

On the Lake of Volcanoes

Black birds fly above an imploded volcano,
its dark lake surrounded by volcanoes.

As the earth is unnamed, these eyes,
for naming, forget but what they see.

The wider world divided
into smaller pieces of itself.

Life doesn't change us, we change
faces in life, the wind closes the door.

The trees on the ridge rise against the sky,
like tufts of hair, wrapped in twine.

Wonder is full of wonder and fear,
made fearless, like an empty bowl.

I speak something of nothing, else
music is merely its own making.

Lapping at the shore, soft whispers,
from beneath the shimmering surface.

I hear music, words woven, burnished
into a kind of sweet movement.

I become what I approach, then turn
back to speak what is beyond reach.

Ladder against a shed, a woman
in blue picks fruit from the garden.

The town across the volcanic lake
seems unchanged through its history.

What's close appears alive, what's
distant wraps the world in permanence.

How many beautiful gardens would
there be if we were each content?

The boat that scouts the lake, slows
to a drift, then speeds off on its rounds.

A wasp lingers, body pulsing,
a lizard leaps on the rocky path.

She walks among the rows with
a bowl, to collect a meal's making.

Something bites her, she jumps and shouts,
is this not the heart of the real?

Now tell me what country does not
call itself the home of grace and grief.

Workers clear the sloping shore
below to irrigate an onion patch.

High above these hard workers,
I sit on a deck, reading Neruda.

I read a long poem by my old
friend, about life, love, and death.

Like Neruda, he seeks the primal
in the mundane, they find themselves.

I stand in the crowded moment,
until it's been shed of its clutter.

A third man comes, the three consult
a watch that gleams in the morning light.

With quick blows, the dusty soil billows
above their hoes in dry clouds.

The earth, greater than those who
work it, who think of it, who live and die.

The men look up from their work
to see a stranger reading poetry.

Among words, a massive presence,
the unfathomed deep, sharp hoes at work.

Yellow and red for the hummingbirds,
and there, the woman I am with.

How can she not be the same as this
ungraspable reach, this rich soil.

I see a man in a wooden boat,
a couple walking by the shore.

I see essence, not of primitives
in some idyll of pristine life.

These men work for wages, have cell
phones, motorcycles, and time for fear.

Their hands move swiftly, smoothly,
to place and cover the onion seedlings.

The sun seems caught by the edge of the
roof, the slightest breeze cools my skin.

Like them, I converse within, as I work
these words into fertile ground.

She asks one of the men if she
might photograph him at his work.

The boys throw water in a spray,
in imitation of the men's grace.

Each one walks barefoot to the lake,
it doesn't matter if some gets spilled.

The thirsty ground will take the water,
the summer rain is months away.

Bamboo is cut with machetes, to make
sticks for string to mark the patch.

The page before me has rows of words
that turn the blank to planted seeds.

An old man and woman plant
a garden at the top of the hillside.

She holds a watering can, he digs
with a hoe, she wears blue and white.

A skirt, a blouse, a scarf on her head,
he wears a hat, t-shirt, and jeans.

They talk, she more so, he seems
less eager to speak, until he begins.

She stirs the water of words, he
calms the water, they swim together.

Old bathers in words, they know each
other's strokes, splashing, diving, drinking.

They sit by the side of the garden
and shade themselves in silence.

The planters have gone, no workers
among the stalks, the lake, sleek and calm.

A wasp attends a drying pair of
socks, the hot sun burns the dry air.

A wasp lingers at a flower, the wake
from a launch ripples ashore.

A house on the far shore seems on
fire, smoke drifts up the steep incline.

The fire burns down, perhaps it
burns up what is no longer needed.

What's needed is called by different
names, I might call this life by a name.

A family of seven walks by,
on the path next to the water.

Mother tells one boy to wave, he
waves, another waves, then all wave.

One young boy waves, by throwing his
arm in a wild arc, back and forth.

I wave back, across the brief absence
of distance, a simple greeting.

Travel brings us to the moment
of ordinary grace in meeting.

A stout woman sits beside the lake,
a boy tosses a fishing line.

A green growth spreads itself, offshore,
muffled voices, birds, a motorboat.

An active volcano rumbles, not close,
louder than anything near.

Can anything so great be called humble
when it's humbling to our kind?

A bird flies at a high window,
as if in love with its reflection.

Perhaps there is reward and purpose
in everything, or there is not.

Or else, there is celebration,
embedded in all we are and do.

The Wedding Dance

At the wedding dance, paper lanterns
float aloft, small fires lift them.

Bride and groom are honored by more
than a hundred guests from out of town.

A man moves, happily out of time,
his arms, legs, fly out on their own.

Faces, lit by light, cast from here and
there, move like bright masks in the dark.

A young girl dances with her mother,
flat-foot-jumping from spot to spot.

One friend said to another,

The band plays century-old music,
while all eyes dance in the present.

A man greets an older woman, his
mother's friend when he was a boy.

Young women dance with each other,
playfully, young men dance like young boys.

Cups are used up, a boy drinks lemonade,
his mouth pressed to the cold spigot.

he scoffs, incredulous.

Invited to dance, not to the wedding,
we came, head bowed, with light feet.
Women lovers dance elegantly,
grinning in each other's faces.

Paper lanterns float high, then higher,
until they burn out in the sky.

Sparklers handed out, then lit, more
are lit, until dozens are held high.

Dark night sky above the dance, a cloak
of comfort, cars beside the road.

Car lights fade into the night,
silent music is taken home in hearts.

The Man in the Red Brick Building

Vines on the brick by dirty windows,
a circle of clean glass, a face.

She's gone, she's been gone a long time,
no use searching for the sight of her.

The man in the red brick building hides
from something, and she is not it.

He hides inside himself, without
knowing it, no matter where he goes.

He looks for her in passing faces,
never sees what he thinks is missing.

Something loved has gone away,
it fills his heart with its insistent love.

He crosses town, back and forth,
holding, carressing, his beloved absence.

Absent love lives, in the place of his
absent lover and his love unknown.

Desire provides an abiding charade
for the love never named.

He looks for love, beside him in the
mirror, when love's the one looking.

Missing is what misses everything,
until nothing is lost but losing.

He smiles the smile of the lost,
who fail to find themselves alive.

Walking in Cape May

Cat beside the chair, on the deck,
asleep, its leaping, confined to dreams.

Walk to the corner, a few steps
on sand, and then, the eastern ocean.

Beside the sand beach, motors purr,
roar, no bikes on the promenade.

Muscles pump legs, arms, kites held back
against the wind, a small dog, prances.

Three gulls, as if one, stand still,
facing the wind, never not in motion.

Three gray gulls stand still, as if one,
until one drives the others apart.

Three gulls, stand apart, at the edge
of the ocean, each tending itself.

Five gulls, in a row, preen themselves,
one wanders out of line, preening.

Three elderly women, on the sand,
birds of three breeds, in a tight bunch.

So many feet in the ocean,
legless fish wonder in wild surmise.

Oceanside, the unfathomable deep,
across the road from rented rooms.

Walking in town, on the street above
the ground, facsimile of earth.

Rockers on a veranda wrap the
hotel, squirrels leap in the grass.

A wafting, gentle breeze caresses
the shade that blocks the burning sun.

It can't hurt me that I am alone,
when I am alone in wonder.

Here in my eyes, not the world, but
the color of the world awakens.

Swans, beyond the parking lot, big
and fed, ready to fly, without will.

Gaggle of geese gather the calm, float, dip,
rise, spread their wings, skim the pond.

Ruffled white swan, Cleopatra's barge,
a regal black swan swims apart.

Hawks, geese, swans, down from trails
in the sky, followed close by human eyes.

At the end of land, a shack for food,
red-faced visitors eat their fill.

Mafia wannabe, in style only,
dragging fries through the cheese.

Wonder moves, place to place, wonder
stays wonder, different faces glow.

Butterfly plumbs the depths of a
carnation, secure in its easy gift.

Folded chair swings on the back of
a tottering man, the beach beckons.

Old ones masquerade as their young
selves, half-believing the happy ruse.

Sailboat, atop the sea, cannot swim,
cannot fly, does the in-between.

It takes time to let go the names
of what we see, or but a moment.

Joy Profound as Sorrow

Love poems from the past or present,
lock a certain sorrow in time.

Love spoken, lives past love, love alive
lives unsaid, free from naming it.

That moment, just past, fading edge
of who we are, escapes love itself.

Love itself cannot be spoken,
except of, after, toward, and from.

Heartfelt tales, the finest we can say,
exclaim to name what we love.

Greater love than love, love rains,
pools, streams, flows oceanic, unseen.

The heart of love, center of the
center, cannot be lined or margined.

Love will not be orated, love will not
be declaimed, love's heart is mute.

In love's orbit I spin, in love's halo,
I glow, spun out from love's core.

Circle love in loving, fly out from
love in rhapsody, find love found.

Rescue love from its arrows,
grasp love in the origin of the bow.

Sing love, speak love, build houses without
ground, joy itself remains profound.

Thing of no thing, this heart, that heart,
no heart but the real, sings itself.

As all metaphors sing, not one
speaks love, that certain uncertainty.

No sorrow in love, only sorrow
in leaving love, I leave leaving.

