

Driving Without License: Early Poems



Photo by Victoria Pak

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A GIFT OF LOVE

It floated above him
bone wrapped in the flesh

he pulled it in for examining
to the bed beside him

unraveled from the mind's clamp
it was shapeless

she was asking What are you doing
and he was quiet with this disguised

because he knew
that this was his lover

what he had done to her
with the mandible of his mind

flags of skin
hanging around the bone shape
wrapped into the quick present

AEC ORDINANCE

December 22 when wreathes go up
on the security guard-posts

is warm with the desert sun.
In the typing pool Dora agitates
the group. She thinks they ought
to try "It Came Upon the Midnight
Clear" during the lunch hour again.
Two stay embarrassed for her
enthusiasm they tip their eyes
and smile at one another

Three scientists come out
in their white laboratory jackets
and play with a football,
running across and down
with the leading arm raised
and a hand wagged for a signal
the way it always was--when they
were boys and knew only what was done
as what was done in the game

Two of them scramble skyward,
feet and arms mixing loosely
around the blur of white robes;
the ball tips away from the lifted circle of fingers
and rolls its egg-wobbly way against the fence
as awkward as any early A-bomb.

AGAINST RITUALS

Straws burn clean
and smokeless close to heat,
but not alone. I press down
pitch forkfuls to make straws meet
to hold the flame.

A brand
like this can fire fencerows
to spring-clean fields. I stand
downwind then, and watch
the thistles wilting turn
to fired fumes, and dodge
the smoke.

I wait for mice
and wintered gophers racing down
the wasting row from flame
to clean this ground to black

to greet the spring.

AGAINST WEAPONS

Green invades even Sandia at night
the air green night just created
still reeks of damp beginnings

Sponge earth, I could drop your
green water out in some eternity
if I could stretch fingers
like lungs a little further.

The scientists turn to their tables

Tenuous night fills cannoned wash
of space: its loom circles
physics small smaller lost in dark matter
as if spiraled snails devour sea's wash.

ALL ELBOWS ABOVE GRASS

fireweed blow ungainly
knotted by November.
They skid and leap
with a skeletal pulse
and November speed.

Thistles, as romantically
seen, bounce regularly
as wind gusts, predictably
roll across fenceless miles.

But if you built the fences,
it is the fireweed you watch:
Numberless they stagger into rows
and pitch in drifts,
until like Verdun heroes
a few hurl up the ramps
and limp another mile.

When plains winter finishes,
they are thirty feet deep
pitched to the north.
None roll back as
wind changes--having had
issue with the ground
where they spent the winter,
stark joints lie exhausted.

In early April
we will burn the skeletons.

MESSAGE FROM OPENED BONE

Horrored behind my raised razor,
I see myself in this morning mirror
stare through lips into my cave of bones.

Knowing some joke about unveilings,
the bones at the center of me
make a skeleton grin.

The stretching of its skinless lips
rubber band a grimace at the things
I think to offer for intuition fees;

until today I never knew the truth
surrounding whales who shut their eyes
and grind minute bones in dark seas.

ANIMAL TOUCH

Her eyes feel fever hot
behind the lids
And I can touch
the structure's bare hip bone
except for tacked-taut skin.
Behind the hot caved muscle case
life in folds lies

I have watched it pop out
in spring slaughter

blooming then like sprung lilies
behind my butcher's slash,
a balloon-release
that surges and relaxes.

And just a touch away
she blooms

APOCRYPHA

Bait made of tin
Let's say
to bring us wolves
is what we've got

and after years
turn our dull eyes
slack to left right

knowing we wait
in the wrong
wilderness

They are sending
a steel fox with a bellows

to learn fierceness
from that fire

APPLE GREEN

Smiling, she claimed
that these spring trees,
confused in their early start,
have as many tones as fall,

that early yellow flowers
light up the moss-deep grass
like suns, like strobes,
and make the green so bright
our eyes will ache tonight.

Now between the curved hills
she stands in her green dress

I watch her
wade this going stream
dropping single violets
into the water
because she sees
they lose their color
picked.

Better when they grew
beneath the undone trees
and were lighted by
the throb of whiteness
of her thigh beside them.

A TRANSLATION

This is a Truffaut Diner.
Here you must pay attention
to what you find in your soup
a butterfly or a horse or
a moving vehicle

Above us
in the yellow swinging lights
she adjusts her spangles
and gauges the catcher's arc,
lets go and by damn!
just goes on up
propelled by his empty stare
large bright birds
off the backs of kings' coins
wheel down and cover her

One by one the cook handcuffs
each customer to a buffalo
and, they sold us all

If you see a man
come in, moustaches
as fair as wheatheads, if
in the season: The Stars
of Asters, please
put my square flute
where the wind hums
through it

If in the season:
The Stars-of-Asters,
you put my square flute where the wind hums
through it

BEDROOM

Brown night. The electric clock
winds its thread of sound
bunching at one place in the tiny
effort of twitching off minutes.

Counterpoint the pulse beats,
moving tympani of blood against
my pillow louder, surrounding,

I cannot move to stop this
running-down crab time
irrevocably hitching its way
closer across the sheeted darkness

the awkward shell of the ear
convulses again; again; again;

BORROWED SPIDER (after Michael McClure's ababac/us)

YES RIGHT NOW 12: 47 AM
i really saw it
a spider scurrying out
from under the *wastebasket*
with an abacus on its back

the meaning
has something to do
with Tandy Ann
under the cedar windbreak
lying under my brother neither
of them knowing what or why
THAT young but knowing more
than me

and Tandy Ann and him
under the pickup
when it drove off
AND THERE THEY WERE
screwing in the middle of the road
not old enough to have pubic hair but bold
and this to stay untold
except for this years afterward
DREAMING IT REAL

I LOVE THEM
i always meant
to write about the
grand-daddy long-legs
under the culvert where
he took Tandy
it smelled of wet earth
THE FILIMENT LEGS OF SPIDERS
TELL YOUR FORTUNE

You pick one up
hold it by a black leg and he'll point
to where the cows are

Those made no sudden
lunges They were plain gray
no abacus on their backs

BROWN HORSES

Spring has not yet come,
yet these felt-coated
horses
nose the earth.

Thin horses,
their tangled manes
too long and heavy
for spring,
they find in the slight green
of perennial grasses,
edible ice.

Not yet spring, but
they will be the first
to find sweetness
at the earth-ends.

Then the horses toss,
they dance,
torched by this
green burning.

CACOPHONIC RHYTHM

Middle West: a grass rise rolls
and carries up a graveyard
of three limestone pillars
hand-hewed from some outcropping.
Not a dozen others know exactly where.

I've often wished
to find the shelf
where some hard-knuckled man there
wedged and cracked the posts
until they too broke
to feel the rough corners
to see how the three had fit
together in a single slab
of stone-slow birth and growth
until they too were slowly split
for mourning.

Perhaps such intricate marks
are worn away--god knows
the marks the man made trying
to raise a crop on the hills
are buried by the grass.
What all he left was made of stone
these three and a broken line
where he used stone to fence.

The side of one homely, handmade
post could jigsaw match these
but I won't believe that.
Burial pillars need a special wedging,
stroke by stroke a conscious business
and not slivers left from an everyday task,
Any man who'd stay to lose three
felt a lot for things. . . or not at all.
And I believe the better.

His was poetry of the land's first passion,
the unknown beauty of stir and fade.
But the hills beat him at last -
he's nameless as the stones.
Hills scoffed impotent surface love

he never dreamed her deeper love,
the curves she offered to a gambling man

who'd use her for his fullest
pleasure, she pushed her pulsing life
steaming into gunbarrel tanks
at his desires. Oil! Pure velvet days,
winner gambling man, a winner when
those Kentucky drillin' sonsabitches broke grass
for their lusting three thousand feet down.

Jungle up an oil city, West Virginia snakes
hopheads and prosties and roughnecks- -
Where music is
Where rhythm breathes
This will I write
Like whisper-trees- -
But take Jake Baeker's busted
rusted cable-tool rig
that he used to rip
near forty holes for oil-
 (mostly hope and blood to soften ground)
that banging mill made poetry.
And when the bailer dumped
red-stained slush from
his thirty-third dry hole
and broke Jake Baeker good- -
that rendered life. A poem too
is how sharp Jake's rotting rig-lines
scare the sky.
 Rotting rig-lines and limestone pillars
 shadowed against the grass-rise sky.

