

Death Waits in the Street

Death sits in the street, its big body rotating,
as the driver waits for the light to change,

To move, to find the right address, ready
to pour itself out in someone's driveway,

Smoothing the way for the ambulance
and the basketball players who gather,
beneath the rim, after the owner is gone.

Death Holds a Ring

Death holds a ring
between its fingers,
then spreads its fingers
for the air to waft through.

Death draws an imaginary outline,
as it dances in the air above the table.

Death clenches, opens, touches,
waves, rises to a woman's lips
and floats nearby, as she smiles.

Death in My Hands

I hold Death in my hands.

With Death in my hands,
I invent and reinvent myself,
without effort, without changes,
without effect, without loss.

With Death in my hands,
I'm free to move my fingers
in any direction, to any purpose,
to its final absence of purpose.

Death Wipes the Table

Death wipes the table in front of me,
bends and wipes, bends over, bends
to reveal her breasts, as she cleans.

Death stays busy with cleaning,
but bends to show her softness,
an invitation, to keep me away,
to warn me with her beauty.

Death chastises me for my attraction,
to leave me questioning if she's the one
for me, or if she's only one who works
here, cleaning, for the general good?

Death Adorns the Window

Death adorns the store
window across the street.

Three coats and two dresses are hung
in front of three long sashes of white.

Three lights are hung above the display,
in the window of the store, that had been
the gallery of an artist, in a neighborhood
that has gradually raised its standards.

Before the artist was there,
Death ran a dry cleaners.

Before that, no one can recall.

Death Wears a Baseball Cap

Death wears a baseball cap, rolls
his fork in his fingers like a pointer.

After each bite of food, Death chews,
swallows, then searches his teeth for
the smallest remainder, to swallow that,
then Death forks another mouthful.

Death looks about, indifferently,
with eyes that lock onto others' eyes,
like BBs roll and catch in the tiny
depressions of a clown's face.

Death is Having a Conversation

Death is having a conversation
between himself, male and female,
one leans back, the other forward.

Death talks about work, the people
at work, the people at home, family,
the people they've known, intimately.

Death talks of hurts and pains, desires and fears,
Death wears a blue shirt, the other blue pants.

Death shakes his head as he speaks, the other
holds her hand to her head, runs her other
hand along the inner thigh of her leg.

Death sits up, to get up, to leave,
and the other leaves with him.

Death Bounces as He Walks

Death bounces as he walks,
his hands in his pants pockets,
his long coat puffed out
above his stuffed wrists.

Death wears a backpack, his
jacket hood falls across the pack.

Death's butt puffs out below the jacket hem,
pulled taut across his stiff bouncing hips.

Death has a neatly trimmed beard
and close-cropped hair, he whistles,
like water running out of his mouth,
over and between his lips,
into the evaporating air.

Death Has Become Worn

Death has become worn, darkened,
scuffed, scraped, stained, in time, since
when it was new and seemed an imitation
of what was here before, beneath everything.

Nowadays, Death is so much a part of the place,
it goes unnoticed, except by those who might
look down or might drop something or fall
suddenly, of their own accord, or across
something in their path.

Death seems to absorb and retain
traces of all who pass across it.

Death no longer seems new or old,
but only what is, here beneath us all,
holding everything up.

Death is Kissing Her Lover

Death is kissing her lover,
lightly, touching mouth to cheek,
like monkeys take a new thing to their lips,
to bring it within the realm of recognition.

Death's curiosity is weighed with trust,
knowing what it will ingest and what it will
toss to the jungle floor, without a thought,
still bright with wonder.

Death Walks Briskly

Death walks briskly,
her lip, bit between her teeth,
Death is small, regal, but seems sad,
Death pulls the sleeves of her earth-tone
sweater high above her pale wrists.

Death absorbs hearty soup
the way bread absorbs the stock,
as one wet color absorbs another.

Death Has Spread Across the Skin

Death has spread across the skin of a gesturing man, has turned his arms to forest, his neck, chest, and half his face, as well, beneath his clothing, the reach of Death can only be imagined.

A gold tie splits the electric blue of his shirt, jewelry glistens at the tree line of his fingers and throat, the edges where Death continues to extend its inexorable reach.

Death Drops From the Trees

Death drops from the trees,
as October slips toward winter,
turns from green to red to brown to
absent, then, to born again, in spring.

Death blocks the light and feeds on it,
Death provides the shade and denies it.

Death Screams

Death screams,
because it works.

She will stop screaming,
when she gets what she wants,
and she always gets what she wants.