All at once in moving, I am still,
all at once, in love, I am love.

Shock of my heart, as it wanders
the world, to be at home in motion.

And yet I sing, I sing of love,
without sorrow, I sing myself home.

Counting the Ways

How do I love her? Shall I count the ways? What ways? No ways in love.

All the ways of counted love are not of love, love is uncountable.

No ways, yet I love her ways, she's kind, considerate, blunt, outspoken.

Unconcerned how she's seen, loud, tender, loves dirt in its fertility

A light in her eyes that dims, darkens, and shines, ready for anything

Signs of love are, for her, tangible, in thing or deed, she sees what's done.

Expressions of love are expendable, not trusted, ephemeral, however well-meant.

She prefers tokens of consideration rather than passions proclaimed.

Still, she's passionate, in her ways of a lifetime, and in the moment.

Artist, gardener, maker of pottery for beauty and use, she sings.

In a life of tragedy and work, ready for play, she laughs aloud.

A dancer, she can lead and follow, she plays at being romantic.

Romantic, she loses sight of it, then picks it up, in an instant.

Candid, tactful, bold, shy, she barely recognizes her giving gifts.

Self-aware, she knows how good
she is at being alive in this life.

I love her ways, but my love cannot
be found where it might be described.

What's the reason for sky where birds
pass in flight and rain is born in falling?

I look in her clear eyes of love, and
I see love, not looking to be seen.

Looking for nothing to see, I see
what love is, uncouneted to be.

On a Sidestreet in Paradise

White clouds, deep blue sky, dark green
trees, sea, I lie down in its lush painting.

On a sidestreet in Paradise, beyond
these hotel walls, trade winds blow.

In the lobby, a small boy on his
laptop, a boy on a dolphin.

Nearly naked woman crosses the
street, with nearly naked others.

Crepe paper, stuck to the stucco
ceiling, a night's quiet aftermath.

Ukulele, guitar, bass, and steel,
aloha's rich island song.

Music calms the yapping dog, curled
up in peace, at the foot of the notes.

Joy's pure music, dancer, talking to her
friend, jumps up, points to the sound.

Hula fingers, while other hands walk,
hers dance, while others talk, hers sing.

Rain in the sun, slippery stones,
walkers wait beneath an overhang.

Pigeons, not beggars, on missions
of survival, scan picked-over sand.

Plumped out skin and bones, Miss
America at the beach, her devotees.

Crooked clock, a circle on its side,
in some cities, tells the right time.

Flag pole in the lobby, unfurled,
hanging limp, wrapped in flowers.

Crescent in the leaves, reminder
of the moon, that orbiting fondness.

Peacefulness, in this room where no
one lives, people come and go, night falls.

In paradise, things go about in
disguise, like sorrow and sadness.

I go for a walk with a Banyan tree,
its pace is slow, I slow down.

My sandal breaks apart, my foot
escapes its flimsy attempt at binds.

This island must feel its sorrow,
absorbing rain, sun, fallen men.

Burrs in the grass, unknowing where
I step, lead my path, follow after.

A small girl with a crown, gives it to
another girl, twin queens of heart.

The island does little to keep
the sun from owning everything.

I see the old, old people dancing,
light of foot, in the setting sun.

Mother hen with chicks, her small crowd
scurries past men, women, and children.

Australians on the beach, the
beach, not Australia, is the beach.

I float in the ocean, stumble in
the sand, walk upright like a man.

Nomad, she tents herself beneath the
beating sun that demands its price.

Surfers, waiting for fresh waves,
the sea gives, and, in time, gives again.

Those who hope to ride the power
of the wave, ride its beauty as well.

Perched on volcano and ocean,
the clouds become a ready refuge.

Green, upon green, upon green,
on this green isle of volcanic rock.

The ocean caresses the shore, with
its claws, its jaws, its bearish roar.

The farther I look out to sea,
the better I see what is near.

A Spoon in a Cup

All these ways of being alive,
such invention, a spoon in a cup.

In the mirror, over time, this changing
face, in endless space, the moon.

I stand to go home, and a thought
falls out of my pocket, so I stay..

I am stopped from the practical,
I come back home to the opportune.

This life's a low-entry profession,
come on in, the water's fire.

My story lacks assemblage, a handful
of pebbles, tossed on the sand.

The stories of our lives, we trade
them, until we are worn together.

The old days have died, I visit their
graves, the stone, so finely carved.

In plain sight, the unhidden hides, in this
room, there hides no room at all.

In abundance, I seek austerity
and find it, in abundance.

Do I breathe the air I praise,
or has heaven become so prosaic.

All these ways of being alive,
such invention, a spoon in a cup.

Woman of Oaxaca

Against a rock cliff, her uncertain
comrade, a small bird, pecks at cracks.

Sun on her shoulder, soft whispers
of heat, her bones, glow in their fire.

This earth, this bed, from which we rise,
she opens her eyes and soars above.

Halfway home, flat on her back, unhappy
fortune, she grins.

Soft stone, assured of herself, she
seems to prey, to leap, to pounce, to rest.

In confinement, rage falls quiet,
thought resolves in its disappearance.

Contained despair seeps into flesh,
despite the desire to fly free.

The wind is loud and broken fluid,
and when the wind stops, she's silent.

Her soul waits for nothing but to strike
from the heart, and peacefully sleep.

Her arms wrap her legs, her legs
wrap the journey in muscled symmetry.

Her chair, designed for ease, is joined
with the earth, and open to receive.

Perfection reclines in what she is,
imperfection finds itself, as well.

Her tree grows around itself, from
the ground to the sky into everyone.

Her back, strength of where she goes, wall
of the past, fronts what she leaves behind.

Dark remains, until her dark becomes
her lighter self, and she's on fire.

Clouds on the ground wrap her feet, she
sits in the sky, bends low from on high.

Contorted by laughter, untwisted by
peace, she plants words in the air.

A glacial shelf borders her tropics.
From her squint, she sees nebulae.

She is an obelisk, a monument
to motion in the moment.

Her hand is alive, her heart, beating,
from parted lips, her song is sung.

Wrinkled skin, in the stillness of thought,
smooth silence becomes her lover.

Jagged edges cool the day, oiled
edges warm the night, these icon.

Wise in her dark leafy bed, summer
blurs the bodies of her blood.

Time wanders away, rushes back, she
touches others, pulling time apart.

That night in Oaxaca, inside the
cantina, sheltered from the war.

Haiku Café

Haiku café, shiny surfaces,
disentanglement, Funkytown.

Under the window's fading light,
enclosures of private thought.

In the near, under ceilings,
the decimation of desolation.

Dance of contraries, the line moves
slowly, things fall behind the counter.

The wide, slow turn of events, seeing
the wind jump, the short breath of space.

A twinkling in the light, an opening,
are we not like each other?

Deep mud of mind, time to be free,
furrow the brow, the weight of waiting.

Heels squeak, a place to sit and talk
amongst the peoples of the earth.

Wonder opens wide, voices raised,
something of everything's said aloud.

Change dances with the familiar,
memory's reborn in the fray.

She wears a jeweled ring, he points
to a piece of the painted ceiling.

White grains in a shaker, high sun
in a pail, elbows on the table.

Lone figures, blinking light, white scarf,
glimpse of snow, sitting in the shadows.

Uplifting thoughts animate the stillness,

Three grownups in a cluster, a child
by herself, she knows how to dance.

The nuclear family, scattered,
W

Vague shapes in the once-shiny floor,
toddler puts the toddler seat away.

Plaid jacket zipped tight, dust in the
ceiling vents,

Tight mouth, pulled to a pinch, fast texting,
ripped jeans,

Singers in unison,
a laughing pair, stir sticks.

Shiny patent leather shoes,

Moving quickly, flight control, abrupt
landing, complete stop, the last seat.

Ponytail, inside a hoodie, eyes of wild
abandon he says,

Serenity floats across her face,
painted birds on the window glass.

Chewing his teething ring, fierce
look of concern, a little potentate.

, blue shirt,
brown hat, cargo pants, white tie, vest, no pie.

An empty coffee cup, pockets full,
a brief aside,

Thrift store tag, obsidian bracelet, three-page
San Antonio pamphlet, driving by himself.

A funny smell, knock before entering.

Startled look, large tub on a truck,
ballet slippers, hung from the mirror.

He nods, a big gun in his holster,

a see-
through blouse, long lists of things to do.

Whispering, she clicks her fingernails,
a gradual darkening of the outside light.

Aging lines that didn't used to be there,
two small drawings, done with care.

Ziploc bag for brand-new brushes,
Southern accent, stern look, eyes aglow.

Mumbling, lumberjack walk,

Sheepskin coat, heart pounding,

Salt shaker missing, socket cover
missing, sudden feeling of bliss.

Argyle socks, sighs, nearly cries, sighs,
pulls her hair, sighs, she looks at the door.

Magic Marker, puffy parka, graph,
mascara,

She's flamboyant, he stumbles, gloves
off, shoulder shake,

Ankle bracelet, bomber jacket,
double chocolate,

Painted shirt, painted tie, jumping
jack, pencil, murder, tapioca.

Old man, balding head, doing the cross-
word puzzle, near the table's edge.

on the edge of his seat, a slight shrug.