CANOPY

In the last light a boy
 a girl beside him on the grass
And eight pigeons on the lawn
a brown male fluffing himself
largest of all lightly
 dancing.

The girl lies away from him
He pries at her with heavy eyes
While a pigeon umbrellas himself
over a gray dash of feathers
and six pigeons cry ooh ooh
spin in an awkward mobile
away

COMING HOME

Today you are a traveler come home.
I will gather all the neighborhood
kids and give them kinds of pipes
and chimes, and drums bigger than
they are, and let them unloose
the noise that tightens in me waiting
for you to turn one last block of road
that sharpens to the point of
time and distance

But before they strike up and
lead you in, and you think
we use up the good strangeness
rolling against each other
in the circles of our arms
as if it were something over
let me add one more tympanii
to the music, this:

to me you are always a traveler,
because you are the strangeness
of what I created unbelieving
in me, and then you astonish
by being such grace come alive
to everyday air:

CRADLE OF STONE AND AIR

On this great green toad
of a rock, ragged lichen-
splashed and black-warted
with older stones in quartz

on a house-sized boulder
above where we built fire
two weeks ago, where
if time were retrievable
like a kite on a string
I would see us close
in honest talk,
lazy after eggs and beer.

Perhaps I am too thorough
imaging lost love

eruption like this stone
lumped of older parts
some new coloring,
like this stone liable
to crumble under blows.

Or last quietly for centuries.
In this size of ancient mountains
I know myself an ordinary man
here in the high desert
skin tightening in the sun

COILS

Clouds humped like a dragon
sprawl long over these mountains

sift through tall pines
where we wait smiling and silly
to be taken off into foggy mystery

eating peaches in our happy green hunger

We turn to each other primeval in mist
The fire, when the rain came,
hissed and hissed

CONTINUUM

1.

In the time I think of you
the wind comes, the trees
take up the hunched postures
of winter and sigh uneven
winter sounds

An empty potato chip sack
bounces down the street
runs on its torn edges

2.

In the half-sleep of morning
you walk toward me
your face is clear. Closing
we only smile at one another
since it is something
we can't say.

Seeing you smile this way
I am glad it is a dream.
In it I do not think of waking;
in it I can forget
the earth's lust for seasons
that blows between us

CONVERSATION

George says, To be a man
you cannot idolize
the things that men have made.
I can enjoy my modern
contoured chair,
refrigerator,
speed in the air,
suburban affair;
But I can not ignore
source, myself
who wills the meaning of them.

* * *

I am building, Fred said, a machine
I am building a machine
which will store everything
and tell me how to do everything,
even how to respect
(yes I can even build that in--
and find what parabola tilt of breast spurs love)

And the machine gives me dignity
because I built it
It gives every human dignity
because they know a human
has been able to build such a machine.
And the machine can tell me how to respect
my wife when I can't love her.

The machine (that I made)
can tell me everything
the machine can be my dignity.
I will plug it into enough heads
and come up with the formula
for how people respect--
And looking for a truth to be true to
will be rot, finally
and finally and finally.

* * *

You talk very much George says
to tell me you don't like pain;
next your accountant will tell me
that I can't smell life in rain.

DAY – BRIGHT SPRING

I come
closing off the long
reaches of afternoon
with dark folds of doors

We meet
in the open rooms
of your eyes

The shift holds you
loosely ready for love;
a row of buttons
and we have a tent
for glad dark rants

We are caped
in bold yellow
for our high chromatics
a smother of inverse suns

DESOLATE AMERICA

You've got to get into shape
to go for the Playoff, and here
you come into camp 30 lbs overweight

You know you didn't mean to
just ball the girl and go;
you had in mind a nice morning
with her. But then
you just didn't know
what else there was to do

You are too jealous of the animals
who play among you; their motions
and their motives are joined, even
their imitations of you
are better than yours

You're really hurting christlike
in the side under the heart,
you should go for a walk
hoping to meet something interesting,
buy a paper and read it
over a big order, hamaneggs

The flesh falls too easily
from your bones:
the skull is showing through

DOG AT A STOPLIGHT

He blinks.
It blinks
colored eyes.
He wags his tail, twice
gunning his motor
pink tongue running
double size red light.

Now
he turns
down the sidewalk
lapping cracks,
bulldog front legs
hooked out

His chest makes a claim
for sergeant rank
tapping his nails
like cleats of a tank

He swaggers
gives me a glance sideways
going by.

DREAMING LIZARD

I am waiting for the Indian
to come down from the rocks there
he will claim
the mortar and pestle
I found on this flat place in the desert
sitting there for 5,000 years
in the wind

Comes the fluid lizard,
He turns
his tail makes a circle
he moves mystically towards us
his
head looks to the east, he
returns
to watch us, trails
his tail under a dying bush
moves to us in the black shadow
changeless eyes

The lizard, the dead white sheened
sun/preserved limb
from the gnarled smoke tree the
grey ghost of the wash

Lizards
they burned themselves in fires
into the shapes of raw mountains
I am waiting for the Indian
to come down from the rocks there

DRIVING BY

In the headlights
snowflakes
strand
rise at the last moment

Something rises in me
the long curve and swoop
after swoop they make
as they flick by
I am high
with snow's
narcotic

the past falls off
pieces of time
rise in the light
settle behind us

EARTH

"Look to the earth," Job sings.
"There you shall find truth." I too thrust
my machine-and-book-worn fingers as I must

Give me some grasp
on what once grew or shall be

And may I reach some knowing
in earth's simplicity

ERRAND TO ANOTHER COUNTRY

All that lightning
pulsing
below us

(who thinks
how silly
at 35,000 feet
a little wine)

To the west
an orange heave of light

Flying towards it
not
quite bringing it back

Orange
(finally)
goes grey

They chased an eclipse
this way
in DC-8's
with cameras
made for looking
at H-bombs

The sun an H-bomb too
we are pulling there
slow enough
but sure

What then poems
museums
archives & sculpture

All this comes cinder
what then
why then
what of our beating
blood
once
pulse
love

ah but floating
all our lightning
pulsing
behind us

EXPO 67

she sits with her long legs
bare by the St. Lawrence
and a bird by
and then two
high gulls past
towers on the bridge

and the white waves
the ripples move
against the current

behind us in buildings
made like sculptures
films about doctors
caring their patients
about man's cities wars
his try to slay minitour
his space his motion
his space his triumph
of industrial fission

and here here
by the St. Lawrence you
woman
with golden legs

three gulls arc by

FALL 1967

Suddenly the night
is a thunderbarrel
the darkness a wall
that echoes the rocket motor's
shards of exploding chemical
from the Special Weapons Center.

My way out of the glare and shadows
of the nuclear weapons laboratory at night
thunder and explosion blurring perception
past rows of alarm boxes
glowing red
I check out into distance.

A security guard watches
separated five stories up
ringed in sound he and the full moon
in a ragged mare's-tail sky,
high enough from this enclosure
of fences and roar
and our little war
to be a haiku:

Night harvest moon
 smoke steals over mystery
 of this year's fruit

FALL RIVER

Man finds a lazy harbor in
the haze of fall-time graces,
its crooked branches like those
trees around my boyhood places.

The way we used to let ourselves
down river banks, holding sticky
bloodweed, branches, or mare's-tail
to come to water, look for tricky
beavers, to find their trail and marvel
how they slashed live wood.

And seeing where one had an aspen
half-way through, hoped we could
surprise him next time. We never did –

And winter comes, like then, before
we're quite prepared. We never see
what's cutting off our quiet days, our store
of haze, of reminisce, of half-made sun.

Before we know or watch enough of fall
we are submerged in winter's slough and pall.

FIRE IN A VACUUM

The snow of a long winter rots.
Boys write their initials with sticks
in the gray ridges along sidewalks
and wonder how the snow tumbles
into the hollows they made. At winter's
end, snow drifts are vacuums inside.

