INHABITING THE BELOVED: SELECTED POEMS

1960-2025

From ANIMAL, PLANT, MINERAL

THE CHRISTENING (2)

Sometimes when you are with me I shut my eyes
you are a bright column of light, a fire-making.
For fire, for fire, for fire, be fire-bringer
return of old mind to the center for fire-boring
the waking

Coyote tried to make fire striking together shells
that fell out of the big dipper when it turned over,
he tried to use the pieces of stars that came down,
he was trying to dip up some fire shining on water,
he tried the grass and trees that had sun in them.

Finally coyote dug a little in the sand made it nice
and a woman came in there who moved like a swan
she came in there and lay down in the sun she was
a bright column of light, he got himself with her
so they were moving just right there was just one thing

and he turned that into a hawk with burnished wings
beating until they started a fire along the edges, then
the hawk was fire all over and it could be fire-bringer
teach fire-making

CLEARING

Turning over earth for the new strawberry patch
and firewood too chaparral roots come out

from underground easy now, lumps of
heat stored seven years since I fired their tops

& took the first crop, branch stubs and roots
all I could pry or rope out with the 1971

blue-horse VW squareback, roots that cook hotter
than oak could always be found in a pinch in that
playground.

In the new strawberry patch trenching around
copper roots from the sugarbush
 to prune off the winding copper roots, feeling

underneath for a clipper-hold. How they lie smooth
on each other for a startling long way!

If for myself I undertake to till a small field
to its limits (as is said), a few berried friends

flaming souls may come of it, many strange uses
of love still attached underground must be felt

and then the hunch of muscles at their shearing

RAIN-MAKING

Hearing a rumble we turn to the wind sweet
wine smell out of the thunderheads east. We
watch the sun overhead eat back rain, its fire
on the cross of our spine and arms.

Clouds with bruise-blue undersides drum
rain over the east mountain, a wet canopy
I long to pull over us and the sun,
to lift our open mouths skyward at the taste

to find a black beetle and tickle it
to line up these tall clouds of July rain
down the sight of the pointed tail
to the dust where it buries its head.

The windmill shifts
    seeks its direction
        pumps up fossil water

The humid leftover of Hurricane Maria oils
our bodies, the roll of thunder and breeze
lays a cool blanket under the bony stays of sun

A hawk with a snake in its talons rises, you
"loose your love to flow" water salt tears and
wet is the globe in my cupped hand

MARROW

it's bones
Colby by the creek found the lower jaw
that fit the skull I found on the road

For awhile we speculated bear
for the size of its teeth canine
or extinct wolf. His find on the bottom,
now it can be seen as horse.

Its eye-sockets stare with light
from the corner window.

Dayna came back from her ride
to feed carrots to Darwin's horses
brought the skeletal head,
first twelve vertebrae of a rattlesnake
arm-thick the flange bones
three inches wide at the bottom.

Saving bones.
Karen digging strawberries to transplant
their rampant numbers shook roots
running through a gopher's skull,

hooked knife-fronted strong the back teeth
tiny the bones around the eyes
thin as a boutique frame from Ch. Dior.

These skulls on the bureau,
deer antlers on the east moonlit window sill
raccoon brainpan with complete teeth on the wall,
its man-round forehead beside the turtle shell.

Seeing my house strewn with bones
you might wonder if I am a hunter

Rub their smooth ivory
they are for the nights when we see ourselves
as skeletons, to know and love bone
white and tender fans inside
that once held marrow

EARLY HIGH DESERT RAIN, OUT

Fire season. But this September bursts,
rain leans through oak umbrellas all day.
In slicks I dike the washed-out dirt road,
hear April in the creek's cleared throat.

California sage greens all of a sudden,
Monkey-flowers open for a second bloom,
emerald moss ruffs the boulders' shoulders.

Water swells everything with feasty smell,
“all flesh is grass." The springhouse
floods ochre soup, a hillside's offering.

Light breaks through just before sunset,
leaves point and color. An owl weaves
down the creek's street, knowing creatures
squirm under wet leaves, wanting out

like the first Russula mushroom and me
out in last light with chainsaw to the pine
that didn't make it through the drought,
whose brown needles now hurt my eye turned
to green. The incision draws flinches
of sap under the bark. Its hummingbird
almost takes my ear off

After dark the window flecks with insects.
Two little white-bellied frogs suction up
hand-by-hand, lamplit throats pulsing.

the alive
out under the stars leaves drip
my fiftieth year

LOOKING FOR FIRE

--Autumn Equinox

Sunset a blaze flight of the peyote bird
rainbow through oakleaf lattice it went, the
last summer sun. Now our tended fire,
versatile creator and destroyer in a form we
can talk with and listen while we wait for the
sun to loop under and come changed.

A lizard paddles out of the ashes, rattles
into dry leaves. We will take this as sign
that a fallen fire promises regeneration.

But after this fire's up and night comes
another lizard skitters out between us
waddling, shaking wattles. I pick it up to see
if it burns, back in my palm, you stroke heat
of blue-green on its throat and let it go find
a place to burrow earth before night slows
this paleozoic threshing against our hands
cupping an old excitation.