Pretty postcards taped to the wall,
large cup of tea, big hug and a kiss.

Baggy pants, hearing aid, patent leather,
hook and ladder, knitted socks.

Pair of flats, painted toes, a
wrinkled nose, pottery, jalapenos.

Diamond brooch, imperious demeanor,

Muscles on top of muscles, gold
chain, baby in a numbered jersey.

Bright skies, sore arm throbbing, poised
to leap, scan the book of maps, start over.

Prepare to Dance

My arms rise and a great being
emerges from me and engulfs me.

This deep love is disappointing
to a life of naming desires.

From deep within, sleeping beauty
arises of her own accord.

There's no one to blame or credit,
this is the love song of all beings.

Splendid fighting queen, her castle's
in my heart, never has she left it.

Emptiest eyes I've ever witnessed,
this love swallows its own name.

There's no one here but here, sense
can't make, missing her is what misses her.

I miss love when I allow it, this missing
begets knowing true love.

From my seat in paradise, some
part of me clings to unhappiness.

I hear the whine of an unfavorite
dog, here in my dogged mind.

How far within the unknown of
love am I prepared to disappear?

Love's arrows aim in, toward the heart,
loss lingers at the abandoned bow.

The only fear in love is its loss,
until I breath it large again.

I try to pinch between my fingers
the invisible sleeve of love.

In my broken heart, lies hidden
the love of the never-broken heart.

Greater than my narrow hold on what
I hold close, lies what can't be held.

I let go of this cherished thing that
I hold, for what, unheld, holds me..

Can I claim some shape of perfection,
come to life in the simple heart?

This love lives between the last breath gone,
and the next breath, not yet breathed.

Deprived is a shadow. Where light
goes looking, it cannot find the dark.

I lose love, to gain love that laughs
at time, as the ocean laughs at rain.

Let this love become itself, so all
can see how it can become two.

I look to be this love I'll be, without
ceasing, when I cease to be.

The phoenix rising, sings,

All earthy joys are exquisite
and immediate in this moment.

All small loves turn to paper
houses in wind, in rain, in fire.

I desire to breathe, to exist,
or do I only fear their loss?

I can't remember when this paradise
was over there, somewhere else.

We live inside our lives like dreams
in sleep, like leaves in a whirlwind.

It takes only a little fear
to back off from this reality.

This is love's only definition
that doesn't lie, just a little.

Two lovers love, one waits, the other
loves, the one who waits, waits alone.

Fearful love is the king of romance,
fearless love is all this that is.

I glance back at the edge of
the rapidly receding precipice.

I sing in, to the heart of the heart,
even grief awakens this love.

How can I love, when love begins
everywhere, and its end cannot be found?

I release love's shadow, I let light make
love to light, where is the problem?

Streets of New York

Beauty wears itself, lives entwine
with tender tentacles, see boys dance.

Crowds, where the poet drank himself
to death, celebration takes his place.

A short, narrow street, carpeted with leaves,
soaked by rain fallen from the sky.

Patient wait for a poem, inside
its coming, I think of nothing.

To report building's condition, one
writes a poem and leaves it behind.

Like surging water, two black
dogs pass a seated, elderly man.

A girl, smoking, leans to one side,
in the door of a fashion shop.

A parade, a steady beat, dancers
in the street, routine grace and bliss..

Trains run into the city, their
riders, in love with arrival.

Brightly lit lounge, start of a party,
rolling rooms, the enclosing dark.

A white limousine parallels the
train, then slips silently away.

Talkers bend to each other, in the
steady murmur, rumble and roar.

Man leans close to his partner,
he says to the other.

This Blank Page

Back home again in the blank page,
at ease in its welcome expanse.

Where nothing is, I live free,
in the nativity of all that is.

A blank page is not nothing, nor
an empty mind nothing, nothing is.

Who talks of nothing, when all talk
is of something, even this nothing?

The word nothing's a mask of its
heart, a portrait of barest nature.

This blank page is a template of
everything that becomes of it.

This blank page is a photo of all
thought, before it becomes a thought. .

These words on this page are flick-
ering eyelashes on these seeing eyes.

Words clutter the page with the
textured sound of their empty origin.

Words that paint themselves to be seen
are made for seeing, to be seen through.

All these parts of the whole, narrowed
to something seen, show beyond themselves.

How can I say so much of nothing?
How can I not? What is this life?

Here by the grace of nothing, my
gratitude is boundless, still unseen.

is a word for this everywhere,
is a word for this always.

This blank page, that I call myself,
looks a lot like you, and you, and you.

This blank page knows no other, needs
no other, yet grows beyond itself.

These words outgrow themselves, blooming
wordless in the transformed air of time.

Nothing is nothing, until something
assumes its place, changing its face.

Empty page, mother of many births,
womb of wonder, its earth is here.

This blank self writes its heart in wonder,
and again, in thought, word and deed.

Words chase words, until I return
to the invisible starting line.

I'm home where and
end in their quiet emergency.

This page contains galaxies in
the reach of its enticing terror.

I stare at emptiness before me
and recognize myself, alive.

This empty heart, vacant in aspect,
fills every word with its fiery pulse.

From vacancy, to drawn upon,
from unwritten, to written upon.

Who I am, this unshown unknown,
appears here, in words of life, alive.

I Spilled Coffee on the Buddha

The crying of the loons plays sweet
havoc with the croaking of the frogs.

Soles sink, grain by grain, weight reshapes
the sand, beneath my feet, behind me.

While I wait for someone coming,
I hear the lapping of the water.

My heart goes out through my ribs, to
embrace a heart, come out to meet it.

I feel alone, and the vast meadow
of love opens, once again.

I know how lonely it is, in the
night, after the howling is done.

I am as tired as any common
metaphor one might think of.

I lay down on the grass for long
enough to be at home with the ground.

In an open heart, I am made conscious
of my least conscious passions.

Life speaks through the hollow in a
stone wall, in the middle of nowhere.

I move about, invisible as a jackdaw
in a shoebox, some might call it murder.

A shabbily dressed old farmer, humble
and grateful, stands silent by.

When I feel love, I am not afraid,
I see the trees of the forest.

It isn't being nice that pleases the cat,
but gladness in one's heart.

There seems a time, in my ancient
memory, when war went unanswered.

I ask to hear the secret of long life,
the answer comes,

An eagle rises from a song sung
and spreads its wings across the sky.

We march to the beat of a tin drum
in the hands of a small child.

I accused her of weeping, I recanted,
she forgave me, I wept.

I've lost it all, I cry, as my heart
begins to reshape the world.

A bonanza of grief is my reward,
I've learned everything but this.

Light grows louder, drowns out the color
that shown brightly, moments before.

When my body abandons its spirit,
I send it back in, for life.

Courage puts away the steely heart,
at the risk of one's uniform.

Parts of the art and the artist
are joined in their public embrace.

A flower says to one who adores it,

I'm born, thrive, and die, in this life
of wonder in the blink of an eye.

Steam from a kettle, I can feel when
my dreams leave my sweat-soaked body.

Startled back into the common-
place of tasting of my own saliva.

This world's a vale of tears,
the same world's a vale of laughter.

Without guile or guilt, I spilled
coffee on the Buddha, both smiling.

Love Letters to an Absent God

Here within this now, I have no
relationship with you or to you.

What separation is there between
us to keep us linked together?

How can I pray out to you when
you're not over there, somewhere else?

I pray out to you, but you're not
out there, I pray in, and here you are.

I liked you when you were over there,
you're here now, and I can't see you.

You are not what I imagined
when I imagined you from afar.

When I go away from you,
I'm deliciously miserable.

But my misery goes bad, it sours
and begins to cause me pain.

Who can I complain to, when
I'm the one who goes away?

With you, all my problems dissolve,
I'll never have problems again.

I gave up all my problems for you,
but I kept thinking about them.

Thinking, my favorite problem,
the problem I love, I give to you.

This love is polymorphously
monogamous and faithful to all.

My love is not jealous, it doesn't
mind if others' love is the same.

Where did this being here come from?
This love has no coming or going.

Love of mine, since I can't lose you,
how can I sing my sad song of loss?

I say I love, but this speaking is
beyond words, so I sing love's love.

This singing comes up in my heart,
in my throat, in my eyes, in my mind.

Before I knew love, I couldn't
tell who I loved, I loved the many.

I loved this one, I loved that one,
I loved myself, from time to time.

This love is now upon me like a year
of seasons, like uncalendared time.

Raindrops, falling, shout at the sea,
, and it's proven.

I look in love, and where does my
wisdom go? I can't think of a thing.

I stop feeling emotional, my head-
ache and heartache go away.

I look in love, I look in and I look
out from nothing to nothing.

Living in love, we recognize
each other, in being who we are.

My seeing returns from where it
came, I find my love is here within.

Love's clothing conceals love within,
this love strips all pretense from love.

Love's light is my raw naked reality
stripped of all other claims.

Outbursts of love, inbursting upon
my heart, how do I find their source?

I look where direction has no
arrows, I look deep within the seer.

Within this love, I can't see without.
Where is without, within this love?

Within this love is everywhere,
and without this love is still within.

Wave and rain and ocean have no
quarrel to mend with each other.