In this enameled room, hollow
the noise of mornings and morning's
leavings, of children after breakfast
and a cookie. Another morning, and beside
our hello-ings and goodbyes,
three bananas in a wicker basket.

From ice green they burned soberly yellow
for two days. Last night something flashed
down their length, now they are charcoal.
Charred stubs, they may have come
from any tree

FIRST WHITE SOUNDS

Tonight we get the first
of summer moons

a little moon grown white
that gets reflection in the burst
of blossoms on the honey locusts

For the fragrance in these trees
came noisy bees today, enough
to empty all the hives around

But tonight is still.
Only the silent sound of beauty
whirls tall in the trees to crown
black branches, asking nothing
of the night the moon or me

Passive in their chemise
before I wandered out

white locust trees
are lovely as the moon
goes down

FOR THE OLD THE YOUNG

"We'll make it now" the old men said
when the sun came out in March.
But the next day the land is scarved
in fog and wet snow and black leaves
that had stayed all winter fall from trees
weighted by today's drugged snowstorm

But underneath the last reach of winter
there is this strangeness of water
running from the first full thaw

Etchings finger the south-facing hills
and today in March's uncertain air
summer's color glimpsed-- or its sound--
the whisper of the young to the young
something half caught expectant
as a fuse burning down heavy minutes

The promise of exploding nights
smokes in this pungent air for the young
who ball lungs in the grip of waiting

And what shall the old the dying do;
weather in them that also waits March
that tenses and suspends their breath
sighing the suffocation of snow of dark

GAZELLES

Spring haze in the hills

Tension in waiting fields
their emptiness ripening.

Then out of the trees two girls
whose legs have lengthened over winter
 race themselves and spring
downhill over the flattened stalks
 of last year's brown corn.

Their red dresses flag
They speed beyond themselves
They must surely trip and fall

I feel their downhill thrust
 and fear to look away

GLEAM

My death is looking through a baby's eye
whose staring in the dark makes sure that I
am there and will be. I bend to see
if that shadow is sleep, and suddenly
am poured in eyes so deep they soak my
powers of recognition, annihilating
all I be with calm deep waiting.

GOLD WASH

Joyous lose your balance here,
In eye-chasing seas
of ridge, whirl and trough!
You hold the edge of motion
waist-deep here, pulling at
the stem-crossed, wind-washed wheat

The bulge of sun stains
gold kernels fresh-rubbed
from chaff sting farmer's mouths
with life, more hot than creatures
pulled from some other sea.

GOOD RUST

Sun-made sparklings of good rust
Flake off crystal stars of dust
a wash of brown and gold

Peeling layers of machines gone old
Become the source of sunburst heat
and slowly sweet decay.

GREAT PLAINS AND WEST

The land the sky open pale and clear.
Without the closing mirror of blue above
green below our senses rush out
disintegrating like the sight of deep fish
pulled to the bright surface of seas.

In deserts the bones last for decades
and on New Mexico's stark hillsides
black shadows still trace the fan of fires
from smelting Spaniards seeking gold

For centuries yet we could smell smoke
in Rio Grande kivas in pueblo kitchens
in Sandia caves where lines of scorpions run.

The long horizon hazes away to infinity.

Strange how hard places which keep us best
threaten us most but we were unafraid
in the green ease of lakes and leaves
we left behind where we would be traceless
in ten years were we to work long seasons
and then lie down there like old trees.

GROUNDING 2

Lust its smell and
smell of pumpkin seeds baking
that breath
And now you fear me now
you fear alone-ness

Your feet are shriveled
you say, and imagining a break
from us you wash away

Rush of surf across cliff
stones that swirl of loss

depends on rock, your children
yet imagined to come

silences and trees not
enough to hold to or can

not be happy again,
choices out of control
hate that hawser to my

God how we need love we are
bound to sell it for it

where for a secret memory
we are happily crippled beside
scent of cinnamon candlelight

HIATUS I

When freedom equals love
and all the watchers flee
I wait for you just as suddenly
as you wait for me.

In
the hiatus I stand without
even socks and only hear
the muted light that rolls
waiting for you to appear
and give the light life
it never had from anything
but skin like yours.

Now
the door pivots to bring you in
squares its surprise
back into its dark mouth
leaves you nude
to the room's warm eyes.

HAITUS II

The night is deep
beyond this dark square
tunneling to my window
universe space and closer
hidden shifting clouds
that throw down warmly
this night rain

You are in the rain
on my window
against the glass
writing there its merge
with earth in surrender

Your dark eyes that night
were this deep
when you drew them
shutterless on me

HELLO, A LETTER I FOUND

Hello darling
it's 11:00 your time
you're probably out selling
your damned earth-moving machines

and me?
me I'm stoned on my ass
and feeling like hell

Finally received
some kind of letter from you.

You love me,

the baby sitter steals
the petty cash
for the baby sitter

and that doesn't
bring us any closer
does it

HOMECOMING

New New Mexico night:
through the smell of pinion smoke
the full moon. All the fallen leaves
sparkle in the gloss of fall

Here the telescopes of distance
and time slip their focus on me

I am here glad of it finished
sad unable and frozen inside space
a walking zombie under the starfall
and such a moon.

IMPOST: ROCKY MOUNTAINS

ah hello mountains
there you are again
slow pendular slides
hugely waiting
to surround me
to remind me
of how i changed
in five ten years
and you have not

i stand in your walls
and am glad at how
you stand hunched

blue with height
head out of the motels
and candy joints

IF YOU DON'T MIND

I am no St. Daniel
33 years on his flagpole
of meditation
in Constantinople,
not that pure

Meditating on my own
turn of that many years
I am not likely
to be more than
a translator
of the ordinary

Not obsessive enough about measured achievements
to believe in the U. S. of A stories
except in a gut way
as far as I too
am a bean plant
splitting up to light

Not enough despair
to fling a new
irrational art
rising from
boredom in our time
post-dignity

I am not bored
I am in my own crisis
new again today
broken with
curiosities
and fear

Coming now to 33
For the Greeks a perfect number

IN A NEW SEASON

Diana slim supple in hunting
has not the curve of your thigh,
no none of the grace of you.

I would not trade your touch
for all the soft edges of spring air;
whatever throes the earth knows
in this overpowering brood season
are less fervid than my
dark boil of mind. It closes
my life on you and you on me
as if we stood in time here
between two mirrors burning.

IN DARKNESS

Hurrying to you
under dripping trees

a cold branch
splashes me

but there are
no senses
to call it cold

secret they have all
run ahead of me

slipped quiet
through your door
next to you
warm they lay

I come in the dark
to give them
length and motor
voice and way

IN REMEMBRANCE OF M.D.F.

What once was mind
is now a bird flying
light curving down
a broken flight of cloud.

What was will is water
breaking a stone's shadow
from off some far hill
shadow of a bird flying.

IN THE EARLY MORNING

In the early morning the mortician
drags the signs out in a bunch
they rattle like sabers.
He goes back after the broom.
He is not entirely satisfied
with the sweeping; the sidewalk pulls damply
at his broom, not what a sidewalk should be--
a crisp, business-like slab.

He finishes,
taps his broom on the sewer grate,
then polishes all the glass,
chapel-glass and hearse-window,
until any mantle between inside and outside
will be suitably invisible to the observer.

Now, before the traffic begins,
he plants the row of No-Parking signs,
prefiguring with the black scrolled order
that instant of relief the mourners will feel
parking here, knowing they will get away unticketed.

(mourners wheeling to rest beside
the solemn signs
the gray concrete /the funereal demeanor
...and accelerating away
into the ready traffic, the mourners/ alive
with rapid breaths /repeating the pleasure/
as ribs stretch taut
over their lungs' white ballooning.)

LATE STORM

The progeny of
bastard March—
sleet and cut
shake and bombast
of pretend-winter's
barren debauchery.