At the balance of the year before midnight in
a sight down the burrow of bodies, fire under
him over her surrounds them as of burning
bush and branch. We can move the light of
sunrises and sunsets between us
into the cave we make and out a common mouth,

practice darkening and dawn. We cannot fail
to love changes, the sheath of summer fire
discovered in the hollows of our bodies filled,
lattice inside cells of dried grass filled
with light and its smell even the damp ground
smells of it, full of billiononic star memory

From ROMANCING AMERICA: The Letters and Poems of Buffalo Bill Cody and Annie Oakley

THE REINS

In low sun long harls of silk
on every brittle weed
lines of the east wind grown cold

threads
of the sun down horizon of earth

at dusk, the orange
eye gone Pleiades up
the horizon its
seventh sister lost

firepit light
lifts in the branches overhead

in the dark of the moon the
fire talks owl hollow the deep
well of the fire the wind
saying lonely the first category
of life as Bill sees it now from
wind

from green proposals
of trees hung with
wind their
rise and bow

INTERDICTION

to intersect space to find the world's navel
Bill harries the troops over the horizon
and will be restless to the end of his days.
No boundary no center is a kind of
freedom and schizophrenia.

When the body drops away, the mind
goes into the imagination's costume-shop and
comes back dressed as a railroad, or an angry
blue-green snake comes to him tonight.

What he wants is to be waked by her calling,
saying his name out of desire.

She comes from the whorl
carrying both candle and dagger.

ODYSSEUS AT TOMBSTONE

Then when he asked her to come
to him she'd simply said yes, and after
a few days she showed up at the cabin
back up Salt Creek which was his true
hideout. When he tried to remember
how it was came a vision of Remus
and Romulus there under a she-wolf
drawing down Mediterranean purples,
long ships, bronze shields that
advance like the sun.

Then after she'd gone, that night
he saw every lamp glass washed
invisibly clean. She had left him
with more light, again, and what
had he given her?

BILL THE GEOGRAPHER

I am looking for a place on your body to leave
some mark that does not require pain to stay.

Your lean flanks lead to fall to cottonwood
turning to flame they could line creeksides
in South Dakota leading on to wheatfields
in the Canadian steppes drifts of white
snow.

Your mouth that sings sunrises of wet grass
maps bridges of amber incense across streams
across paths of small animals on mooned' nights.

Under your nipples there runs a prairie
flow of wildflowers the blood of birds in
flight outside a fast train window. Your
bones truss a mine gem-full of summer
lightning storms.

A white spider with only air to start its web
hangs swinging on your breath at my shoulder

It looks for the turning earth and its weathers
that have gathered hidden under your bent
knee.

BILL CONFESSES THE ATTRACTION OF OPPOSITES

I used to pick up rocks that were interesting,
the so-called Kansas diamonds or moss agate
from the Flint Hills, or cat's eyes or sometimes
just a homely node that caught my eye.

Going along I'd end up dropping them off
somewhere, I figured I was doing them a favor,
another look at things they couldn't have imagined
without it.

Then I met Annie, and we were always brangling
about it, she couldn't believe I hadn't thought
about it, how I was breaking up their families.

SOMETIMES

It was spring, so naturally you think about snakebite,
but I hadn't said anything how often snakes had been
coming up in conversation or had been found by others
lying in places where I would have been walking next

I hadn't said anything about looking for the medicine
this last week, just a visit to Captain Jack for good times

When we were getting ready to leave he gives me
a bundle with a razor and a strap, some herb powder
and some advice I don't think about much until then

Leaving I kick a piece of bone ahead of me on the path so
I get a good look at the meaning of bones in the dark
beside the grass still rattling the dry sound it has

In a dream where the snake threshes not able to let
go of this body too big to eat anyway, who will kill
her with rocks, or

Follow your advice to lie down with her and take her off slow.
She will bring you the visions you need to know

COVENANT

In the closed purification lodge Bill hears the splash
of water on glowing stones *now this water*
come to us on earth from the skies is sweetened
with sage and moves through our bodies, and
moves again between heaven and earth, O great
spirit made visible, move in us the help for all
things living, to live in a sacred manner, all my
people, for the four-legged people, the crawling
ones, for the winged, and the green growing,
for all the relatives who live in grandmotherearth!
hear me! Hi ye, thanks! May you . . .

he breathes the steam, then shuts his eyes, dark
yes dark dark dark as the room of Juliet's womb.

Then a little to the right across the prairie of his mind
something burns with a hard gemlike flame, a camp
fire too far off yet to see the flickering he supposes,
and he rides towards it
deliver us from self-importance and fear,
hear the voice of a weak and poor two-
legged here offered to grandfather sky may
the holy wind one breath move

. . . comes out the other side to
find himself admiring the vapor of morning, the
early air of September in Wyoming. Ah! Bill,
the covenant of champagne and whiskey, the
blood of antelope, and the wagons of women,
laughing!

Now he vests himself in soft white deerskin,
a hood of rabbit, a throw of light leather
heightening his shoulders. His carbine,
which is still a carbine, is also a true rod
of sorcery.

A white buffalo will appear when the sun breaks
through. This buffalo (which is buffalo and something
other), after we have watched, given the awe of
silence, and named her ghost, must be chased away.
So it is.

THE JOURNEY

They wait beside the dark pit of tracks.
Train wheels scrape to a stop on some
line the cars jolt small explosions each
more distant the night's images printed
on the skin of Annie's body come to
mind now, the breath catches, the
dawn a thin whistle in a foreign station.

