  
I am the being of being itself, discovered  
in being who I am, the same as anyone.

## So Often Away in Paradise.

A poet reads her tale of Blake's wife,  
saying that she missed her husband,  
*he was so often away in paradise.*

This is the propaganda of escape,  
that denies the discovered reality.

Blake and his wife welcomed spirits to their table,  
they climbed naked in the backyard tree, this is  
the propaganda of spiritual romance.

We so habitually cloth our freedom,  
that our tales of it become costume dramas.

Jelaluddin Rumi wrote love poems to *the Beloved*,  
when his honest asides were of being in nameless existence.

A spokesman for religious others, it was customary  
for him to dress his bare grace in garments of glory.

The emperor of existence is absent from the clothier.

How do I admire existence, if it's naked of any form,  
except I praise everything that might be its raiment.

This path of praise I allow in myself, is my human urge  
to clothe what I am, instead of showing its naked beauty,  
undressed existence is too much beauty for these rags.

## How Beautiful it is to be Alone

After the aloneness of the body, nothing so surprised me  
as the aloneness of the soul, anything that forms a soul  
is alone, the being of the soul needs another soul,  
like a god, to protect it from its aloneness.

Oneness is a truth and a deception, it careens in the mind,  
like good drugs, as true as last night's drunkenness.

Sobriety destroys the kindness of the illusion  
of the separated soul, sobriety is a toxin, as sinful  
and adjudicated as the church runs the hiding from God.

There's nothing more terrible than being alone,  
it is the truth, how beautiful it is to be alone.

Aloneness is the opening to having  
no thought of self or the self of the soul.

Aloneness, in the soul, is the last refuge  
of the illusion of separation.

How beautiful it is to be alone,  
how beautiful it is to be a soul.

How beautiful it is to be beyond alone,  
how beautiful it is to be beyond soul,  
how beautiful it is to be in being itself.

I'm no one to think myself alone,  
I've never been less alone.