LEGEND FOR EARLY AFTERNOON

Would you convert with Susan
among the agnostic corn
take her down those green rows

Flowering and deflowering
pollen breath

With all that agitated green
the sybarite sun demands
the tone of flesh among so
much green

seeing all the world is made
behind green bars which shake

The sun is voracious
he takes afternoon pleasure
in Susan's deep-eyed look

LEGEND FOR LATE NIGHT

Unzip, for suppose you may die
with blood on tomorrow's face
mixed with some of the sadness
that we, good scouts, sent ahead,
preparing for always.
With always open like a cup
let's tear each other morally up.

LIFE ELEMENTED QUARTO

I. Prime

January cold front blows
gelding cold over cold
sharp leaves
tumble brittle over
over brittle ground with
thin and painful noise:
An uncanny wind flings
a tablet rattling aimless
on the dead side of the moon--
→A thin and ragged pain
knifes a dark and barren mind.

II. In Ground

I know
kindly quiet brown
cauterized with snow
tired from many loves--
(Rekindle Passion, pretend. . . so. . .
until the feigned is real.
And I know
your stirring under skin
that speaks a throe of pain--
(of piercing needles piercing thin,
of crust pain-shattered;
 But I read for all again
hope transubstantiated in
life spinal-tapped to earth,
→attendant joy in primal birth.

III. Burned

Cremation!
By God, how the sun does burn!
This earth is now forming
rock. . . or dust. . .
Dust a scorching dry steam
Wrapping on me and
the damned dead grasses.
The edge of this heat-pan
laid to the sun
is so far
and wave-imaginary,
Dust-puffing with painful steps
 can't take me to it.

IV. *Primal Water*

Rain shades us here
a sheltering cool wall
around our double warmth—
¬Alone warm alone here
our closing is ordered
in lusty wind that shakes,
draws life from water—
The breeze measures
your lip-red dress
lifts hair and a face
startled at rain's probing

LONG HILL

November 25, 1963

Not yet winter in Arlington
and so a few leaves fall
across this framed picture
that electronically makes us all
intruders into history

Trees quiet and falling leaves
restore sanity in the camera's sight
of procession of timelessness
of buildings ordered against profusions
of anger and fright

Aiee! Aiee!

my Persian friend who watches
with me cries in eulogy over and over
John F. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy . . .

So drifts

A leaf in its withered peace
a slow few meant to purge us of sentiment
awake to our ancestry of grief

LOST HAWK

The rain is
straight finger-down dawn rain
warm from low warm clouds
in a cool night.

I give up the line-blurring books,
the rain's friction sigh covers
the noise of my retreat.
Perpetual rhythm, the rain is

Instead of sleep I worry
some question unreconcilable,
"uncritical enthusiasm vs determinism"
or such fades senses taken with

a hawk in night wheeling
cries burdened in the rain,
an all-night crazy creature
raucous as the rain tries to push
him too into the earth

As I mind-wrestle
you turn asleep, your arm over me
and warm hair falls on me
a gray shapeless thing slips away

The bird banks away down the hill
more distant. Then the rain is

In the morning I hear the sound
of fall-dry roots drinking.

LOVE CHORUS

“it doesn’t matter,” she said,
“that there is no god;
while you are here
it doesn’t matter.”

LOVE, WE LIE TO TALK

Afraid
to effort
to rise
from this balance of emptiness

we look at each other
tipped
postures
afraid—

needing a new kind of love
now
not wanting to use our bodies
for that

our talk, of childhood
separate times.

We lie under the blanket
to talk

how you liked only cold lettuce
then
and were anemic

I stroke you,
thighs, the Dacron
pudenda
between them.

when you are asleep
I move away, bound by clothes
and legs needing motion
go turn on all the lights
in the other room.

MAN AND HIS SYMBOLS

I would like to walk
with you through trees
wherever that might be

I promised
a butterfly
although it was too early

and one came
for the wine I brought
without a corkscrew
pushed the cork in
with a stick laughing

we drank it all
on last winter's dry grass
and a few new flowers

looked for spiders

There were fences
across the old wagon road
where we lay

MATRIX: STONE

In parts of Kansas, central west,
wood is scarce and limestone plenty;
men make ordinary fenceposts from stone.

I heard two schoolboys snicker
at the arcing motions of a man
trying to gut one of those pillars
upright into its posthole.

With arms around to shove
against and with its bulk,
the man was making honest love.

Stone stroked and lifted,
Kansas fenceposts stand hard stems
in rows after a century's flowering.

MESSAGE FROM OPENED BONE

Horrored behind my raised razor,
I see myself in this morning mirror
stare through lips into my cave of bones.

Knowing some joke about unveilings,
the bones at the center of me
make a skeleton grin.

The stretching of its skinless lips
rubber band a grimace at the things
I think to offer for intuition fees;

until today I never knew the truth
surrounding whales who shut their eyes
and grind minute bones in dark seas.

MIDPOINT

Somehow it comes to this
to say, we can stand back
and in the mind
complete this love

Love recedes then
like distant cries of dogs
like morning fogs

like ice
morning spired across water
has just its own
crystal loveliness

In this hiatus a barking dog
night might rise on the echo
ghost go out of fog
and the crystals go in day

We seemed each other's gods
But here we stand mouthless
to say it all undone.

MIRAGE, LA QUINTA

Words for a bare desert, red
falling mountains, and why not?
spume-born star-worked
stillness

words, our sense of them
happening right beside this old bareness,
sounds are not big enough for this rhythm rock
fall, shoulder of purple sun, the earth/rumble
drifts to an echo of light

but here is the place we can turn
to each other, with nothing moving

except odors pressed out by the heat
and know what we know,
only here:

We are gone from there, those shapes
cannot hold us, we have turned

and, seen from this distance, the house
is miniscule, the sand flows to it and on:
Let it in! Let it in! Open the windows!
Peter is throwing a balsa glider
in the hottest part of the day,
and, I see girl and lizard in the same hallucination
of sun-veil, coming straight at me
from the plum-colored mesa;
she has cave/cool arms

the words that followed went out of our mouths
and flowed down the dry arroyo--
Do you love this
place?

MORNING

you wake new
from darkness gather
your intelligence for today

finished with yesterday
we also start over

a quickness moves
behind the lid
you have to make us happen
all over again.

we are suspended
while night warm breasts lift
in your morning stretch
and sigh

while you look us-ward
with your inward eye

MOWING

Flash gold puff pheasant blurr wings
sickle stab section sliced
threshing feathers brown and

blood purple camouflages
cut green leaves.

“God, both legs!” my voice screams
before it’s stopped.
“That’s three today” and clear
feathers from the sickle blades.

MUSIC FOR A DRY WHISPER

She had been laid,
been in the throes of love.
And she had seen a parent dead
been pregnant herself
and herself nearly died,

And had been very happy
four or five times.
She had been both child and adult
was even now hated by a few
keeps affection from others.

And now after all these things
comes a roar.

Time was playing its throe
faster o god the whirl of it!
the race crescendo!
the pitched trumpeted repetition
of every chorus of every Beethoven
echo of her so-racked motif
to echo in hurt tense tempo
races toward the dark echo
of a hunched kettledrum
drumming.

MY ENRAGED BULK OF DAYS

I would fill days with quiet motions
intense and relevant, whose motion
stretches cartilage over bone.
I would walk my hills
muscles haunched like a lion's.

I would build shelter from limestone,
not granite, but softer stone
that I can split with tools held by hand.
Stones and bones will weather
in the compress of days and hills.

MY HARD PLAINS

My plains hold scattered in their dust
my lost days of burn and burn.

.
My plains like steel plates gone to rust
lie hard, and men who stay to turn
that crust are hardened.

Here no soft forest hides men
from the sun the red-eyed god.

Earthtaught plains girls make love
with skill in cars that stand
like tumors moon-profuse
on section roads, those strips of land

beside fields whose best produce
boys reap on weekend nights, tanned
resilient girls, who mock the blankness
with promiscuous joy and frankness.

MY PLAINS

My plains mass no flat lowlands as some think:
long hills rub one another's back across time

Wind scours them like wind scours mountain tops to rock.
I criss-cross them, putting steel teeth down land
across the wind, gambling that by tearing half the wheat
I will not lose it all;

I work in wind
so filled with earth its curve of force possesses me.
Wind rags my shirt to strips behind me, rasping;
it has no limit, no end of height, weight:
gnawed silt lifts and comes at me;

I breathe best when I look some other way.
What pushes at me on these hills is old, pitiless,
and makes me out to be the alien that I am.