With the insistence of a sharp
bell, with the clarity of frozen
metal, some link is opened or
latched.

The man and woman wait in early
morning, the belongings they most
need lean to a center beside the
leather suitcases.

They walk a little way in the
direction they are going, and then
come back along the open track.
Beside them people turn and settle
themselves inside compartments.
Yellow squares of light tick away.

For a moment they are waiting
alone. The way distances have
closed on them they laugh their
breath joined white the cold air the
snows that start this week in the
Engadine the desert winds that
clear the Pacific for sun, floods that
unexpected wash over them.

ANNIE INVITES HER SOUL

Nineteen years she has been on the road.
Again her hands slide the trunk open. A
sheen from her own wear begins to match
her father's palm-print on his jack-plane.
Inside, the gunpowder smell on her
clothes is never quite damped by the
lavender.

The smell of wood-curls she collected from
his carpentry! They turned easily to their
center, and light they floated down. Her rifle
stock glows like the handle of his gouge.

Without the ways of a father she is educated
by strength of men she fell in love with
without their knowing it, shy as she was she
walked like a cavalryman in her dreams,
looked out a high window at the dance, and
saw every girl but herself covered with lace.

She has made her way loafing with the
men's ease, stayed free of the suspicions
of women. She has met the generals,
queens, and he of slow dawn in his smiles,
flights of geese in his eyes. How could she,
with her broken fingernails, speak to him
of her other dreams-
-

She watched her sister fall from the window,
was told she alone has secret knowledge
of the rightful king, who is never the one
she chooses. For Bill, she will balance
halos of crystal on bullets in the air
and be his lover,
but never choose him.

DEAR BILL

Dear Bill, my dear Bill:

I don't know what is wrong. Everything is missed up, and only your letters seem real. I love these moments in the evening when I'm sitting at the table, the room is dark, only one small lamp. But sometimes it is hard to believe in the old good things when your mind is somehow confused. You can't think clearly. There is Indifference—the worst of feelings—it happens to me and I hate myself at such times. I tried to find something and I am still writing. It's not friends, practice, love (perhaps I'm a person that's not able to love?)I do not know. Paper, you touch it and there's no feeling. If I read poetry I start feeling something and I'm back alive.

But somebody speaks and I do not understand. And all that outside I deny. Oh, I notice objects and touch them and I feel alive, wonderfully alive. But this is only physical contact. A friend of mine said its like laudanum. I know you must be disappointed in me. I have so many good words from you, that's priceless and there is love in this. But I do not know why I decided to write all these things. It is possible in any hour I'll start all this and write in a different manner. But Bill, please tell me. I must do something about all this, how do I start? You say there are people who do not ask…I don't believe it. They may not be so selfish. This must be the end of my stupid confession.

I want to tell you if you won't laugh at me. I want a red bicycle, a tall one. Imagine riding it in the show, smooth. As if I had dreamed this a thousand times, I am riding it, practically it goes by itself, and I am shooting and breaking glass balls easily, and never missing.

I do miss you, awfully. Please tell me.

Annie Oakley,
Kansas
Oct. 30, 1886

MY ANNIE. NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Got up in Greenwood Falls, we are almost to Crest . And then we head north to Leadville once we drop down a little and cross a high prairie. This place you would like to see. Flat grassland away to a mountain range, the other side. You see a great crater, especially in winter, the way it sits in here like a white lake with mountains splashed up all around it. The trick is, the mountains on the other side look about the same as where you stand, and this time of year when it is clear they look like they're in your lap. With the snow there aren't any trails you can see, or herds you could go by for size. You think you could cross the crater in three hours. But it must be near a hundred miles across. What looks like those mountains your size go about 14, 000 feet, Cap Jack says.

There used to be a little town down there about half way across where we hope to be able to stop comfortable enough tomorrow night.

Meantime we have victuals for a king including hindquarters from a young doe for a dollar down at the springs in case of short time and poor luck.

We didn't run into any snow until we were in sight of Crest. Not that it has not been cold enough! It is pretty dry on the east side compared to plenty inside there, Leadville keeps three feet on the ground this time of year even if there is a warm spell like this. Hope it holds.

When I do not get a letter for a while, I never know what it means. We do have long silences, don't we? It must have been two month you did not get from me with that last mail mix-up. I expect the same.

I hope you are not another time suffering to yourself how we should go on. You know we always do anyway as we have found out already, White Bear Woman.

I hope you are easy and happy to get this May be when you practice today you will pat your Winchester as our friend as you always say. Our situations will not always be the same.

Trading for the land around Lookout means two weeks if I can find what I want. Taking some bad weather into account. I know it would have been faster East around castle rock but the real investors are still in Leadville. Yes I should agree that I always have a good time there. Be sure I will be in time to Denver with every hope of our meeting there.

