

In This Being Away

In this
being away
from the past,

Time becomes
ungrounded
in time,

In this vast
emptiness,

The bark of a tree,
like flaking skin,

Slips into
the open sea

Of air.

In the Shower

In the shower,
with the window wet,

A thread
from the curtain,

Sticks to
the glass,

A filament,
fixed in space.

A Man Shoveling Cement

A man
shoveling cement,

Drags a board
to the ground,

Tips
his shovel

To spoon
what's needed,

His boots,
thick-coated

Cartoons
of themselves.

I Hear it Said

I hear it said
that no one

Is listening,

Yet I cloud
the air

With words,

When inside
poetry,

No words.

The Old Monk Says

The old monk says,
Zen stinks, and dies,

He knows Zen
is without meaning,

So he lies and dies,
laughing.

These Old Men

These
old men,

I am older
than they,

If I walk ahead,
I tell her,

I can
lead the way,

If I walk behind,
you can hear

What I
have to say.

In My Dream

In my dream,
I get old,

The dreamer
is ageless,

The dream,

Wrinkled
and paunchy.

These Words

These words
are moonlight
in a barrel,

No chance for
profit here,

These words are
second-hand goods,

Their profit has
come and gone.

The Air is Sliced

The air
is sliced

By speeding
cars,

A service station
sits

In prosperous
repose.

I'm Old

I'm old,

It's time
to take

The words

Out of
my words.

The Breeze

The breeze
in the trees

Goes where
it pleases,

Can't spell
Charlotte Street.

A Workman

A workman

Sweeps the lot
of a business,

Built by one
of the richest

Corporations
in the world,

He brushes
the spider webs

From the Sistine
Chapel ceiling,

He lifts the dust
from the Buddha's

Smiling face.

I Seek Salvation

I seek salvation
between meaning

And the absence
of meaning,

I strive
to write

Poems

In fire,
with paper,

I make faces
for the world

Behind
my back.

I Like Sunshine

I like sunshine,

I'm not the first
to feel this way,

Nor the last,

The last may feel
commemorative,

The first,
celebratory.

The First Anthology

The first Japanese
anthology of poems

Was called *a collection
of many words*,

A derelict man
shows his poems

To a nervous smoker
in a racing jacket,

It takes a while
in words to see

The true nature
of things.

Poems Circle in the Dark

Poems circle
in the dark,

Knowing there are
other predators
nearby,

Some are more
determined
than they,

I'm an old
bull elephant,

My hide
is thick,

I welcome
their attacks

Into my
longevity.

Old Man Walking

Old man
walking,

One foot

In front
of the other,

The same

Uncertain
delight.

Sleepy-Eyed

Sleepy-eyed,
in this security,

Behind
locked gates,

Closed doors,
enclosing walls,

This lazy, lovely,
caged comfort.

Coming from the Volcano

Coming down
from the volcano,

The boy across the aisle
on the bus, smiled,

A conspiracy
of like liking like,

A small girl
did the same,

On the trail
going up

The side
of the mountain,

In a country
not my own.

She Makes a Watercolor

She makes
a watercolor,

Blue at the top
for a sky,

A band
of green,

Where we walked,
this morning,

My feet
dig in the sand,

Her foot
twitches,

I love her
with all I am,

I only make it
seem so,

By saying so.

She Paints

She paints
the humble

Corners
of things,

Until

The decay
of beauty

Becomes

The beauty
of its decay.

.

The Character of Death

The character
of death

Is that
of a poet,

Deathless
and dying,

Again,
and again.

An Infant in Arms

An infant
in arms,

His mother's
hand

Holding
his head,

He looks
at the world

And grips
her sleeve,

The cold wind
blows

In the big
old barn,

The old dog
barks.

Each Car's Wheels

Each car's
wheels

Drop into
a hole,

As the line
inches

Toward
the light,

Sudden speed
smoothes the bump.

I Make Words

I make words
from words,

I look to
others' words

To forget
my own,

Before
I write them.

These Magnificent Cities

These
magnificent
cities,

I love them,
like a bird,

like a bird
likes berries

On Bush Street.

The Good and the Bad

The good
and the bad,

I hold
in my hands,

The way
the riverbank
holds the current,

All I know
is the rumble,

The rush,
and the roar,

No time

To say hello
or goodbye.

Language

Language,

That wardrobe
of the invisible,

Makes me
a king

I cannot see
in the mirror.

All These Years

All these years,
working

To become
somebody,

And succeeding,
I am ashamed
to say,

I laugh at
the shameless

Ruse
of my biography.