NEO-ROMANTIC

My brindle kitten
Stalks
On a row of books,
Grace balancing
A foot in the air,
Wondering who built
This curious stair.
She kitten-paws the gilt,
And curious peers,
And feels to know.
In one work here
Where someone's pen
Rang like a bell,
She finds a scent—
And claws at Bernbaum
To find a m(o)use
To feed on.

NIGHT SCENE

Quiet lay muffling, two feet deep
the incandescent snow;
A glow from drift and winter's moon
diffused to peace and silence.

Dark. Twisting, winding serpent stream
wound into gaping sepulcher;
Yawning chasm cliffs lay open
still and deep with shadow.

Life was vacant, deadened, still
as I looked down from covered hill
And saw dark grotesque reaching limbs
with other life as dormant.

But life was there, a half-grown hare
and shadowed bird from hidden lair--
and pain is near with pointed wings
to charge night scenes with violence.

NORTH OF PORTLAND

For Gary Snyder

The falls, a raindream roar
Thread-long and white
Just before we got to
 TIPPY CANOE TAVERN
Yes, our romanticisms of green

wind in the Douglas fir pointed south
to laugh at us and come true,
her falling hair, water in air
down green and such a river
COLUMBIA even in concrete pipes,
 Through flues:
The sharpness of wet wind
Above the slab of water.

The red doors from a fallen down barn,
 rainforest eats it; ferns and moss
They put the barnwalls on the housewalls
For insulation and beauty. We ate
Yong Chow and rice talked about apple blossoms.
The broomhandle fell against the wood stove
 and burned.

Watched a tandem job
gunning up beside the river,
The clouds forming in time-lapse in moonlight
And moving east with him. OLD LOVE
 Wind trees music above water:
"Any ritual revises for a new time,
REVIVAL changes VITALIZES (see also
Christ) not going back but alternatives
to the environment we work out."
 Crack the ginger root
 For a sharp hot smell:
 tasting, tasting it
 while we talk;
In the rain under the thin roof
wrapped in new love.

All the old fir here have their tops blown out
 Some dizzy thunder wind time.
Walking downhill/down wall/ down
 mountainside-stride.

Came back with devil's club flaming
in my hand;
Had only brushed just barely
that green and velvet flesh.

NOT-REALLY BILLY

Billy didn't come to school that day,
Abraham Lincoln's birthday-
"He didn't have his report, that's why,
That's why he didn't come today,"
George laughed.
I didn't disagree.
"Yeah, that Billy," said George,
looking up from digging an anthill,
measuring me, pausing
while he scraped out soft white eggs
to mash layers of ants that covered
trying to protect them.
"You know what else?
You know what he's been bragging around?
You know Billy says he's your friend
Better' n me?
Sweeping again, his eyes dared my silence,
"You don't really, do you?
Like him better'n me?
I: "You won't tell him what I said?"
(Though I hadn't yet said)
"He asked me and I told him because
I had to . . . you know. . . his asking.
But not really."

But not-really Billy died that day.
Not because he didn't have his report.
He had unused his finished report,
right out of the red encyclopedia.

The line ring on the party line
was reserved for very special things--
"Oh, no! my mother said, drew
out the second word.
You knew it was bad;
my mother never wasted shock on little things.
I was more curious than anything.
How did a guy die when you just had
your arm on his shoulder yesterday?
"Convulsions? What are they?" (Not really happened)
"Well, how can that kill you?"

" . . . and, well
they couldn't get the doctor to come out

and by the time they got him all the way
there on the rough road he was dead.”

I didn't go to Billy's house. They said that
his brothers and sisters were very quiet—
Looking at magazines. Magazines must have been
all over the house.

(I found out that mothers get kissed a lot
at funerals; shawl-draped, wet dough-shaped,
mother's face accepting "Poor-Martha" kisses,
like casseroles and cakes the day before.)

Honorary--guess it's too heavy for
to help carry--we friends stood sentinel
the sidewalk where they were going to bring
Not-really Billy, four on a side.

I didn't know that Richie Salvo
was a friend of Billy's. Just relatives
shouldn't get to do this, only real friends.
George was standing there just across.
And then a piece of dirt stung my eye, stung
until it must be rubbed.
“I just got something in my eye,”
I said to staring George. I smiled.
That's right. It's really nothing
else. What else? It's really nothing,
all this Billy.
“Yeah, just a piece of something.”
We sentinels slouched, talking of something
else, waiting for them to bring Billy out
after the flowers.

NOT TO LEAVE OUR LOVE UNTRIED

like a confident virginity,
we enter it

press it to limits;

Since we don't fear,
commit it to stress
for tempering

for knowing,
its extant warmth
is not enough,
we need to travel in it

fill it
feel how far it can go.

NOVITIATE

Tell me,
 if it is too hard to breathe
holding time this way,
 the force of the quick universe
 balled here, the solar plexus
 where you feel our perpetuity
 not in the soul.

how abandoned can you be:
 how many yeses! then

tell me
 with this in your eyes
 smiling (your mouth curved
 at my aye shout)
what you have seen or touched
in your religious spasms

ON

the wheat that blows
out of the beds of trucks
on the way to the elevator
will not serve anybody

at the edges
of Kansas roads a swath of gold
the fruit
of July the glow
of ripeness

speaks
from the sides of roads

you could be a gleaner/ or
only be warm from that
spilled light

ON LOOKING UP

A tower above and I below:
above the top sweep clouds,
the clouds that show slow
falling sway, fall all
the downward bending
stones that arc over me...
To stop stone's drunken slide
of a world sideways grown
I camera-click and
focus to their place
realities of cloud and stone.

To breathe to see to let stones fall
without a trick to set them back
I manage later; I groundward sprawl
to let the world arc over
and not crush me.

ON LOVING OR DYING

1. A cigarette and...
one last cigarette and
(bite down hard)
I'll turn
and show you how
Stimulus turns to perception.
Bite down hard
fuse
make it bloom
bigger than I feel.

2. A final sigh, and
her ribs collapse from under
my arm
as if a child
has kicked down his toy log cabin,
in fright of a finished creation.

ONE FOR A DOG OUT SHOPPING

Attacked by a dog
at a stoplight!
He stood at the window
and ran his tongue at me
like some lazy dragon
who has his first trapped
victim for a year

I offered him cake
through the smallest crack,
but he was having no substitutes.
His old Bert Lahr eyes,
I knew he wasn't healthy;
I tried putting on the eye patch I carry for changing roles
late at night (or for looking
one-eyed at the sun).
Leer... nothing

He circles me,
and I drive away,
But it's not far I have to go,
and he is following me,
and he'll be here soon

OUR LADY: The Palomino We Called Queen

dragged the bloated horse's body w/a chin
behind the tractor into the hog lot
knifed slashes in the hide for their entry

still they started at the mare's genitals,
then the soft belly open next

daily the ripening flesh gave way
to tusked appetite, rib
cartilage finally chewed off

separate ribs standing a cage
long after the lungs and heart
eaten out, they enter her

rooting in the chamber, that house
cannot quite pass through, they
chew rancid flags of tendon

along the vertebrae, that once
graceful flow of motion, nothing
wasted

OVER CHAOS

it is outside us now
finished beyond our identities
no longer dependent on how
we look or move

 This love,
a pagan child we had together,
a white suspension bridge
we built together

As a child it runs mad
stuffing itself on spring air
and handfuls of glad odors
from elm leaves that crinkle
like half-open yellow flowers.
Indulgent, we smile at each other
 at its immodesty.

This bridge we built without a plan
from materials we didn't know we had
stands where only nothing
stood before over chaos.

Welded all the struts we once
thought weak, cleanly rise across
dark pools of time and its abeyance

our bridge was built; nothing
else makes any difference.