Your affectionate, Bill

P. S. I am sending this to you by Al, who is the only one I am sure will be there. He will think it is only business.

From OLD BILL'S WAYS

1. Learn to assemble yr rifle while walking towards the target.
2. Keep yr eye loaded.
3. Never depart from innocence.
4. How to schedule yrself: "Today, who knows what's going to happen?"
5. At sunset, the bird on the top branch sings longest.
6. When you've got it right, you are how you feel.
7. To find out the meaning of yr lost visions, *lamentum*.
8. Watch how plants go about surviving a drought.
9. There is a being in each of yr parts, and when you are spread to them, there is a singing.
10. No use hating the desert because it ain't green.
11. A crow can count seven people coming out of the trees; after that they're a crowd.
12. Where there's anger, there's fear behind it.
13. Broken-off posts can still hold a fenceline.
14. The more you look, the more you see.
15. The moon will let you look at her, but tell you nothing.
16. Awake to the sun, to the grass wet.
17. Awake to your suffering, awake to _____, until there is only awakening.

From DRIVING WITHOUT LICENSE: EARLY POEMS

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.

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

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

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

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

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.

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 sentineling
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.

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

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.

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.

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 form 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.

SILO FILLING

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 greeness 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
.

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.

From MOTIONS

MEMORY BODY

1.
the rise of ocean the woman walks out in
cold foam tall her arms rise
she goes to her toes the rush
circles her crystalline

her outstretched arms
the ocean's desire deep
throated washes over me

2. there at the 2:00 AM railroad crossing
timing my going-home drive to feel
it go by
thundering lots of times after
leaving the girl drumming those
children to be
the sonorous earth gong of
lights half-way Kansas City to
Denver

a rumble an undertow
rush

MOTIONS OF PASSAGE

I want you go go around this fire in the
direction water goes when it turns to go
out

* * *

Great horned owl on the corner post over the big
rocks, he went for the darkness, pulling off down
into it.
Coyote song over the hum of the Coleman, and Peter
amazed at his shadow.
Four kinds of wood for the fire: - An old sumac gnarl,
should burn at the center all night; -pieces of 2 x 4
from framing the new room;
-split oak;
-the burly chamise roots.
For firestick, the shovel handle broken off
digging around rocks.

.* * *

White sage in the fire, wave the
whiteness into you.
This bundle of sweet fennel. Rub fennel into your
hands, smell it, should you feel sick or if what you see
when you're prayin' should pull you down too far.
Stand up straight, rub fennel on your face, slap your
chest twice alternately with sweet fennel in each
hand, noticing how strong and clean fennel is, twice
with each hand, stomach and genitals. The dreamer of
death's timeless eye
asked about possible incarnations. Ho!

"Only into the past, in a line I
meditated."

Meteor showers, says Peter, are exploded
planets, 40 million years, and their tails of
debris go by.

"Returning again and again, to the
point of origin."

Huhh!

* * *

Smoke breath up into a space, with smoke pray
from fire into galactic fire word smoke prayer mind
smoke fire born breath smoke for the ways of
beauty.
To the four directions of all families; to the
rise of air; to the center underneath. Wave
smoke into myself last. seven directions

* * *

Asked for a look at the center: saw folds of
skin as at the penis underneath, as the
lines at vulva's head, two bird's heads
symmetrical. curves of a fetus.
"Arrange the folds of flesh in new
patterns."
* * *
Driven to your knees in weakness:. Pay
attention to moss blossoms. Pray from love,
what we've got among all beings. Wish for our
gracefull way among them.
* * *

Got myself all cleaned up for this, was washing outside and thinking how she liked to come out and wash my hair out of care, and thinking “why not go for it and so to say I really tried this time of instead of having to think I could have made it work, but chose not to, back there," righteous in making choices. Poured the whole bucket on my head to rinse, and the sand in the bottom. .

* * *

At midnight, we feel it, the second of four
edges of the year grinds itself over the third.
The fireplace at the center burns green, but our
eyes have changed with it. The stone recognized
remains a stone.
* * *
Ho WKK! uhh
I'll take you out at 2 am barefoot
under the stars, a layer of cool
dust on the desert hardpack,
squat and spring up Ho /WKK! uhh
as flop-armed as we would gain an
instant's more rush of air in the ears,
hopping in place and leaping up the
stretched ankle tendons Ho WKK!,
uhh!
plunging up to the sliver, new moon,
seeing a comet headed to the ocean
shelf.
You do it like this:

WKK! Ho
Uhh!
* * *

I want you to go around this fire in the
direction water goes when it turns to go
out

OUTSIDE IN

outside by day we go trans/planting melons
supposing their round bellies under

the moon now by night a firepit

stars ablaze with the moon not
up yet
what we all want I saw in
your eyes

this morning's slow love the birds
just singing
what we all want *go where*
ye love and are well loved
in the sky a big bang flare just now
arrives to us
just now dancing around our
small fire

PREPARING OURSELVES

Tonight
bats after their dusk frenzy somewhere
hang upside down
satiated silent
Oak trees participate openhearted
discussion with frogs
After dark we pen the roaming
dogs walk back arm and arm with
regret and joy
after moonset walk back footing the
dark devout grass
Spaces between stars filled with
cricket music prepare us

From FIRESTICK

FIRST SONG FOR THE BEAUTY WAY BLESSING

--Spring Equinox *Asking Permission* at FrogFarm

Green words ho! washed clear the
mind to the sun put the firebird on my throat and tied
hair back with raw yarn in the stone where the
Diegueno pounded acorns we grind corn

On the great rock corn for
your power in the beauty of granite
the way you hold together

North to the mountain with
springs corn for your living water for quartz
and garnet that slowly grow in beauty. Here
I said beauty now I say it.