Rain speaks to the greater ocean
it falls upon, enters, and becomes.

I say I love, as a wave becomes
itself, within the ocean's swell.

The greatest love I've ever known
comes from the love I've always been.

Finally, I have tasted my true love,
beyond all these names for love.

I stay away from love only when
I stay away from who I am.

This nameless love begins everywhere,
and its end cannot be found.

In these passing times, I teased with love,
a style of clothing, sometimes worn.

Now, this love has stripped me naked
to love without a moment's ceasing.

Life is not nothing to be left for love,
this love gives and takes nothing.

A man lives inside his life like sleep,
then one day, he is awakened.

In life, a man is lifted up, like
leaves in a whirlwind, like wind.

New love creaks in me, like pain before
the peace I have never not known

Walking in San Francisco, 1974

Cappuccino overflows the cup,
cigarette soaks in the saucer.

Only thing the walker's waiting
for is the direction he's going.

Some people are out on the street like
they just wandered in off the street.

A man sweeps debris to the street,
table scraps, onto the floor below.

A man pinch-grips his cigarette,
the wing of a poison butterfly.

A wine merchant hauls empty gallons
to his truck, glass skulls on a string.

Gold, on his chest, young man sleeps
on the red aurora of his jacket.

A matron's casual slight, almost
seeing the object of her scorn.

Young girl, tiny silver fork earrings,
steps on her friend's foot and grins.

A man squats down to be the picture,
his wife squats to take it, they rise.

Blue ladies sit down in unison,
cross their legs into the bargain.

The square's monument to war, Long
tells Dewey,

Like you'd imagine it to be,
a building, in every detail.

Newspaper against the steps,
like a large leaf of legible lettuce.

Jack-hammer, next to the curb,
a giant battery-powered nail file.

Barber, sitting cross-legged in his
chair, reading yesterday's paper.

Here's the old puppet man, crossing
the street, with his bag of tricks.

Red head in a green hedge,
gutter ball in a bushy bowling alley.

He looks kicked out, cake box, smoky
vase, one paper flower, downturned face.

Against a marble panel, the blind man
holds his hat, waist high, with both hands.

A big yellow fish consumes two morsels
through a vent in its right side.

At the pier, mother, son dip fries in
ketchup, father, son split fish heads.

The pier, the arm of a tour j'eté,
the velvet curtain of the bay.

Strider throws the ripples of his
soles across the asphalt behind him.

The only conversations on the bus,
in Chinese, sound familiar.

At the lake, a couple embraces,
beside the road, beside their car.

Arboretum cat rubs against
Mahoberberis myethkeana.

Ducks and geese on the pond, a floor,
with all the properties of water.

A robin plucks berries into its throat,
quick fingers to the hors d'oeuvres.

A pale green hose lay on
the grass, perspiring violently.

A clean gray margin of fog, above
the turbulent blue page of sea.

Repeatedly, Number 3 slides into
home, throws the ball out to sea.

A distraught man, hunched over, as
waves end in a wash small boys play in.

A seagull, lying against the wind,
a small hand from a speeding car.

Traffic crush, a Niagara of boulders,
no barrel would stand a chance.

High window, potted plant, bald man
in a t-shirt, leaning to the sun.

Eight AM streetcar, silent readers,
restless eyes dart from face to face

Woman surveys the packed streetcar,
like scanning bad fruits and vegetables

He says he'll cut her hair, foams a
little at the corner of his mouth.

Reading the horoscope, she genuflects
at each church the streetcar passes.

Boy holds his transfer like an unhappy
message, home from the teacher.

Parahandler's hat comes off, goes down
between his knees, becomes an income.

Library patrons slip past guards, bold as
thieves, with their books in their heads.

Five old men, wearing hats, six old
women in kerchiefs, wind in the trees.

Old Chinese, holding a silver cane,
his face, swept clean of adornment.

A feather on the crosswalk, wheel
breezes,

Cars, on their quick drive home, small rooms
to die in, the streets are full of cars.

Young man nods on the bus, his lips
pink with the residue of cheap wine.

A street lamp glows in the doorway,
a picture frame of the narrow street.

Cigarette hits the pavement, like
the famous death of a firefly.

Fleshy Blue Boat

Words, flowing in the street, the grimy,
running, squatting words, the children.

Poetry, train on a track, truck
on the highway, sitting on a rock.

, and she tossed them in the street.

A fire in my house, flames in my
doorway? It licks, it laps, she burns.

In France, spilling wine and paint, Miller's wife
showed him two tickets for the States.

She's just a tiny dot on the map,
yet things are going on down there.

Trees rush by, running like water-
color, desire flies to my heart.

End of the day, I go home, I go
home, I go home, I go home eat.

A picket fence around your love,
my desire, stuck between the slats.

Bee-Bop Bees, bop and buzz, their new
dance means extra honey in the hive.

Poetry/love - it's clear, you turn
the house on its side, people adjust.

Anatomy - each of us - a fleshy blue
boat - made from airplane parts.

This horse, my skin, my skin, a horse dream,
your wrist against my bare shoulder.

Running, out of breath, the box I
crawl into, is my path to freedom.

Eagle, noise in my ears, spots a small
moving thing on the ground below.

Out across the bay, I fall down drunk
on the far shore, in my window.

Eyes closed, I plant myself, a leg
kicks out a root in the cool mind.

I listen to the radio, all night long, the
sound of the sea rising up from below.

I'm beaten down, drunk on the difference
between that and who I am.

Fish jump out of the sea, sunlight sings
in the sky, birds fly, shore to shore.

Images flood the floor, lap the walls,
I drink and drown for a fresh poem.

Alone, I walked to school, the others,
running on paths, behind the trees.

Dedalus explains the death of
his son as a boating accident.

I go away, come back, go away,
come back, and the pear ripens.

I catch my finest thoughts in brief
moments, awaiting their swift return.

A glass, the rain, long grass, soft
music, leaping into the room, shouting.

Muscle cells, tissue cells, neural
cells, everything sells but poetry.

I wandered mindlessly into
this den of lack of iniquity.

My heart was a fish at sea. Life,
inland, has put legs on my wisdom.

Lying down, drips from the cup
slip warmly into my favorite shirt.

Seeing a glass half full, wise one says,

Hometown of the Moon

, the seeker says to himself,

I went to prison, then to a drive-in
for lunch, , I wonder.

Before freedom, chop wood, carry
water, after freedom, still busy.

Feeling depressed while singing
in the rain, I don't neglect the rain.

In my heart, even defeat tastes
like victory, I cheer, shout, and weep.

Nature poets in the city still catch
their breath, still gaze at the moon.

No talking to myself. Now, I listen.
Now, no one calls me crazy.

I point to the moon, moon fades, so
I point to the hometown of the moon.

Day after day, year in, year out,
rollercoasters on the volcano.

I raise flowers to arrest the sun,
I raise a candle to the light.

These words are an oar, pointed at
the place in the ocean called ocean

I draw a straight line through
the invisible, until it disappears.

My mind is wood, inherently
wishing to become its own fire.

I'm not an ego, but life itself,
hanging out, on a Friday night.

Attack of the Heart

In this place of beauty, the air
creates rooms of textured detail.

In this place of beauty, each face
appears serene, or intent, or both.

In this place of beauty, breathing
is soft like the sigh of the forest.

In this place of great beauty, my
heart dies and revives within itself.

In this beauty, the poem speaks
to the other purpose of breathing.

In this place of life's greatest beauty,
one breathes the heart of one's life.

Breathing is the occupation of
stillness in the flight of being.

Still by nature, I am made still
by my habit of living in life.

I am made still by the sudden
encroachment of my impending death.

I'm made still, not against motion,
not out of time, not in stolen truth.

To know this being in its stillness,
I am made quick by the meeting.

The quick and the night are the same
delight, here within their unseen light.

Two moments reach in the lungs to
pull the breath out for greater duty.

The lungs engage their finest wind,
witness to beauty, proclaiming love.

I inhale and exhale myself in some
greater proportion profound.

When spirit in this beast arranges
these lungs into storm and wonder.

This sudden conversion of small
into largest of all, feels right size.

When death is near, anticipation
dies and dying's less a concern.

Metaphor's lost, I come home to
no more imagining abrupt death.

I live death's moment, with no
facsimile of imagined dying.

I feel grace, not anticipation's
ache of warning and conquest.

My dreams teem with life, both ape
and owl, sleeping cat, and tiger too..

This arrival holds the door, until
endless arrival takes its place.

This new force rearranges one's
life into its slight derangement.

Any derangement tries to hold what's
unheld, in concert with the wind.

A note seems held in the throat, while
the sound fades away in the distance.

Time becomes meaningless, when this
cup overflows with true emptiness.

In the nature of what is, I find
the prediction of what may come.

Feet on the ground, toes in the earth,
I sense when rain is coming or not.

This is the present, that grows more
true to itself, as the droplets fall.

Racketed by contraries, I with-
draw to my heart, a garden plot.

Bachelored by the pursuit of
lovers, I retreat to open rooms.

Bed room, work room, wash room, dining
room, living room, and the roomless room.

My cluttered heart collects its
obstructions, even to its own damage,

Then the heart is cleared, and it
pumps again with original brilliance.