PAIRS AND OPPOSITES

I am not good for you
oh i am not good for you
i am not good
for you

the dove
beaks into the throat
of turtledove
thrust and throttle

she convulses and thus
stuffs him deeper
she fluffs
he is on her

now his nervous head
too small for his body
darts
she lays feathers back
her tail
her breast

the yellow ring of a blackbird
does not stay on them
your neck arches
like a raven
and very white

they preen
two feet apart she creeps
into pine needles

under the shower we lather
against one another sliding
loins your breasts across
my ribs

you had shut your flecked eyes
smiled
 what ache do you mean
to take from me
what food

PILGRIMAGE ON THE GRASS

Small enough to be a caricature,
the boy-pitcher plotches the ball
into his glove again, premature
copy of nervousness--a protocol
approach, he knows, to mighty sluggers.
He is glad to have the pitch
against the bat; much worse
to bounce it every time (which
he had done). He spins
intensely with the fielded hit.

Stretched to match a big boy's run,
with trophy stretched in infinite
determination, he tries to make
a tag. A boy's game, but imaged
in his frozen need to overtake
is more than game; it's politics,
or war, and the child in him is aged.

POEM FOR HER BIRTHDAY

we have been
where the land went out
 slowly from the arroyo
and then swept away

alone in all
that silent world
hands and bodies together

clothes thrown
on the pinion's branches
the sun down

we have been
when the wind outside
the wind
blowing color from trees
 just as it came on
whirls of dust
drifted leaves

with the strange mix
 skin makes
colors flakes marks
veins that show
 and touch
and not plan for Saturday

'thank you for good love'
one of us said
'why don't they tell people
making love is messy'
we are that simple and sure
 though love in messy
love is
 not as tentative
as skin

what does it mean
to say we move
 through the last three days
or that you move to thirty

we move
 Through an old land
thin air the only resistance

POEM JUST BEFORE SLEEPING

Every
cell
fiber
full of you

every sense
full

Or every
strength
drained into
you

to leave me
empty of I am
so full of
you

POET

I am your arsonist
with no flint for his lighter.

I am a fire marshal
derelict in my duty

a seeing-eye dog
with thorns in all four feet,
standing at the edge with a grin.

I am a laughing boy
who didn't understand the joke

the pusher who had had it
(the dope about death)
but got hooked again
by chance.

POETIC AT ABLE CREEK

The water falls minutely
on these stones. Somewhere
above it has source, but the lair
of a spring is deep and silent.
Better than seeking sources
is to follow the farces of water
worn through stone.

Here alone, one finds a somber glory;
this spot closes, and does not please
like mountains please trees
crowd overhead. They limit things.

Water works down seven steps,
a measured six-foot waterfall,
then spreads to make a small
and muddy flat here on the gray
hill's lap. It seems that water,
coming such a tedious path, deserves
to think disorder follows rule...

this lap-of-buddha needs a pool.
I scrape at small stones and
at the clay this water made.
I build a dam, limestone laid
on clay, and try to make it blend,
to be a part of this gray hill;
I watch and wait for it to fill;
the shallow pool clears quickly,
grateful for my devotional.
A small wind ruffles it:
pool plays at being oceanal.

PROGRAM FOR A FIRE

Piling new wood
on the coals
gets
Smooth fire.
Sounds
It could be a small wind
through grass;
could be a shell
of blue water running
from under
and up.
The smooth wrap
under the new wood
carries orange flecks—
rather, streamers go
yellow lines
in the blue: o
Orange

and now it takes;
the lines of sparks go off,
the sound ragged, that
of fire only, the smell
only that

of our hands,
that day we sprawled
spent under trees
and pried pinion nuts
sticky with resin from cones

READINESS: HAWAIIAN NIGHT

The apron in floodlight is the point
of stillness and this ride after midnight;
the winding road and the hot moon
have an armed B-52 for a locus.

The plane crouches in a light bomb
facing down its runway to the sea;
surrounded by darkness
wings hunched back,
she seems already in flight.
Toy cables hold her from the leap.
Men watch her from behind the little fires
of cigarettes behind the secure line.
They finish their coffee and open their faces
to the guard's flashlight,
and pass silent to the power
in metal curved to front and back
and jointless down the long wings
where engine pods droop low.
she is gashed behind the tires;
intestinal wires spill around struts.

Four men go back toward the weapon;
two squat under the bay to watch,
frowning in the arteries of light
they are whispering, "and she says
Who do you think you're going to satisfy
with that little thing? And he says, Me!"
The laugh opens the silence
and the tired black rifleman from the wing
asks them can they tell him
when this baby's gonna ever get fired up and off
They tell him no they can't say.

Then only the generator spills slight sound.
They sit with their knees pulled below their chins
watching the photographer's flash above them
silhouette the fat bomb, its awkward little fins.
A new crew comes, hushed midwives
carrying their electrical kits
to this belly's tub of ugliness.
But the plane is beautiful, silver in white light.
They move closer in the silence of the night.

RED AND WHITE

My love
waiting for
potential joy.

Yesterday
before we came down
the mountain

we had
red wine
in this filling-station-bonus glass;

looked at snow crystals
freezing to the windshield as they came

some of them
perfect
in the dry air

about what nonsense the old song
love that waits
for a warm day

In the unheated cabin
we exhale white clouds
The burgundy bedspread
underneath us unopened

REQUIEM FOR MUD TURTLES

Of things we hunted in our youth,
I number two that seem to hide
within their search a certain truth
(about outs elves, that is, if I'd
insist that what another kid
and I did was haruspical,
a map beneath the bolted lid
of time). Still, one ought to chronicle
the turtles. We hunted snapper muds
in summer, crawling up above
the logs they liked; that bank in Bud's
alfalfa field gave plenty of
perspective. At fifty feet you'd think
we'd be concealable--those eyes
of theirs were made to help them slink
through mud

We never did surprise
them. . . or sparrows. These we'd hunt
in winter; Indians we'd creep
in barns. They roosted in the front
of mows, we knew .where they would sleep~
in just this corner. The light
was meant to blind them. Instead
it stabbed the dark, we aimed, and flight
of birds effectively gainsaid

our plot as Indians. Of course,
in each season we'd get a few
(turtles and birds), but then this source
of measuring our skill withdrew
itself; we increased cunning in
ourselves. To hunt we would augment
designs with schemes stunning in intent . . .
Indifference from turtles irreverent

RITUAL

We played one summer, making
Enchanted rings of leaves pulled
Green from elder trees. With green
We outline mystic paths. Someone taking

An oblique camera eye at us
Through time would capture waving arms
As we stepped away on the softer grass
(to keep from adding impetus

To loss of time and childhood).
The time you slipped and landed on
The ring of elder leaves, I'd say
Our plan was sensible and good:

We thought to make a cure of leaves—
To counteract the spell—deploy
Them everywhere. Our stratagem
Required rites to get reprieves

We needed silence, mystery,
A hidden place, and nudity.
Your leaf-splayed stomach bore
Accomplice ritual from me.

SANDWICH JOINT AFTER CHRISTMAS

the waitress; her bermuda socks rolled down make
a black tire below her shinbones. Her legs
are not bad but then she stood a lot (waitresses
do--stand a lot). Her face cancels it out, no
joy and for all that she was under seventeen.
I order the pizza burger. The short-order woman
startles me, shouting, "Bread or bun?"
I don't know. Her face accuses me,
i can't see any eyes behind her glasses i can't
see any lips that make a mouth just a white fold
above the chin. She has red hair (on the
refrigerator is a toothpick-ball Christmas tree
full of little blue balls, and from where i
sit the creation makes a startled thorny crown
for her fine big red hair). I decide to let
red-haired jeasu-mary with her blue balls cook
my pizza burger with a bun. Then I see it, back
of the cash register, the kind of brass knick-
knack that the heat makes go and go around. . .
It has three angels, each one has a clapper
swinging down from below his stomach to ring
three bells when the candles are lit and they
get hot and fly around. Only there are no
candles left and the angels pose with brass
wings out and clappers dangling noiselessly.
And on every table the celebrating cellophane
of an imitation Christmas tree, and I wonder
in the smoke of my pizza burger she is burning
(out of spite) I wonder what they do for joy
here, now New Year's day has come.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1962

Already today

two revelations

the bat-eyed pain
of the mother

the wonder of blood
dried across one
wrinkled thigh
of a son

Now the ancient sky
sets through immodest clouds
one red glint of sun

air cloud keen
pain

SIDEWALK 1

The boy derails
and crosses the street.
his breath is real steam;
he raises his arm
 and toot-toots four
more pitched blasts
 and manages to roll
right over the curb, wheels
churning. . .
shuffleshuffle See
how he is gaining Speed.