Death's screams
bring food to her mouth,
and whatever else she wants,
whenever she wants it.

Someday, the screams won't be necessary,
Death will be given her desires by default.

In anticipation of that day, Death
learns the smaller ways of greed.

Death Fills the Air

Death fills the air, for those who hear it,
Death shakes the body of those who feel it,
Death lifts the spirit of those tuned to its heart,
Death rankles the mind of those who resent it.

If Death was not playing in your youth,
you may not recognize it, may not like it,
may wish it were never playing, may think
it only belongs to the old and the momentary.

Death may sound foreign to your ears,
or its presence may be deeply moving.

Where is life that is not touched
by the sound of Death?

Death Has Spiked Green Hair

Death has spiked green hair and an earring,
Death hunches over the open pages of a book,
Death wears a long leather coat and canvas shoes,
Death has dramatic features and pensive eyes,
Death never looks up.

Death becomes nearly immobile in concentration,
Death reads *To Kill a Mockingbird* with a can of coke
nearby and a finished bowl of chicken soup pushed
away, Death reads *Tolkien* with intensity, never
looking up.

Death Arrives in the Mail

Death arrives in the mail,
without any word for years.

A life awakens with new promise,
and parts of it begin to be left behind.

Death arrives in the realization
of a long forgotten desire.

The opening of an envelop
starts and finishes parts of a life.

Death Taps the Head of One Man

Death taps the head of one man,
and brings back forks for the others.

Death drinks coffee
and laughs at the jokes.

Death leans against the back
of an old church pew, moved
from another kind of sanctuary
to this casual setting, Death's
home away from home.

Death Sits With Bare Shoulders

On a cool day,
Death sits with bare shoulders,
next to a man in a thick sweater.

Death is voluptuous and happy,
with a large mouth and gleeful eyes.

Death lifts and twists her long hair,
twirling and tossing a current of hair
from bank to bank, from shoulder
to shoulder, from front to back,
from side to side, from time,
out of time.

Death Flops About

Upon learning of someone's death,
Death flops about between emotions,
a fish on a plank, not finding the sea,
from confusion, to anger, to grief, to
memories of love, until love itself
overcomes pain, and stillness
overcomes movement.

Death accepts the death of another,
as quiet accumulates to peace.

Death Climbs Out of its Basket

Death climbs out of its basket
and lowers itself from its high mount.

Said to be hanging, Death does not hang
but grows toward the widest plane of light,
grows toward greater growth, in the only
direction its gravity will allow.

Death hangs out, and Death hangs down,
but its leaves resemble wings, and its
wings open upward.

Death Lies Soft

Death lies soft between
the legs of an obese man.

Dormant and nearly undetectable,
it holds power in the man's mind, as
he attempts to quell the still small voice
in his head with the roar in his mouth.

The roar demands more and more
of less and less, until Death can
no longer be heard, even in
the virtue of its vitality.

Death is Raised and Roofed

Death is raised and roofed, Death
surrounds us, separates us, and unites us.

Even when Death is portaled, windowed,
and divided, even when it is not apparent,
we erect these forms of Death around us.

Without its narrowing protections,
we are unbounded and unsafe.

Without Death's embracing spaces,
we are cast out to the farthest end
of the unknown in our selves,
to make it known where we are,
beyond Death's definitions.

Death Stops By

Death stops by to say hello,
says he may not come here, ever again,
the portions have become too small.

He says he's writing a book of the generations,
most of whom, he says, cannot tell a proper story,
they go on too long, they stop short, they never
begin, they never finish.

He says he admires nothing about Hemingway
except his ability, but if Death were rich, he says,
he would hole up and write a story of his own.

He says he has to go, says he doesn't know when
he'll be back again, shakes hands, puts on his coat.

Death's eyes sparkle, as he leaves.

Death Plays Chess

Death plays chess with death,
it's an excuse for their being together,
without purpose or direction,
until the endgame.

The moves, up to that moment,
are relatively unremarked upon.

Cross-armed before the board, Death's
counterpart sits with legs spread, as round
the board is the scattered debris of time
spent eating, reading, drinking,
smoking, note-taking.

There's no despair and no celebration
in the victory that's mated with defeat.

Death plays chess with death,
neither one is hurt by the other,
neither one is remarkable
to the other.

Death is Framed and Hung

Death is framed and hung
in a lofty position, so all can see,
but only a few notice.

Most are busy preparing themselves for
occupations, for community, for mating,
for mild disruptions, inhaling the information
of living in company with everyone else.

Death is framed and hung, so all
might see, but no one seems to notice.