South to the green
valley corn for your way the
beauty of oak trees all the living
things in the wisdom of the south
way.

West to the place between the great
knees of stone mountains where the sun goes
received to the ocean corn for that beauty way she
lets you go now north for spring to come.

East to the sun where you
are now corn for your rising-up strength
beauty of the day that comes with all animals
and plants who look east now for their
strength here I said beauty now I say it.

And walk to the garden and say
teach me how it goes green leaves shaped like
seeds find your beauty way now corn at
four corners and the open gate.
Path with flowers yellow
and blue corn for your beauty way
a thousand perfections for attention

Corn to birdsong and animals
moving but not seen in the chaparral moss and
rapid insects trees that lie down and show how
they were made here I said beauty now I say it.

Corn for the pool where the water falls from rocks clear as beauty with roots down where they come to drink.

House for going in at night corn for the big trees that protect this house oak trees growing in the beauty way. Corn for each corner and door to door friends to come in the beauty way.

here

I said beauty now I say it house full of beauty children who were here what we come to know in this place love to be. And come for the fireplace in the center for the food cooked for the things the fire shows us in the beauty way.

Firebird on my throat speaks green words mind of spring come washed clear in the beauty way.

GENERATIONS

My sons begin to wander through my
dreams and the poems eating licorice
and prying curiously at things.

My daughter stands a little back an
early candidate for wound and wisdom
one arm behind her waist bribing the
world with her grin that closes her eyes
and holds it in.

The younger son wakes up choking
from his mouth I rake out a slice of
heart-meat rosy on the edges a
cabalistic meal he swears he didn't take.

The first son in front of me on the little
horse and when my father gets on as well
we make it back to the spring, I don't see
now — even its liver burst when it
collapsed crushing John.

I carry him to the place and set the
fireworks off early so he can see
O he who carried the eagle-
daemon that lived in a horse.

And my girl! sitting in a small road
of shade in the high desert intently
stroking the dewlap of a horned
toad.

OFFERING

Snake come to offer your power I apologize
you were strong and beautiful

That was an old stone from
beside your granite lair that hit
you

Was it true I lost my inner sister in
the night ceremony among many
moving people

So I have your place now But the
others of fine senses and your
mate out there
don't know why you did it

I put on my snake dancer amulet and
protection hear them
slide in the darkness further back

I clear everything not necessary off the
table and wash you yellowish brown
white-tipped scales in single triangles six
apart At the tail five black
four white bands seven rattles

You are long as myself from the neck big as a
bicep with no bulge
of food triangularly flat-bottomed

I'm sorry for your broken-off fang o
winter-fasted fish o strong and
beautiful sensor come from
thousands of years with armor I
sharpen my knife for this work full
of care

SECOND SONG FOR THE BEAUTY WAY

May you walk in beauty here
This earth is seeded with tiny garnet
Walk in beauty here

May you walk softly here Explosions go
everywhere this ground is full of moss-
green splays the rapid persistent chaparral
quartz spreading starred fingers burdock
unfolding out from its center
tiny flowers explode in a day walk softly

May you walk in delight here this ground is home
for many animals who live calm between fear and
ecstasy catching and eating the rabbit suns himself
on the rock in late afternoon calmly walk Name
yourself quail skunk snake squirrel deer mice with
long tail and big ears walk with animal delight here

In power here coyotes celebrate every sunset may
your senses walk here voicings of bird and frog
same as you and me and look with the craw's
yellow eye who came today hawking and whistling
to see about a man who promised to feed him on
the mountaintop
Walk in your full power here

In May you walk with attention for the beauty way
This place lived many Dieguenes of dignity In the rocks
here they ground acorns in nine circles that catch the sun
They had joy and made love in this place with big trees and
water black soil and many animals This place teaches
Walk with attention here in the beauty way

THE SUNSET BECOMES A BURNING TEMPLE, PULSES LIGHT

--Leave-taking poem for Larry Shaefer

"When the sun is set, and the moon is set, and the fire has gone out,
and speech is hushed, what then is the light of man?" Upanishads

Come ceremonial need-fire/wood ritual matter has
grown cold my father's yearly festival with earth is
lost

we would
put our hands on old rhythms move
toward another season

Put the firestick now to the forehead
draw the smoke into the mind blow it to
earth to wind to midnight water

In the night I tremble knees and elbows and
forehead on the floor there is no single
wisdom your stomach heaves as if it
could empty you of pain

you suffer defeat/ she cries out from darkness we
are totally defeated it belongs to no
particular thing it all comes in we can die without
purpose we answer love with selfishness I don't
know how to help you
"we are weak and poor we
don't know anything"

Ourselves charged how else should you learn
"fire-boring" rhythmic motions spiritual
feeding from breasts the woman sobbing in
the candled dark

We discover ritual it gives form
to our suffering it remembers what
we are who would forget our humility
shapes to a waiting bowl

Then as it happens just before dawn she
brings into this house earth
you bring the bowl for fire

We speak of suffering
we thus make fire with our mouths

WHAT WANTS TO GROW

After a full moon came after predicted
clear sun tomorrow a torch of lightning
over Mesa Grande
a night flood coming down-mountain

two ranges lit in shades by the furious moon by
the struggling moon In rain rain I eat the smell of
wet rocks and white sage
water pouring off the cedar roof

glad for the inside fire back there made from a
crotch of oak with three limbs
that slowly split away in serious love

who reminds me how we love our teacher
and forget how we learn and forget

The fire is down rats are fucking under the
floorboards twittering and shrieking
like birds Next will come a pounding at the door

Owl whoop and coyote scramble where are you in
the rain tonight? My prostate pulses with crying-outs
under a new moon owls seducing in two tones where
are you?