Toss My Bones

Toss my bones
in a barrel of tears,

I'm done with bones
and barrels,

Look under a rock,
search the skies,

You'll see no tears,
you'll hear no cries,

Toss my bones
in a barrel of tears,

I'm done with tears.

I Drink

I drink
the air,

And yet
it still

Goes down
the right pipe.

Junkie Guru

Junkie Guru
from up north

Goes home,

Great relief,
what wisdom,

I bow to the
brilliant absence

Of his teaching.

My Father

My father,

Dead at eighty,
these twenty years,

All his uncertain love,
his broken heart,

Where are they now?

Burn my body,
throw the ashes

In the river,

Go home and
eat something.

A Coiling Vine

A coiling vine,
a word in the brain,

The curse

Of thinking about
one's enlightenment.

A Man Shouts Desire

A man
shouts desire
from a car,

Ooh, Yeah!

A blind cow
walks into
a tree,

The bird,
on the
cow's back,

Sings.

An Old Man

An old man
says someone,

Older than he,
is closer to God,

As if that other part
of the ocean

Is closer
to being drenched

Than this
part is.

All of Life Appears

All of life appears,
and then the heart,

And then
a poem appears,

And what
do I care?

The sun
looks not for light,

The wind
takes no notice

Of the things
that blow in the wind.

Green Leaves

Green leaves,
red leaves,

yellow leaves,
brown leaves,

Dead leaves,

My brother
took his own life,

This is the
angriest poem

I have
ever written.

The Sunset

The sunset
doesn't

Think about
the sun,

Or the sun
the sunset,

The painter
doesn't paint

The subject
or herself,

She paints
the painting.

Put My Flowers

Put my flowers
in a bowl,

Change
the water

from time
to time,

To timeless.

Did You See

Did you see
that beautiful bird,

With its mate,
fly by,

A thousand
years ago?

Water Pours

Water pours
onto the floor,

From the noisy
refrigerator,

Now
I get to

Put this
old towel to use.

Looking for My Place

Looking
for my place

In the
whirlwind,

I discover I am
mostly oxygen.

After My Death

After my death,
I will stop talking,

I won't eat
or shit,

I'll stay close
to home,

You won't even
know I'm here.

Do You Hear the Locusts?

*Do you hear
the locusts?*

*They were here
in my youth,*

*And now, here
they are, again,*

We don't hear them,

*We got used to them,
while you were away.*

Leaves

Leaves piled
at the base
of a tree,

The tree's head
in the clouds,

Bare of its
fallen leaves.

Fang

Fang,
old dog

In a photo,
still old,

Old memories,
young again.

Sunlight On the Table

Sunlight
on the table,

And I am
complicit,

I said to her,
the misery of the mind
should be shit-canned,

She said she
liked that word,

Shit-canned.

I Once Sat

I once sat
in sadness,

To taste and spit
the absence of love,

In the midst of it,

Occasionally,
I sit in some
shape of it,

But I have never
not been in love,

Still, sometimes,
I miss it by name.

Heartbroken

Heartbroken
in the unbroken heart,

I feel her absence
from a few feet away,

There is a
fierce tranquility

In letting go
any escape

From love
and its loss.

I Drop Deep

I drop deep
inside the body,

Beneath the bayou,
beneath the garden,

I find what emerges,
in full-throated song,

And none
of my doing,

My joy,
not wrong,

Is also none
of my own.

Prodigal Child of Heaven

Prodigal child
of heaven,

I go out to stretch
heaven inside itself,

I go out
from inside myself,

To find
how far I've come,

To be just here.

Everywhere I Look

Everywhere I look,
my heart

Comes out
to play,

A smiling dog
is simply a dog

With its mouth
open.

I Am Guilty

I am guilty

Of shouting words,
crying, talking,

Molding thought
to make words,

A small bird
farts in the wind,

He flies
into the wind,

And the wind
flies out of him.

This Speaking

This speaking
of life and death,

Is a collection
of my photos,

Here I am,
in my latest shot,

Showing you
these pictures.

We Sit at Ease

We sit at ease
in the same room,

I don't think of her,
yet my heart

Turns to see her,
there, here, in herself.

The Streetcar

The streetcar
rumbles to the ocean,

Stopping just short
of the waves,

Like a poet's sometimes,
likewise, courtesy.

At Work Today

At work today,
nothing

Remarkable
occurred,

What is it,
that when one

Is not doing it,
or being it,

One feels
oneself

Turning slowly
to stone?

Quiet Desire

Quiet desire
comes into

This paraffin
heart,

Swinging
its scythe

Of fire.

The Joy

The joy of every
moment lives

In unwound bundles
of inspired breath,

Like an adoration.
embraced by a fingertip,

End of poem,

endless poem.