All of what I am, in the way of love,
conjures a face before me.

Parts of love are held apart from
each other when one part is desire.

When one face of love fades, what
requires love itself to fade with it?

The setting sun, in some portion divine,
is not cut from its moorings.

If what I care for, slips my care,
why should I not still care for caring?

I pursue care, ready to forgo
the poem for its poetry.

She's gone where going goes, I carry
my heart home, safe for the sunrise.

I return to where my heart's
seen itself open, and opens again,

To partner my heart, I seek to
see it delight in no difference.

For most of life, death is external,
a piece of the sky that might fall.

Until death appears in the here and
now, and one's chorus falls silent.

The physical accepts its place,
among the wonders and the terrors.

Acceptance is a voice that soothes
the short-lived and sings the timeless.

In this imagination, fear is my
some-time choreographer.

Every day in the world, some
terror scrapes my complacency,

But I am composed of peace,
even when I'm overtaken by war.

I am the ground, on which my fear
dances its doomed flight, I am the air.

This room of spirit, grace, and love,
can't be entered by calling these names.

This approximation that we call
all we think we are, is tempting.

Each animal, not keen to its death,
slips into a comfortable calm.

In our dulled wisdom, we
experience an ease of eternity,

We tell our children that grandfather
isn't dead, he's only sleeping.

My body's a home of life and
death, and I am its overseer.

My truancy from this room of
time, lures me to a greater knowing.

True knowing is the bloom of
eternity in the garden of time.

Troy falls, Helen dies, this precious
shape of self is nearest to nothing.

What shall I compare to, when
comparison is the censor of truth?

We never left the garden, we
merely stopped being at home there.

Now the taste of death is on my tongue,
I don't need its bite to wake me.

It is here, if not in full, in
degree enough to be felt real.

My habit as a poet was once
to describe the room I was in.

Then I saw it was to be present
without time's furniture.

I speak to see the roomless room,
uncluttered of any name for it.

The olive-oil pepper-slice slides from
the sandwich to the plate below.

I witness the details of the
emptiness of the miraculous.

I try to enter the room of
the poem, but it enters instead.

This is the way the sun enters a
room, the body, the eyes, the heart,

I speak of a room, I knock out
the walls and build nothing in its place.

I enter the oracle's cave and
feel shock at its recognition.

I look askance at these poems,
and I see the approximate words.

In this orgasm of life, I live
the simple real of its sting.

Naked and Dancing All the Time

A painting draws a man into
the moment of his being alive,

Past memory and meaning, he feels
caught between prayer and having sex.

If he calls the painting a master-
piece, it fades to definition.

I loved a woman of great beauty,
men became fools in her presence,

I wanted her to be as real
as the moment of her beauty,

I wanted to bring this life
of magic into its reality,

And not be something we elevate
and denigrate beyond our reach.

When my stunning lover left me,
the woman at the grocery said,

"You lost her, she was too much
for you." I agreed, and I didn't agree,

I saw her as another of us,
struggling to accept the moment,

To see beauty as an expression
of our common reality,

She pursued herself as a career,
to make her beauty a profession,

This is what happens to master-
pieces, each of us, a masterpiece,

When we do nothing to give
ourselves a name or a definition.

*

When I surrender to this life,
I become clear in my surrender,

But my thoughts work to regain their
hold, like steady rain on the window,

My incessant mind wants my
attention on the idea of love,

Where even the possibility of
love becomes another thought,

Like any of the forms of love,
until I release the thought of love.

We know our thoughts, like breezes, gusts
and gales, like creatures of the wind,

Until this constant, blowing wind
becomes the element we inhabit,

Until all activity becomes
the decoration of the wind.

Whatever one has in one's mind
becomes a part of the blowing wind,

So that when anyone comes in from
the wind, they bring the wind with them,

The wind in the trees becomes the wind
in my eyes, the wind in my heart,

Until I gain a fierce tranquility,
or I succumb to the wind.

The constant wind seems intentional,
as if it had a will of its own,

I respond to the will of the wind,
I give it my fears and desires,

To claim these to be who I am
is like calling the wind by a name,

I have nothing to hold, and I have
no way to hold what can't be held,

When the wind relents, and the air
is calm, I rest in my windless being,

The wind is known for its fervor,
but this silent windhouse is my home.

Out of the wind, I see I am blown
alive by this windless being,

I'm here, living a life, and a wind
has blown through the generations,

From the beginning to this time
of forming words to an expression,

I am the same as the nameless
energy of its tranquility.

*

To let go of our common, shared
commitment to a life of naming,

Feels like betrayal, even when
defining this self is counterfeit,

Even when the words I speak, this
masquerade, compound the deception,

I cling to these approximations, but
something of nothing cuts through,

Until I hear the voice of stillness,
stillness remains in every word.

*

I grieve the loss of one I imagined
to be a part of my heart,

When I hold my loss, thought floods
the awareness that frees my heart,

When I resist the transience of
life, I become my own façade,

I'm drawn to these façades like a
dramatic play of pain and pleasure,

I sit in agitation and imagine
the presence of my peace,

And when I neglect the awareness
that would ease my agitation,

I grip my life of pain and pleasure
in the same fist that blocks its peace,

The dream of peace and power of love
soothes my pain and feeds my pleasure,

I love this drama of neglected
awareness and postponed freedom,

I cherish this moviemaking life,
this bright film of reality.

I love my desperate dreams,
populated by terrible circumstance,

*

This engagement binds my love
of the theater I see before me,

And when I leave the theater,
I engage my love of its relief,

Just as when any fiction
ends its imaginary existence.

In rebellion, my mind says, "You'll die
without these things you think you need."

Thoughts of freedom sound foolish
in the mind that's addicted to itself,

But the captivating drama of
life and death is a shadow show.

In love with light, I sit in shadow,
and from the shadows, I love light,

Until I break the contract of thought,
these dogmas, this belief school,

These ideas I hold close, this doctrine
that soothes and savages my life.

My mind calls this another example
of the failure of the mind,

In love of its own ways, this is
the kind of thinking the mind enjoys,

My mind tells me I'm the deceiver,
the deceived, and the deception,

Bound together in the way we're
human, living in the love of life.

Traitor to my history, I break
the contract of illusion, and,

If dropping out of the shadow
school is as difficult as it seems,

Where even among those committed
to its pursuit and achievement,

Such clarity seems arduously found,
how can I recommend it?

This is another message from
the failure of the mind's own habits.

To stay in the shadow school dims
the light, but when I don't know peace,

And peace itself seems illusory,
I may still recall its birthplace.

*

In my darkest days, I've known that
darkness is nothing more than darkness,

Not a sign to deny the sun. Where
light looks, it cannot find the dark.

In our earliest awe and wonder,
we dwelt in fear and desire,

Until the yearning to know who we were
became the romance of gods.

In the romance of this life,
I tired of its approximations.

More alive in the moment that's
shed of its meaning, I fall awake,

And when I find I'm not awake
beyond illusion, beyond meaning,

I see that I am easily misled
by the habits of my life,

That cling to life itself. I attend
to the crowded moments of life,

But when I give in to the unnamed,
empty moment of life itself,

I pause, and I stop running around
myself, in anxious attendance

*

I honor the poet who died young,
who lived in pain before he died,

He lived in beauty, aware of his
mortality, death was his foil.

Being a poet is not what made
him present in his life or ours,

He stood in the nowhere of his
beauty, and he spoke the truth of it,

His rise from the fire was a look
through the eyes of eternity,

Neither his living nor his dying,
he was the heart of the moment,

Destined to die, our lives may seem
graceless, we want peace and survival.

We want eternity for ours, and
we hope to fashion a fine mask.

But our masks cannot save us,
so we devise masks of eternity.

I forgive my dying, when
I live in this identical moment,

This has been my ready expression,
and I have no more use for it,

Before, I may have gotten drunk,
a clumsy romance of the body,

Camouflage for facing myself
alone in an empty universe,

I choose to live past these addictions
and the romance of their uses,

Past love's facade, neither
its memory nor its anticipation,

I let go of balancing the imbalance
as something to be done,

Doing is done, and undone, until
nothing's left to do, but nothing.

I discover I'm free in this nothing
doing, not the absence of something,

But the presence of everything,
with no searching reach for anything.

In the first shock of being, we fell
in love with the life of the mind,

This curious separation from
everything seen and unseen,

This demanding desire to unite
with the seen and the unseen.

I've lived in a mind that thrives
in the play of its enticing pieces,

I fell into the fear I was alone,
I fell through fear, through terror,

I fell into the abyss of my
own being, then into its peace,

The vast peace that thrives in the
unteachable fullness of life itself.

*

Living on earth, as the physical
children of physical others,

We create structure where none
exists, hello, mother, hello, father.

We want life to have meaning,
until meaning overtakes life itself.

Knowing my life at its essence
did nothing to free my compulsion,

Romancing existence became
my personal pillar of meaning,

I founded life on something of
nothing, as if that gave it meaning.

I shaped nothingness to my liking, we
have named this selfless self, soul.

In my thoughts, I became a hero
of concentrated emptiness,

In the fullness of being,
as a rich, romantic reality,

The meaning of meaninglessness,
a soulful version of the real.