And who rides beside me slowly the saddle rises,
we lope on a trail through chaparral and come here
seduced by a myth
in the seventh month of fearing

But back with the full moon and the rain I sit
rocking on my knees in pleasure at far
thunder its get runs from the roof I piss on
the streaming patio stones and let the rain
take it away to the roots of whatever wants
to grow here

From FIVE SEASONS

FINALLY THE RAIN

This week god has appeared to us
in the form of water, and in her face
and voice of sluice and foam we lift
the telephone and power lines higher,
gesturing across the river, giving up hope
of shouting through her octaves of music
played against boulders and tree trunks

Frogs with hydrophobia have nowhere to go,
hummingbirds must still their shivers
hawk on the weathervane spreads her wings
to dry between waves of storm. Mushrooms
and moss claim stones, and overhead

the moon rocking on her back tonight
will be grinning, raking fingers
through the lakes of clouds we're under

until rain, rain melts coyote duff
back to small bones in a hieroglyph
for “returning strength,” and
they sink into the swollen earth

ANOTHER WAR

Probably I need to play more. This seriousness
weighs down everyone around me, like the foolish guy
in folk stories up to his knees in earth. A curse
or carrying something heavy or getting his footing
or sinking, who knows?

Tonight scarlet on the horizon ¬
into the reclining woman's belly slipped the warmth
of the day gently, sunset to that place we mark season.

The filly blinks in heat instead of readying to foal
as we believed. Your cramps come on as you rake
branchfall to take in for the fire. I turn on water
and start up the lights stored from the sun now gone.
Over. the air this war, the thing our country does best
drums on making just cause more foolish. Civility's
dregs drain from the national trough. In the coming
drought the flowers shall have no water, the child
no home in East L.A.

. War becomes a background
for. the hawkers of T-shirts, the media's budget
bigger than most countries. Raython tools up.
The stock market sings: so low the price of oil
it flows into the Arabian sea, that source
of myth and wonder, that cradle where someone
bombs all the bridges on the Tigres and Euphratis
spilling out of old Mesopotamia, where now
steel canisters deliver light, whose explosions
each holograph the skeleton of a school not built,
streets full of women searching for food,
shoulders hunched under homemade Islamic shawls.

CEREMONY

1. A. Round of Attention

Think of it as one season
The rocks glow again after eons and hiss up water
breathing their heart's steam from earth's body.

Then from the kiva of our devising into ice from the sky
To a great tossing of dark trees' bodies in north wind.

"Thunder shakes thing up, and lightning illuminates"
--mostly the other way around in our nature, we
come to change making noises, then make things appear

and disappear by giving and taking back attention.
Any marriage will disappear without it. But so will a bank
or a bad rule, which has only one place to be . .

while the wise ruler is everywhere at once.

2. All Our Relations

In this we must give up fear. In this
we must give up self-importance.
In this we must sit in the wheel
of all our minds' directions, In this.

After the fire rocks water steam
we come out to ice from air, pelleting
in from the north front, with wind

In the dark thresh of the sensual
tree crowns, two nightdrill F-14' s overhead
barrel back from Joshua Tree Desert
their rocket slings empty. Ho!

3. Purification

The people did not know.
Not even the fire-man was told.
Snake had run into this woodpile

Rattling. After dark. Rattling.
she hid where children play.

Her blood was on the firewood going
into the rocks. Into the lodge

into the steam into the bodies
of the people and in and out.

They became possessed of a song
They became possessed of a song
repeating it on and on, after sunset.

Then they trailed out of the dark mouth
into the Returning Moon rising,
her bright teeth smiling through clouds.

4. Changing Shapes

In this time you see some other animal waiting, some
body you recognize was in you already comes singing.

As the ends of a line of sound, as the whisper
moving inside a snake skin we could begin again.

We would need some deer-toe rattles then, a singer
to take us off to shapes where will can never go.

We two must give up being deer for sixteen chimes
cut from the toes of deer that danced at night,

empty bone-bells strung up tight with mescal strings
knotted through and wove to hold them right to ring

the way the maker works on them she does just then
with rocks and prying sticks a red flint awl to drill
the way she wants to make this shaking song for them

We bound and shake as bells as drums of deer we run
between whispers of air we are only sound, sound.

TODAY

Finally today we took down the old white oak by the garden,
one of four that lived through a fire before any neighbor's
memory or story, her charcoal core swarming with tree ants,
full of rat droppings. The old one in the pasture draws bees.

After sunset, just under the lid of darkness, the bats
flap and peep in a frenzy over our oasis of a garden
rooted in its own darkness, its smells drawing the game;
the corn points there and there at their quick grace.

East, the fulgent moon through the desert thunderheads
veils mauve and salmon, above mesas of clouds bruise-blue.
The pregnant filly, always hungry, nickers for something
to hold her over through the night. Lightning far back.

Let's say today's a sacred day like any other. We're in it then
without comparison, or memory or fit to tomorrow
so when the sleep end comes our motives did no damage.