I smile at him
as he goes by,
but he won't see me
 (dials to tend to,
 places to go, and
 important train things
 to do that I wouldn't
understand.)

SIDEWALK II

As if someone threw a lever,
last night in the town
hundreds of thousands of pounds
of leaves fell down.

Now the four-year-old
slides her feet like boats
and the crisp sounds
pile and swirl
against her ankles;

Following her, falling
behind
an old lady echoes the play
with shuffling
arthritic feet.
She too obeys urges
of the seasons
to dance.

SILHOUETTE

Three small trees, undone
by heavy August one
moon hard enough to diminish stars

He stands outside the car
struggling with a prophylactic
Inside she shuts her eyes
leans her head back on the seat
thinks unmothered images colored
by what she dials (lefthanded)
on the radio

suddenly one glare down this back road
bifurcates into loud lights that reach
while he leans on the car
and lights a cigarette his back
to the coolmetaled door
and low music of her

He smokes until the stark car
moves by increases by
the periphery
of its light slams past
with a silent jar

SILO FILLING

At midnight we expect a great cry
at the dark bridegroom as he
claims a woman. Then why
were we shocked when death
came bride to a man at noon?

Our own terror is the breath
rising shrilly at the last.

Eric started only to curse,
then seeing his legs caught past
redemption in the machine
let the epithet rise until,
more metallic than the clean
pulings of the knives, it
clattered at our wincing bones.

Stillness, honored requisite
which colors the midnight cry,
was alien here. We had noisy
filled ten silos since July,
and half-a-dozen more of the tall
villans would founder on cut
juicy greenness before fall.

But now the noise broken, the high
pitch died as the largeness
of the man that it would crucify
filled the machine a belt
shot whining off its wheel
and rolled the motor smelt
of rubber as we stopped its sound.

Caught to the waist now,
Eric felt himself until he found
some dream that he dreamed
wrong. "It doesn't hurt," he
started out to say. Then he screamed

.

SLEEP CLOSE TO EARTH

Listen! You can hear corn
grow late in darkness when
you boycarry blankets outside
to sleep free of house-heat.

Listen

you can hear stigmas' silken
searching, smell moist life
shake from trembling tall rows
throbbing when you sleep
close to earth.

SNOWSTORM

I pierce a shiny world chromed over;
tall shine piles shoulder high
to part a shiny Jordon;
I drive a roadless sideless road.
This supernatural stuff gives light
and unifies; I lean to peer
past wiper blades I hear a radioman
jingle rhythm in this bright night...
and makes it more alone,
has idiotic stuff so fast awhile
send her here... a galaxy of flakes
flash thin moons at me ** Was not real sure of words.....

SUMMIT: CHICAGO

We drive, waiting for wiper blades
carving at rain to get out of synch.
Cars we meet on highway grades
throw handfuls of what I think
is stones of water as it pounds
across our glass. We don't speak.
We are tired, running gray like hounds
to hunched gray clouds, down streaks
that mark the tracks made by the car
ahead. We run from cities where
we talk like strangers. Here we are
dryly carrying motor-tempered air
and setting with us, in this cup
of turtled car. May's grass greens up.

SUNSET: WAITING AT AN AIRPORT

In this too
each sees
separately
his way express from
the dream of his eye

Sky so clear
that mountains show
pale amber
holding the sun
from fall into night

We are aware of
distances
here beside a traveler
large gestures
become simpler
and possible

What are our limits?
all that thrust
is simple mechanics
only
what are our
limits

I wonder if I could
tell you
without you thinking
dream it is a dream
to speak of what will come

how the sun will fall
on the mountain
some other day and
how a fix of the eye
can know

SUPPLE

Apart, we are both
seeing the wind
passionate
thrash trees.

Such violence
for unmuscled spring
branches; they
toss sheer
yellowgreen hair
exalting
in swift air

Pliant you were
abandoning yourself
like that
to the unknown storms
of my love

SWEPT BY A STORM

Of sudden storm
swept trees are tipped tonight;
here rain-swept streets
are cleared by white whippings
of the wind's curved broom.

SWIFT DRUMS FOR AN ABSTRACT SONG

Swift drums echoed when
 The old house fell down...
 (and)

What does it matter, after all?
After all, being done,
things have finished being,

(and) what does it come to now
this telling, this seeing?
The layered cells in grapefruit,
packed beautifully,
Are finished with the tongue.

What if the tall saffronsnow
once fell so deep it covered the cattle
and we crushed them like cymbals
under the tractor's steel-tracked rattle?
 Many other days have been spun
in quick clarinet rhythm in summer
with a haze over a dusky sun

If I wrote a symphony
for a myriad and phantom band
it would wend circulatory
with few crescendos,
have a stringed sound constant and
(probably) never end

TAMED TRUNK

Carving wood, I am full aware
which wimpled lines are willed
by me, my loose and unskilled
knife, and which are nature.

I call you closer to me
and also carved; but I must guess,
knife-wielding sadness, how less
belongs to nature than is due me.

TETE A TETE

She wears a wreath of men about her brow
and who should speak of banal honor now
and who should care
if none would know
how dark the flash of wanton hips can dare
the senses flow.

THAT A BOY STOPPED

For this, that a boy,
very ordinary,
stopped to pick up
a fresh-dead butterfly
and made his palm a cup
to feel and try
to reason its deadness
carefully
In September among the leaves

THAT PAIN, bringing light

you are speaking of pain your words breaks and
spring while you speak and move
behind a banana leaf that springs in ocean wind
breaks you up like a green camera
panning up and down

early this morning the pepper tree wired
light with its spread of tuft splattering green light
more than that but in that
a spangle of gentle green hands
beyond pain on many arms

moving moving
light
breaks in on you
I would I had no knowledge but in that green camera

THE CLIMB

Those Sandia mountains, shelves
of stone thrown in earth's spawn
lie pocked with last night's snow

Only the wind has them now crying
in the prehistoric caves once holding
rutting nights of the Sandia tribe

I climb for some joining
find in high trees and heaves
a mountain's hard breathing

THE FATHER'S SON

He'll go back, where he wants it to be right
and it won't be. The sun will still burn,
he'd guess, and they may have more time
than when he was young here,
to test the quality of the country air
just for breathing.

But there'll be too much work
that both of them must do, they'll say.,
so they will allow one day, or only part
of one, to look how far that they have come
and see that he is back for now. Then
embarrassed by the nudity that pause
and recognition gives when a day is stripped
to the business of duty,
they will part, to consciously
father and father s son to shake hands.

He will be back again, where wanting
to be right grows
like unsatisfactory seasons on the land.

THE GIFTS

Running
my daughter comes,
summer in her gold cries
holding out her hand.

They are tiger-mottled again
her nose coated with rust.

How can I scold her—
she doesn't know
her mischief in the flowers
has been marked by generosity
of tiger-lilies' dust.

THE NEED

The need
grows in the stomach
like a cabbage leaf,
green and spice;
the need to make words
cut clean
leaps ahead of skill, its
taste the pulpy split
of a true melon
ahead of the knife.

THE OTHER

This time the first snow
comes on a Saturday;
I can
pretend to work in the yard
and stand under roping
falls of white, my hair
rising with the first moisture.

The night rises somewhere
out of me, no
out of this white sky- -
but here it is, since the house
encloses something dark, darker
even than the distance under tree
caverns that the snow cannot light.
I top my toes on the step;
My hair is wet; it is like
the snow leaps forward off my shoes.

I see how it deepens;
I watch from windows the motes
now battling to light the larger
cavern of the night...

and see the morning
how both the night
and the reaches under trees
have succumbed to white.

THE RIDE

Congregation will rise.
Guitar accompaniment:

“Oh,
Your own daughter out for a ride
car-flipped end-over-side
slid in abandonment down the slide.