And my greedy mind stayed at play,
always a thing in everything.

I thought of no thought, with no one
present to have the thought of no thought,

No one to witness thought's absence
except this wondrous thing of nothing,

I was at ease in a pretense I might
have enjoyed for a lifetime.

I kept a self that allowed for
passion, despair, and disillusion,

With all the character of anyone
one might meet on the street.

The self as soul, center of the
universe, placeholder of meaning,

I tried to match, in heart and mind,
the deepest of what I've always been,

But this selfless self's a self of the
mind, that believes its own beliefs,

Even when it knows the mind's workings
are a bundling of gossamer.

This domain of thought and feeling is no
small feat, we've done ourselves proud,

As self-imagining creatures
of our own beliefs and sensations.

Naming the unnamable became
the romancing of existence,

Until love of existence became
the love of its definition,

Here's the book of my gods, my passions,
my reason, they are the same book.

*

Brokenhearted in love, I have
never been broken in love itself,

Love has been my fullness, my
emptiness, my drug, my awakening.

I have been asleep in love, I have
been awake in love, my haven,

A respite from disappearing
in unnamable reality.

Why go any deeper in this being
here, when love is all there is?

I'm the storm, I am the eye of
the storm, I refuse any refuge.

One man lay on the barren ground,
to witness the death of the body.

I lie in stillness to witness the
death of the proximating mind.

Unreceptive to directives from the
mind, despair seeks my quiet heart,

In this threat to control, thought
works to convince me I am my despair,

But I'm not this despair, I am the
moment in which despair occurs.

*

Every mother bonds us to
a life of union and separation,

Whenever anyone close dies
or goes away, one may despair,

I despair in the death of my love
of this life and of this being,

I despair in the death of my love
of the world, of love itself.

But I am that mother, no longer
here to anchor my love and fear,

This is the moment of release
from the romancing of the real.

Alive in the thought of being
a lover, of being thought a lover,

Alive in this moment, there is no
more need for this feint of the real,

Unheld in love, I'm the same
as the love that I imagine holding,

As if all love were a passing thing,
but this love does not come and go,

Whoever has lost a love may transcend
these transient thoughts of love,

I accept this despair, to see the
fullness greater than any loss,

I stay to see separation between
all forms of love disappear.

*

We are wise to listen to the wise,
until we leave the wise behind,

To go into the unknown the wise
can only describe from a distance,

We know the lush and dangerous
wilderness of our own existence,

Even if we don't trek to its heart,
its center is always with us.

A man tells his time as a monk,
its rigors made to free the mind,

He saw the natural aging of his life
had done the work for him.

Nothing was as clearly seen in his
mind, as when he stopped holding it.

I stay in thought's awareness,
until thinking fails to seduce me.

I stay until I feel the ground beneath
thought's construction, fall away.

I stay in the heart of love, until
romance is freed from its habits,

Until desire is its occasion,
and not love's authority.

*

Knowing who I am and where I
come from is not the end of travel,

Free of the mind's romance is not
the same as being sent to a Gulag,

I don't love any hero, any god,
any lover, any less,

For setting them free from the
desire and the romance of the heart.

Instead, I live in that wider
reality that includes them all.

I am not water, I am not movement,
I'm not the course of my flow,

I'm not the shadow of my stream,
but its occasion, its energy,

I'm the being of this awareness,
the awareness of this being.

When I stop eating my sugar, I think
something needs to take its place,

Nothing is so sweet that it needs
to take the place of reality,

Godot has come and gone, love itself
leads nowhere but to love itself.

This is what is so disconcerting,
this peace contains no containment,

My sugar speaks of paradise,
It guarantees my seat on the plane,

Until I find I am already
living at my destination,

Waking up in paradise is a
disappointment to the airlines,

After living in the house of
romance, now I live in who I am.

Familiarity is gone from
all I once thought familiar.

Without its deep romantic cast,
I lose the play of its filtered light,

Seeing becomes sight, sight becomes
vision, with no division between.

*

I took a welcome trip to a
foreign country, it was magical.

I went a second time, expecting
the same, but it was real.

I prefer reality, but I might
have denied it, that first time,

Romance is a charming dance that
doesn't seem false when it's occurring.

Romance makes the routine
miraculous, the miraculous routine.

This real comes dressed as itself,
I drank espresso in Progreso.

Reality terrifies and inspires,
I climbed the pyramids.

*

In this theatre of life, I see
other dramatic characters,

Dancing, singing, hating,
fighting, killing, loving,

I see others, in fear and passion,
accepting and denying life,

Acting in and out of control,
fully alive in their own being,

My character has substance, yet
with no body, costume, or language,

Nothing seems to be filling out or
holding up my life's performance.

Sitting in an empty chair, I see
arms, legs, the trunk of a body,

I hear the timber, resonance
and echo of a voice, crying out,

Deep within my throat, I hear the
call of kings, and I become a king,

I hear wailing, I become a naked
baby on a dark highway.

The roar of the gathering crowd
makes me a hero or a villain.

I sing out the voices in my throat,
until there seems no end to them.

Someone enters through an open
door, there is a picture on the wall.

Since I'm none of what I appear
to be, I'm free to be who I am,

Characters come to the fore, they
run the gamut of thought and action,

Emotions, intimacy, idiocy,
I hear a clock ticking,

I speak of the real, and I remain
no one, wearing my costume,

I want to know the script, what happens
next, I look across the footlights,

My throat constricts, there's stage fright
in performing this all-too-human life,

I become fearful of the empty, silent
stage, I want to know something,

Where should I stand, and what should
my character be? I tighten my belt.

I want to learn the comings and
goings of all the other players.

Do I speak? We greet each other,
I become one in their company,

Here is the director's chair. I write,
direct, and perform all the parts.

I stammer, when I can't remember
my lines, I posture, I hold forth,

When I have no speaking lines,
I become an extra, holding a spear.

I fade into the background, I stand
by the side, I come to the front.

I tear at the scenery, I topple
the walls, I rip out the seats.

I hope for meaning, yet nothing
changes the state of my awareness.

I rest, in character, conscious
and aware, witness to the drama.

In the moment of who I am, none
of this is mine. I comb my hair.

I can't be misunderstood. Something
tells the truth, I put down my script.

Nothing surpasses the theatre
of there being no theatre.

I create a show, knowing nothing
shows what is, but everything does.

I cannot tell what is, without
being its salesman. There's music.

There is nothing that does not
reveal what is, so I take a bow.

I speak as if I'm present. I claim
the space empty of my presence.

I'm sound in a shape that composes
a song to its own emptiness.

I take heart in the disappearance
of what makes itself seen and heard.

Holding out my hands. I shout, "I am
not here!" I whisper, "Here I am."

I speak to the empty reaches
of this theatre. It's a big space.

My mind swims. It swirls with thought,
knowing no-thought is thought's origin.

No-thought populates my thinking,
no-man inhabits my body.

No-stage supports my performance,
no-universe stretches to my end.

*

This man, born a boy to parents
in Illinois, stands on the stage.

He speaks to nothing and no one,
to everything and to everyone.

He says we talk together, so our hearts
may commune with each other,

We talk together, so our common
being may commune with itself.

This one that he is, who says there
is no one present, is the same one

Who appears here now in place
of his emptiness. It is what we do.

This art that frames me human
is the same art that shows me artless.

In the art of this artless being,
a voice comes out of the darkness,

I Is My Name

I is my name, used everywhere,
by everyone, it's an alias,

I stands on a stage, I looks at
people's faces. The world is alive,

I reads written poems in reference
to what I sees around me.

I also writes what I thinks, feels,
knows, imagines, and what I is.

Since I is an alias, what
I says is also an alias.

These poems - an alias for what is,
I - the alias maker.

What is real and what is not real,
sometimes I know, sometimes I don't know.

It's hard to keep it straight,
when I is an alias for who I am.

If I speaks of a bear, the wind, the moon,
or the trees, it seems more clear,

But all things are an alias for their
essence - they are what we see.

I say I is an alias, I try
to indicate its essence.

The essence of I is not as
definable as its name or face.

Awareness of the essence of I
is the freedom of detachment.

I often say I, at the very
beginning of my detachment.

Then I say goodbye to I, say hello
to everything, then let go,

I say bear - there is no bear. I say the
bear lives in the woods - no woods.

There is a bear, there's a poem, and
there's an I who writes these words.

I is lost in the details - the details
are found in their essence.

I looks down the road, and I sees
a running bear. I runs with the bear.

I is the bear, I am the bear,
I is the bear running, I run.

The more I say I, the more
I am defined as the undefined I.

Each of us is I. I speaks for
all of us. I has many other names.

Repeat after me - I, your name,
repeat after me - My name is I.

I go for a walk, the rain comes
down, I become wet, I is the rain.

I cry, I cries, tears fall, I rains down,
the ground, is drenched, I is the ground.

I have my ways, I is the way to I,
I gets in the way of I.

I walk with a striding gait, I slump,
I slouch. It's what I does. I do.

Essence is always here. The face
of essence fades in and out of sight,

I is wearing a shirt in the shape
of I. It's a new cotton shirt.

I is wearing new shoes. I is bare
foot. I is footless, without feet.