And again we found an uninitiated part of our flesh to offer
the day's flint knife to line, draw blood, scar a permanence
we can keep in the name of--What shall you choose? Attention,
or beauty, versions of faith we gain from the arc of sun,
the expanding or fasting moon in a harvest time of change.

CELEBRATION

The yucca sword that bloomed this year
begins to tilt with the dried stalk from last year,
and from behind boulders next year's green bristles.

Crows yesterday at sunset hawked their way east;
today they veer off, go between the north mountains.
Between their two paths I have emptied my heart

in ceremony with you in the eye of all directions.
Nothing is lost through devotion, nor in turning
away from confusion. When we have gone,

Mt. Woodson's peaks of spraddled knees
will reel the sun day by day into its lap still,

year by year the sage be blooming, though for awhile
we plant roses and lilac in some of its places.

The supposed limits between us,
the idea that our cells had another way to be,
becomes laughable.

IN MEMORIUM

Hey, son, your old man's old man
would have been 93 last night. As his work-
thick arms grew thin, how bright and
remarkably long his fingers! Farmer turned musician
there at the end, crossing hands on what keyboard.
At November's end the moon grows in the cold.

Today, as if you were the sort of man kept calendar,
you point me to look up, how the high sensual sway
of the eucalyptus softens the blow of Santa Ana winds
off the desert. I have remarked it again
and again. How vulnerable we are, a miracle
to stay alive a moment much less the gift of memory.

This tree made limber and lightly leafed
lifts a hundred feet of air on a finger, the same tree
after twenty years of raining down kindling
and seed pebbles like marbles you can bust your ass on
if you don't pay attention.

Surely you've watched it
too in moonlight secretly against the music
of night wind's galactic threads, long fingers
playing in the dark.

COLD WIND

A black spider moves quickly on invisible feet
and is gone under the alfalfa shive.

Tonight the air is clear, the
string of constellations in night's hair glitters.

The planet's heat rushes outward.
For the dying tomatoes and ourselves,
nothing may stay the season's change.

Dogs mutter and circle the house against something
unknown. Only syllables chanted half understood
may make peace with it.

As the wind rises you whimper in your sleep,
about to cry out. But you quiet with a moan
when I hold you.

Someone has entered your dream
bearing my love in a form I cannot know.

From PIZARRO'S UNDISCOVERED ISTHMUS

THE BONES

The fishermen of the delta long-bearded priests of water
build their houses on stakes and never go back to land

They strain green alcohol through black bread and drink it
raw wanting a blaze to run desert through their bones

never dry bones that wash after them to the sea
when no more they ride that current in black tarred
boats.

They scar their throats with hieroglyphics of fish bones
swallowed for breakfast which teach them no new
tongues.

From the level of water they watch white cranes ride
bright air above the rush-walled canals. Their mouths open

and closing like carp they pray and finger the knots
of their lives in nets let down to where sleeping sheath-

fish drift whiskered and open-eyed in arithmetic dreams.

Sometimes one fisherman without a woman at home
breaks the night's membrane and pushes into the water's
dark:

He looks for the sign of what moves under him pleasure
or something darker but cannot find her eyes

among the stony glitter of broken stars on the water.

GOODBYE AT LINDBERG FIELD

Afterward under palms in the
yard by the wood fence you
walked and stretched your
unsheeted body

was the sun really coming on you
through moving branches or was
it my eyes splintered the light
from you or my mind's want
streams of gold rippling across
you like hands

what was I when I lay with you
boy old man brother child
disembodied and animal uncle
father teacher and subject to a
new rule

what was it I seeded in you that
only grows there (if I am not in
that field it is famine) or
"I think that when I loved you I
fell to my death"

and I hear strange long cries in
the plane's climb

Now I see your eyes
the ocean curls white under
green

& tilt to the gold and life-ribbed
mountains where we fed birds
after we filled ourselves
with bronze motion under the
sun

ah, the veer the rise the Going
back I tear a palm branch from
the trees wrap you in it carry
you where I go

OF HEARING, OF LISTENING

This world is made from
sound it was made rock and
blue distance from the
shock of a great breath,
melodic light and matter
keening.

Women and men stood up at the sound
of a voice singing inside them and
slowly slowly turned in a dance slowly
lifted graceful arms in a dance the rise
and fall of melodies from their mouths
made analogs for the world made from
sound, named rock and blue sky.

Now I attend stars that each
bear a note of light in the
night.
Can eyes hear such songs?
My eyes can be convinced by
canvas stretched above a
small light my mind follows
my eyes deceived.

But sound links fast to the
world. Hearing you, next I
will feel you and I listen for
your humming soul high-
pitched, rapid across
distances.
Only a skillful hunter can hear it.

As for you and me, believe my
love time is only Great Silence.
Listen blood and breath sigh in
our bodies everywhere goes a
tiny singing in us in each part of
the world a voice while time
reels off invisible to the sea.

This world was made from
sound It was said it was
made it is so.

01.03.79 Benidorm

Standing high over the sea
of Spain, do you hear any
song in this rock, is this
standing too far from the
First singer, is it only wind?

THE SECRET

This Calypso, who had the Russian poet Pushkin as her lover, arrived in disguise at the Moldavian monastery of Neamts in 1837, and was taken into the brotherhood.