The framing of Death is done
in the common style, so that what
is framed is nearly invisible
to the casual eye.

Death Lingers at the Door

Death lingers at the door
and inquires of one who enters.

The answers to Death's questions
are unregistered in the heart.

Death asks about her friend's recent days
and listens to his new and different replies,
when the only answer she cares about
is the resonant core of nothing new,
nothing different.

The nature of Death's love is in
her acceptance, within the smiling,
unchanging heart of Death's love,
nothing particularly matters
a great deal.

Death Replaces the Block

Death has replaced the entire block of buildings that was here, a year ago.

Death is replacing the empty hole that it put in place of the old buildings, with new buildings, half-constructed, empty, undesignated, with a fence around the entire enterprise.

One can see through the fence, one can see through the walls, one can see through the buildings, to the far side, where one can see through to this side.

A year from now, Death will have made the space opaque, solid, named, and occupied.

Death has taken and will give, and in between, it has made of itself an inaccessible playground to all but the imagining mind and the free.

Death is Considered

In some countries,
Death is considered unclean.

Children, innately inclined
on the side of Death, are taught
to deny their nature.

Whatever the prohibitions,
Death works well in cooperation
with its opposite, the works of Death
are indistinguishable from all others,
many are considered the finest
works of human creation.

Death is Everywhere

Death is everywhere.

Death, of a million years past,
recycles through today's bustling airports.

Death, once breathed by mastadons, bellows
the lungs of schoolyards around the world.

Death is forced into the dying and gives them
back their lives, Death is bottled, tanked, and
encapsulated, Death has been to the moon.

Death is the breath of life.

Death Fills a Dress

Death fills the dress of the woman
sweeping the restaurant floor.

Every five seconds, some man imagines the touch
he sees in her fullness, still not sure of his desire,
if it's for her flesh, or if it's the talisman of peace
she seems to offer him.

Is it Death, or is it the image of Death,
he seeks to engage, with her, every
five seconds, without success?

Death Draws a Pen

Death draws a yellow pen across the page,
until the page seems less black and white,
awash in translucent yellow, accenting words,
lines, paragraphs, until what's left unmarked
is more obvious than the chosen passages.

One assumes that Death knows what he's doing.

Marking is what teaches Death his lessons,
not the steady yellowing of his large book.

Death Comes in Sections

Death comes in sections.

The first section is more public,
more violent, more dramatic, more
current, more important in all our lives.

The same description
applies to the second section.

Sometimes, there's a third section
that vies for its equal share of headlines.

Death is Orange

Death is orange.

Also, chartreuse, mauve,
ochre, metallic blue, black.

Death comes in every color,
there's no use listing them all.

Some of Death's colors are more subtle,
some are bold, some garish, some dull.

Some are worn for fashion, some for shock,
some are handed down, some come as a gift.

People try to find the right color of Death.

The company one keeps can influence one's
choice of colors, so that Death might not
seem freely chosen, but there are
true colors for everyone.

Death is Dedicated to Life

Death is where the dying
are taken for their care.

In Death, the dying find
solace among the dying.

Death is a virulent, infectious atmosphere,
where precautions against contamination
are carefully taken.

As much as Death is dedicated to life,
the dead are its likely survivors.

Nevertheless, in Death,
the door swings both ways.

Death Takes the Ashes

In India, everyday,
thousands swim in Death.

The smell of Death is a pungent mixture
of living and dying that startles the senses.

On the banks of Death,
fires consume the swimmers
who have completed their ablutions.

The fires, that consume the non-religious,
as well as the devout, burn the same.

Death takes the ashes of all who burn,
from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal.

Yet, for a few rupees, one can ferry
across the breadth of Death, from
the near shore to the far.

Death Has a Golden Post

Death has a golden post,
a golden bowl, and
four golden flames.

Under its light,
there's no distinction
between the man reading
his newspaper and the empty
chair at a marbletop table.

Death Has a Black Binding

The black binding of Death cannot
keep time from rotting these pages,
the gleaming, black binding of Death
cannot keep these pages from crumbling.

The slick, reflective binding of Death
will outlast these contents, it will sit
atop the garbage heap, past the decay
of these words, only the life of Death
will outlast the binding and the bound.

Death Has Many Faces

The face of Death is the same
as every other face, the face of
Death is whatever one faces.

To face Death is to face
whatever faces everyone.

To face Death is to look
in the mirror and become
the reflection of no face at all.

To face Death is to become
the seeing, not the seer,
and not the seen.

Whatever is Death
is whatever is,
and life is the same,
and being is bigger
than both.