I has no face. I takes my face.
It's a nice face. Faceless, I smiles,

A brightly plumed bird flew by, ten
thousand years ago. Do you see it?

Dream the future, what will be,
it lives too, in the alias of I.

Room of aliases, this churning
cauldron, this amazement of I.

This love of life, common
inheritance, pomposity of self.

Engine of dreams, origin
of imagination, I let I sing.

Shout I from the hilltop. Whisper
I in the darkness. I lives its life.

I say I in poems. I say I in life.
You is no different..

We is no better. It's another
alias. We is plural I.

Do not despair. Fall back in
recognition. I, you, we are fine.

Who we are is naked, dancing all
the time this nameless dance of life.

Even in our unspeakable death,
we dance the joules of molecules.

Stop and dance, I tells my self. There's
room to be free, here, inside no I.

Scratch a Family

Scratch a family, see what bleeds,
what becomes the life of its children. .

We unearth what's stored in mind,
for unpredictable use in unbound life.

Pine cones litter the way - soft
grenades - a tree's regeneration.

A curious boy follows a snake
as it slips under a closed gate.

A child is a mind in a body at
play, before fear is named.

Elbow on glass, this garden cafe,
the earth lies beneath it, unseen.

Animals in the city imagine
themselves running in the wild.

Old dog howls at the moon in the
dark night of a clear blue sky.

A greyhound gracefully runs by its
owner's side, tethered with a rope.

Looking up, barely out, a man talks
of honkey-tonks and road repairs.

Ambition is a fraud, contrived for
the benefit of gain and loss.

All rivers flow to the sea as if
they're one, but for the alligators.

Laughter interrupts life with more
joy than melancholy can conjure.

An old man sleeps in cafes,
resting the machinery of his heart.

An old man, a hero in his
private memory, loves licorice.

An old man sleeps in his chair, pen
in his clenched fist, papers in his hat.

Deep in Oregon, an old man recalls
his mother's critical tongue.

An old man, who's not yet old, seeks
his perfect fate in a woman's eyes.

This vast and eternal peace, a breath
in the heart, a moment on earth.

Feet sting from running on cement,
not like the river's muddy bottom.

Rings on her fingers on the keys,
they flick like fleas, like crocodiles.

If music plays in my ears, and no one
hears my voice, am I deaf to myself?

By the lake where I once lived,
a man teaches boys to control a ball.

I rest in a warm breeze. I'm gently
caressed by the ignorant world.

City of no bugs, birds, or beasts,
a running mother pushes a pram.

The wind stirs the trees, branches,
until the leaves seem to control the wind.

Some walkers stride, some stroll, some pace,
some run, some stumble, some skip, some race.

Sun on the water invites the eyes
to dance, alone, or with the trees.

Here we weep, as in the world, we
bully, and the silent children watch.

Inside Modern Art

Looking out from a gallery,
I look deeper - within - from within.

I see water in ruts run down a hill
from a copse of trees - bleeding.

In this modern gallery, white stairs,
white walls, a flat white maze winding.

Artful eyes peer through artful windows,
a dark hall, chunks of broken lives.

Black and white movie, empty room,
wall of cries, a woman eating grapes.

All-white photo on an all-white wall,
a stark likeness of its background.

Art breaks spaces into space, unboxes
boxes, throw curves across sleek floors.

Empty room through, an open door,
a thick wall of undulating waves.

Flesh is film, blood is air, move from room
to room, see the white walls breathing.

This day has me wondering,

Four figures dance in a boat, an oar
stands, smoking a long cigarette.

A man stares at an unpeopled nude,
he sees a wound on painted skin.

Grapefruit on the floor gets a laugh,
the artist paints his great face large.

Wide gallery steps, without color, smooth
as the floors, watch where you walk.

Back on the city streets, the real
made abstract the abstract real.

All things can be made art, we are
the art, street repair everywhere.

Traffic slows to a crawl, lights come on,
the light fades, we linger over tea.

Geese, squawking in flight, come to
rest on a pond, as if by its design.

Stop Time Look Around

The only thing that saves me
from this poet's life is its poetry.

I paint in the dark, wet colors on
wet, footprints in the surging surf.

Sitting still in my chair, all these years,
I barely notice its winged claws.

On this path of nature, the moment
bursts into the air around me.

The wind has no feet, the light has no
wings, heat wears no hat, cold no coat.

I run to the world, forgetting
my feet, I watch my feet and fall.

This life of words, dancing in the dark,
holding a flickering candle.

Behind my eyes, I catch the glint
of gold in their blind capacity.

This peace, never not here, I seek
its reflection everywhere I look.

In this dream, I'm a stone mason,
building walls of words that disappear.

Newspaper, bereft on the table,
in the sun, dried of its content.

The greatest heartbreak we see
is the one we create by our presence.

In the pain of the world, eyes choke
with tears, anger comes without relief.

Death's unbeaten in the taking
of lives, yet we challenge its record.

Brain in knots, I complain about knots
when my complaining ties the knots.

These exploding molecules,
rolled into a conglomeration.

Poetry points at nothing, the sunset,
the dawn, the cold cabbage soup.

Work's a meditation, I say, and
the day flies by, like a fat bird.

I see the sun, mine, I see the moon,
mine, I see myself, no one here.

The songbird does not care what
I think, nor I what the songbird thinks.

I lean a ladder to climb a wall,
spider ignores my mimicry.

Young girl's dog has a muzzle on its
mouth, its nose, full of the world.

Swallows, in eros, climb the clouds,
amid crowds of loud, wallows of wings.

I hung half the earth on the sky,
it began to fall, I held my cry.

I saw the world in a room,
the room was empty, I saw it all.

To become truly naked, no more
anthropomorphizing myself.

Exhaustion crawls up my spine,
back up the pole into the firehouse.

Skin of one hand slides across the
other, two cats fall asleep as one.

Cars in the window, rushing by,
smudges in motion against the sky.

Obsession blurs the moment, for
the sake of its own darkening light.

Wild boars on a wild island, free,
in their sense and sensibility.

Summer sun, its oven heat, no walls or
doors, cooks this great roomless room.

I hope to save the world, alone,
without the world knowing it.

Heroes die timeless, we live, in their
agelessness, the heart's occasion.

Parts of the air, where is their map?
This path leads me around the world.

In joy, I think of joy, often not,
plumed birds appear, fly away.

Somewhere, in between here and there,
here and there begin to live as one,

To be a doer, yet contemplative,
doing need not hide its soul.

Mind does not free its thoughts, nor
a burning barn, the terrified horses.

Forty-nine die at the wield of a gun,
leaves cling to a windblown branch.

Farmer stands with one hand on his truck,
his other hand, counting the rain.

Love is a word for what we are,
other words say what we say we are.

Doors open, lovers emerge, they
populate the night, the band plays on.

Wind flies, without will, through trees,
blood floods the brain, ideas run wild.

Man moves, each foot thrown out ahead,
sun cares nothing of trees or the sea.

Racoon mother blocks her child, her
black eyes, big as bowls of cactus.

Famed writer, rumored raised in a
whorehouse, depends on his memory.

She died in Italy, he in France,
she in Portugal, he in Spain.

Unbound by thought, all we do
is a simple thing, even this thinking.

Memory knows but memory, your
love knows who I am, my love you.

Time is a private thing, shared by all,
air passes through our public lungs.

When I think to live without humility,
my finest love leaves me.

Mind and god, mother of the father,
I leave you for the open road.

This moment is temporarily
forever, every breath knows it.

Thrust into the commonplace
of tasting my own saliva, I live.

Wanting something to inspire me,
I have only this boundless life.

These words are one sound next to
another sound, until we hear their heart.

Crossing through thorny thickets toward
a sea of clover, random birdsong.

I commune with golden butterflies,
with my eyelids, these sudden wings.

Alive in peace, I walk back
into town, craving the familiar.

I look up from my painting, to see
what I'm painting, fresh in the real.

From this empty mind, in this
fiery heart, I love this life of love.

Stop time, look around, nothing is
gone, the moment is birthing itself.

Spiraling Toward Armageddon

My mind is a rabbit hole, I am ground,
in this charade, I am real.

I close my eyes, the world goes dark,
they open, I am born in darkness.

All are welcome among us,
until one is said to be a danger.

Triumph of the chosen over them-
selves, in the shape of the other.

Fear and the desires of the fearful
breed death in the name of life.

Cowed by a lack of faith in life itself,
we arm to the teeth, and wail.

Dire warnings of the fearful drive
us deeper into our own fears.

Failure to make peace among others
brings us to war in our own hearts.

We wave weapons at each other,
in the failure of our ancient faith.

Spiraling toward Armageddon,
the end times for a world of love.

Not what any god of love would
wish for, but a human desire.

Or we welcome human embrace,
and become the presence of freedom.

The beauty of each flower
blooms in its transient reality.

Sending out grasses to fill my eye
with spring, I become a new year.

I live as one not at peace with
the world, and still, in peace, I live.

In the rubble of a fallen house,
so many signs of it rising.

I look for residence in the distance,
and it keeps returning home.

Viewing the cool moon, staring at
the distant light, my eyes turn inward.

Whenever I see train tracks, I go
along their way, no train in sight.