“Your own son-in-law (to be)
was steering-wheel stabbed to mystery.

“Your own daughter out for a ride
lost two square feet of pearly hide.

“Her crisp-waved healthy hair was scalped,
what was left, by a green-masked bandit,
what was left—she couldn’t stand it!

“She felt she was losing the top of her head—
one thing and another of the past she shed

“Oh your own daughter out for a ride
scored her first fuck and then she died.”

THE STAFF, THE ELM, THE SHELTERING WALL

Day, the eyelashes grow into the eyeball,
I fall asleep. After,
the pile of prunings from the elms dying
are splotched red, blood

over the distorted black wood
I expect to find a man's arm
among the other limbs

Brown and white and limp
I hang there. Until,
at the bottom of my mind, the spider
shakes and clambers upward.

THIS SHELL OF YEARS

I look into the stone, its colors
dug or layered by the watered years
that feed both lime and lichen.

I could photograph you, stone,
or paint you, and make your
subtle colors easily bold.

Stone's careless wearing of walls
I find a crack, wedge and peel
It's a mask of grays and black.

I pull down centuries, do you hear?

In this setting, only I am enraged.
The undone stone walls greatly
over other stone into the earth
and does not care that I
walk upon the shell of years.

TIDE

What might have been
fire behind Tijeras Canyon
was
yes
the moon again

What do you want
from me
she asked
new she was broken
behind
her eyes
and would not look at me
I was better with needs
I could live without
than this
that we have spiked
lives
and guilt has ripped
and womb for joy
from me

When the moon came
as if from effort
its top was half torn off
blunted

it rocked
on its lemonyellow ass
on the south crest

TO LADY ASTONISHED BY MY SAYING "I LOVE YOU TODAY"

When we discover how we are,
that changes, little or much:
How are we now, friend of a sort?
Alone, we momentarily touch
so easily we are naked to each other
and not afraid to have the ease
our hands remember and report.

Well, it is harder for the mind
to touch, to be bold, returning;
If we loved as the solitary bonfire
of our time, do you suppose
we could be a harder burning?

Something comes from so much birth
created over in every pause
of the run from now to then;
Every time you reach to give
that darkness in your eyes to me,
I am confounded and reborn again.

TO MY BROTHERS, TO MAKE MUCH OF THEIR TIME

Grow odd things for ornament, plant trees
and fruit of all kinds

Grow all kinds of unnecessary uneconomic foods to eat for fun

Raise peacocks and all kinds of animals and breeds

Learn all about former owners of the land,
including back to the Paleolithic, and how they lived
and why they came there

Learn all the stones and formations and geologic
features present and historic

Learn all the kinds of plants growing there,
and which ones you can use and eat,
and use and eat them.

TRUMPET, CYMBAL, AND DRUM

O pipe me my lay
Play me in the white
bright tones of a no-longer
negro Dixieland,
 Pretending in
as easy
swelled sound
a melody always
round mirth
not dark not heat
in birth.
 circus sounds never trade
true time
only beat

TUMBLE

As if I am ten
Actual rabbits come out
Around the rockpile at sunset
Light pink in the grass
Holding their blood

My brother has two of them
By their back feet
They had gone through chickenwire
He staked around the garden

Its water ditch stands
Full of horse-hairs
They wriggle on a stick
The actual moves

I am in the empty hay wagon
Bouncing off my feet
I can only hold on
The reins tied around my neck

The black horses know the way
I worry only about the stump/coming
It makes the road bow double
Which way can I make them go
Onto it / no

It washes over father back
In the limestone tenant house
I am standing in the screened porch
The cedars have the wind

The wind is through the three-
sided screened porch the wind
Comes down through the out
In the cliffs

I am alone am silent
 this is something new/
There is nothing in the garden
Bare trees along the river
Over there
I have not a brother
Not three sisters a mother a
Father

Only the wind says something
I have my hand out on it
Am living beside stones
My father laid they go
Up the bluff a road this
Builds and builds receding

TWO WAYS OF LOOKING

The way I remember you
reminds me of a late-late-
movie June Allyson. All innocence, I suppose, so might that classify you?
are you a poignant memory
. only in my trite regret
that I never did tear
at your clothes, dispose
of all that innocence myself?
(by now I know that every
June moves to fall
oblivious of me.)

No, couldn't measure my loss
of what I never had
in some phrase about ego--
(but I don't know. Certainly
now I'm feeling lamely
dispossessed~ So maybe so.)

At best I am pressed to find
easy answers to easy questions.
Even now, looking out iced
windows at the first snow
I won't know whether to be
rationally impressed by such
quantities growing this early,
or whether to be carried mindless
by whirls around streetlights,
by cars turning into marshmallows.
(Generally, I am both,
and now I make a calculation
in my head of how much snow an hour,
and then I go to bed.)

UNCONCIOUS, LIKE A GOD, OF DETAILS

We come back, our senses
polished bright beyond reason
we discover now our human act
lacking in complexity
is copied by the dinning sky
the mountains in convexity

strident green and granite
here is our echo, things primal,

love, if I had made the universe
and opened my eyes the first time after
I could describe you through analogy

the mountain pierces sky
a lover unselfconscious
to everything except
the earth rising
to meet the sun in thin air.

WALLED

Such soft wings
to so shatter the panic night:
the moth in my dark room
bouncing his way across
the underside of the ceiling

Smothered by blackness,
he and I. The beating
inside us erupts
surrounded. I listen
to the pound of moth and blood.
We cannot fathom furred dark
being this hard a prison

he beats himself senseless
against it, is
silent when he fails.

WEDDING SONG

something one
a man and a woman
when the woman is my lover
you beside me

be this the green
the green the joy
the sweet fat times
of joy whisper
each time

at one gone in it
and made powerful
arriving to more birth
anniversary starting
years to know

I know a bold season
by the odor
of a breathing tree
the burning life
of it

you
green-and-each thing
past knowing
how you are woman
ocean tree

WHAT SHAPE OF FIRE AND FRUIT

You come into
my private mania for intensity,
Integrate all the symbols
of a single dream: Mandala:
 Return or recovery, as a child
coming from exile (yes!)

Veiled behind distance
 we exchanged minds anyhow;
Where is that field of flowers—now
“I’m odd and full of love.”

Newness can’t be spoken,
only, rolling over and over
new places for hands

I mean for you tenderness under my cry,
arch and reverence
How the braid comes out, the fallen hair,
(it’s in all the dreams--)
But the ache in my shoulder,
a twinge where I twisted a knee! Ah,
my toenails gouged the wall
where our heads were,
when we first fell down!

 (He came to find her,
 They left together;
 These were iridescent pigeons

WILDERNESS

I go up where real estate billboards
bracket private land to public,
past where adobe walls
of a ranch fall down &
the lean-to slides
from a slab-timber house,
Polito Garcia is tending
the Mountainair Gas-Grocery,
sitting in his pickup
to hear the radio.

He has leaned the door open;
beside the truck
his ragged orange dog
is hung up in a small bitch.
She pivots under him,
drawing a yap at each turn.

Polito's head is motionless
on his knuckles as I go by;
his eyes are fixed, deeply blank;
Perhaps the dog is young
is screwing for the first time
that Polito knows of. Or
perhaps he has grown old
on the mountain, Polita
grateful the young bitch
came & happy for such cries
as she has drawn...

Whichever it is, the man
stares at the act
I drive around the corner
into the designated wilderness

WINTER BIRD

Chrrr...
A bird I didn't know
Has come in winter
A russet warm splotch on him
He is fat
He feeds on the shafts of cold
That drive me away
From the ruffle of his cry
A chaffing rich brown
Sound filling
The air made a vacuum
when the night stiffened
And the life fell from air
During the night
When the splotched bird came
Leaving me standing
with my arms hooked out
From cold
listening

WORK'S END

and
we are tired
from giving back
to earth
the pain she requires of us
camped on plains

we stop
stretch shoulders back we drink water
warm from cans

day fades
it makes gray wreaths

shades of sound trail us spinning off
like the trace
of light

that pulls crablike off hills

those hulls that open
scatter out our night