Poet, on the road, making words
from the trees, the sun and the air.

Lost continent of the young, drunk,
drugged, by their recent epiphanies.

Steeped in boiling broth, the vegetables
lose their memory of the earth.

The muse, mostly female, mostly male,
imagination, mostly on its own.

Bobbing in the waves of images
of the world, searching the shore.

This living hand, scribbling messages
from a empty, shaken-out mind.

In fear's awakening, the mind
resists letting go its stolen life.

Look where I cannot see, be my eyes,
I'll be yours, we'll go there as one.

Words, made to be said aloud, resemble
those that front the dancing heart.

Sand from the Sunny Beach

In the desert, jungle awakens.

In the jungle, joy awakens.

Debris of trees lies on the ground,
surrounding its fertile genesis.

In this ocean of forest, I'm drowned,
I'm saved, by my unsparing wilderness.

Those who come to the gate, swing it
wide, except for the worm and the wren.

I strive to translate blades of grass,
a bowl of soup, a barefoot child.

Silence, followed by silence, followed
by unspoken words, then words.

In pain like Colorado, a mountainous
land next to Nebraska.

What tears are these? These tears rain
down, a sky of tears pours into the sea.

Wanting to do one thing,
another thing steals my desire.

When loved ones go away, love turns
to dreams in the light behind the eyes.

Heart knows the heart of what sweeps
the heart away in the heart of itself.

Earth is sacred to those who seek it,
profane to those who ignore grace..

Strong wind blows away the wind,
old family photos, dried and crumbling.

I hear of a war, soon to begin,
out of the war that never dies.

The work bell rings, filling the silence,
unfilled, beyond the sounding bell.

When I fall from a small ladder,
we fall as one, in tune with the earth.

I thought I had seen, but I had not,
then I saw, and now I am seen.

The noise of the world is the noise
of what's in the world to be heard.

Wasp, at peace in its chambered home,
ready, if any threat is to come.

Joy in the world. There it is. Here it is.
No, now it's gone. Now, it's back.

Tall ladder feels the ground when
seeing remains in front of my eyes.

Bee circles like a seagull searches
a new island across the waves.

My brother writes from the islands,
sending me sand from the sunny beach.

Unbound by thought, everything
we do is a simple thing, even thought.

With bowl and spoon, I'm ready
to navigate the world, land and sea

To Touch a Love

I love who you were and who you
have become, which one is the other?

Memories tell our difference,
awareness unites us in the light.

A railing's shadow zigzags down steps
as the sun drops to an angle.

A poet I don't know used my words,
all is stolen, nothing's taken.

The trance of each beginning
signals a deprivation, or a joy.

The street looks the same, speeding
cars are copies of the same, as am I.

My shadow zigzags down the stairs,
as much as I strive to walk upright.

A tourist bus passes, packed with
happy people who live somewhere else.

I pause, in reading my friend's poetry,
it takes time to touch a love.

The sun, in autumn, cooler than in
summer, reminds winter of spring.

So desired outside, the child inside
hides and wonders about the world.

Shaped to the Ear

One fills one's bowl with words, then dumps
them out, they cover the floor, the earth.

Ordinary reality, shaped
to the ear, becomes musical.

We keep in sight what stays in the
eyes, the simple wonder of seeing,

A harvest unseen, the nourishing
ground, beneath the nurturing hand.

This body's life might be seen, if
it too were revealed at the root.

Overwhelmed by life, sometimes by
the name and the naming, we live on.

Humble in its greatness, this life
calls the same to us, until we hear.

She walks twin dogs, who move apart,
then as one, two parts of the same blood.

This heart of mine belches, farts, and roars,
such crude beauty from tender source.

Heartbroken

It's true that I'm heartbroken, I'm
heartbroken in the unbroken heart.

There's nothing in this life that doesn't
show itself to be heartbreaking.

So much is exhilarating, but
the end of it is heartbreaking.

So much is of generous delight,
amid disdain and destruction.

real,

The true feeling of the human heart
as a carrier of wonder.

This heartbreak is the finest way
to honor what the heart knows best.

Love, unafraid to witness itself
in a time of desolation.

Sitting Alone Without Wonder

A rack of apples, polished and shiny,
two hundred teachers await.

A man I don't know shouts across
the cafe, "Who's gonna win the race?"

My head swims in the clouds, I've gotten
too much sun or not enough shade.

Reflected lights in window glass,
flying saucers pose for their pictures.

Cars in the lot, trees on the hillside,
neither are waiting for people.

The older I get, the closer
I get to the age I will be soon.

I curse the memory of my
forgetfulness, and then forget it.

I begin to feel better, the blessing
of a nap, or the world turns.

I counsel myself, as I have been
taught, and then I look to the sky.

Sorrow is my middle name,
after sadness, ahead of despair.

Theres no name for who I really am,
some of us act the way we feel.

Metaphysician, Koan Thyself

I wait to be coming, until
coming I am, from being to be.

I took myself to India, and when
I got home, I was still here.

I took myself to India, and when
I got home, I was here still.

I took myself to India, and when
I got home, I was still, here.

I took myself to India, and when
I got home, here I was, still.

I took myself to India, and when
I got home, still, here I was.

I took myself to India, and still,
when I got home, I was here.

I took myself to India, and when
I got here, I was home there.

Ah Yes

Fires drift from state to state,
breathing becomes dangerous. Ah yes.

We seek to find our place in the
history of hopes and fears. Ah yes.

Dark trees are lit, beyond the glass,
the glass is lit from within. Ah yes.

Words come slowly back, intent
on the silence of this sorrow. Ah yes.

One takes power with his bravado,
saying it's for our sake. Ah yes.

Gasoline spilled by a car, driver
steps aside, no harm done. Ah yes.

Sit down beside the ones in pain,
show them they are not alone. Ah yes.

Good has been taught as long as ill,
only this moment is born. Ah yes.

Dark sky is the home of the light,
we awaken from the night. Ah, yes.

The sun shines in this shrouded heart,
looking for its own way out. Ah yes.

Despair is yet another version
of unremembered joy. Ah yes.

Red Leaves

Red leaves in the trees, yellow and
green beside them, blue sky up above.

Man in an old truck crosses the road,
flying his ragged Stars and Bars.

Memories fight on, dying dreams
still glow, grass is trampled underfoot.

Bone bruise on my heel, I walk slightly
above the ground, training to fly.

The sun shines in the shrouded heart,
a hand touches the chrysanthemum.

The end of the parade, a rusted
van, a trailer for the homeless.

Celebrants crowd into the cafe,
in praise of recent happiness.

Sadness lingers in the air, shrouded
joy wears its well-worn clothing home.

Mothers talk while children play,
domination dances with submission.

In towns, before the wars, streets were
made of earth, now covered in rubble.

Death bangs on doors and windows,
begging, "Please let me in, I mean no harm."

Winter is coming, and yet the lettuce
grows, the grass seems to stay green.

Pretty Postcards

In the near, under the sky,
the decimation of desolation.

A twinkling in the night, an opening,
are we not like each other?

Uplifting thoughts animate the stillness,
the light stays open all night.

The nuclear family, scattered,
we live in front of the future.

Plaid jacket zipped tight, dust in the
ceiling vents, breathing is personal.

Tight mouth, pulled to a pinch, fast texting,
ripped jeans, anger serves the angry.

What's invisible? Singers in unison,
a laughing pair, stir sticks.

Shiny patent leather shoes, non-
compos mentis, it means I love you.

What's your frame of reference?
A funny smell, knock before entering.

He nods, a big gun in his holster,
we live in bastions of plenty.

More than meets the eye, the
origin of absolutely everything.

If you were the one in charge? A see-
through blouse, long lists of things to do.

Lumberjack walk, mumbling, is war
the antidote to complacency?

Sheepskin coat, heart pounding, it's clear
we care for the same things, you and I.

Magic Marker, puffy parka, graphics
mascara, no question you're right.

She's flamboyant, he stumbles, gloves
off, shoulder shake, let the show begin.

Ankle bracelet, bomber jacket,
double chocolate, some catastrophe.

A rhapsody in words, I thought it was
mine, maybe not, maybe it's yours.

Tell the truth, you've seen it all before,
The edge of your seat, a slight shrug.

It takes imagination, bright lights,
and a peaceful place in the heart.

Diamond brooch, imperious demeanor,
she says they're all delinquents.

Pretty postcards, and if I die first?
Cup of tea, big hug and a kiss.

The Other (. Rimbaud)

Any other poet is the same
as I, the same as all others.

Chinese saying, bad government, run
for the hills, good government, same.

Here in the hills, hills and more hills,
out on the prairie, the distant hills.

On the prairie, one can see for miles,
in the hills, one can see the hills.

On the mountain top, below beckons,
no hurry, sky is also home.

Nothing calms like getting night
and day together in their likelihood.

The peeling bark of the sidewalk trees
flutters in the light autumn breeze.

Happiness seems to linger here and
there, your hand on mine, for instance.

Sun warms and then becomes too hot,
how are the heat and the cold at home?

Hope does not hide in these things of love,
but these things of love hide in hope.

Who can say a word against the sun,
except those who blister and burn?

Leaves pile up at the foot of the wall,
around the tables and chairs.