And here is Calypso's skull,
assembled with priests and monks
in varnished rows their shepherd's
names and their years.

Calypso the small skull with the
same message death, and in it the
secret pride she carried, what
Calypso felt to do.

Some image of Pushkin in her
bones, she followed what lodged
in her marrow
she carried Pushkin into

the pelvis racked the arms and legs
mixed in a wood chest or lost. Here
is only Calypso's skull as slack-jawed

as her secret when the monks at
Neamts stripped her to wash and dress
that boy come pale from Russia ten
years before.

Then seven years they unearthed her
bones polished them lovingly with
incense and chants in the vault that
lifted
infinitely above smoke consecrating

an empty skull another and
another poet images young and
tragic Calypso whores again with
his own desires pushes into this
tongueless crown his seed.

From THE AUTONOMOUS SHE

AUTONOMOUS FORCE/ BRIGHT DAY

Washing oranges in the sink two sliced open for you
star-lines and cells Stack the drainer full of them
and a touch of tart green limes

You are smiling talk about a baby that waved and smiled at you
when you were at the window in your robe

gone now standing all curves globes your white bottom both breasts crinkling
on the ends
though the sun warm today

The hollowed line pointing to your warm fur a gesture of your arm

We are making coffee the foam of waves huge in the sun the
power submerged in my belly
breaks against these coasts
golden green day you are smiling
the earth turns in moon's orbit

Seeing you this way these hands spontaneously touch my *Muladhara*
and *Sudarshana-chakra*

it is love
and love's murder

CRADLE OF STONE AND AIR

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

I am perched on him perched on a house-sized boulder above
where we built fire
two weeks ago, where like a kite on a string I
would reel us close in honest talk, lazy after eggs
and beer.

Perhaps I am too thorough imagining too much lost,
too much what the love was

Your eruption like this stone lumped of older parts, some new
coloring, and to crumble
Or last quietly for centuries

in this size of time
and ancient mountains I know myself an ordinary man, unable
to change
the shape of what I find

here, feeling my skin stretch thin like an aging man in
today's sun falling through
thin air

OUTSIDE, SOMETIMES

Night, and Orion cleared by the Wind blowing
on and off for two days
and two nights

The doors don't keep it out
or walls the sound

Her father has died,
my father-in-law once

Winds that blow outside us! I still love her
think of her in a plane her mind in order
her feelings a fine balance

Sometimes I am lonely
The Wind comes down into oak groves we say it
"rises and falls” among the leaves
And the frogs who spend time
either thinking or singing
sound clear between gusts

An old man stops by sometimes
because he likes frogsong

Tonight centers a turning around Orion
end of a daughter's cycle
start of Fall winds

TODAY MY TIMING'S OFF AND

Today my timing's off and
I keep missing you
It's your birthday and I can't even give a kiss
like I smiled to think of and

last night I was confused a knight on a bony horse
camped a day's ride outside the palace

Should I have shouted *I love you* from out there
or wait for your surprise that I arrive clanking *I remember* today?

And now my timing's off! I leave an absurd kiss on the
doorknob of your house.

I kiss your hand I remember
Stefan saying that in a foreign language and how he bent down
about as low as a latch

it is a gesture left over
how a peasant greets his lady

TONIGHT

the keepers of dreamtime allowed
field and flower

That miracle again, you
let me inside your body gently

the memory in my body singing you back moving under me
without care about the music

your eyes closed cannot speak it the small-smile glint of teeth cannot

the ductile mind grieves, harassed by the shadows of what it cannot hold:
candlelight under wood beams
your damp long hair

CELLO

Your body carries this visible world's spectrum and invisible past vibrating
alive in you back to the big bang

particles of light drift from your body the molten core of constellations glow
behind your visage I caught a glimpse

did you know my dear with bluegreen eyes
you left a crack to see through when you shifted embodiments?

what does the seeming silent Orion send to color the sound of this world’s traffic?

what does this gold string play on the pillow where you lay
so fine as I lift its curl of song it disappears into light

as did I last night when you settled your gold cello
over me and quivered

RASPBERRIES AND CHAMPAGNE

It is necessary that a companion come for the living potential to appear. . .
Gather it and put it in the furnace of creation . . .
I Ching

Packing to come to you Shall I bring sage a flagon of water from the deep well of renewal The odor from a marriage of pomegranates and the afterlife Bring word rescued from the arroyo after midnight Fold cricket sounds into a shirt pocket A collection of old rocks creek polished

I'll come loaded with ears of sweet corn purpled plums blushing apples Grit
under my fingernails from reaching into earth

A photo of an ocean sunset on my retinas a hum in my cells
their molecular resonance
with you tuning up for our sacred dance

Shall I rubber-band a packet of grief and regret and tuck that in the zipper compartment? I'll
bring almonds and gemstones and an open heart

We'll put down a tasseled wine-colored bazaar cloth spread all these and potence and the present You point at anything you want We'll laugh about the price!

SHE IS DANCING

She is dancing
that filmy white robe her hair fallen
her head thrown back

Flowers that were ready to bloom open and close in her mind

O lady
this flower as long as you care for it

She stands shyly, her white gown moves in the eucalyptus-
sounding wind her dark head bent

*

Woman folded in a tree trunk, curve of deer neck, snow queen

you rise from the sonorous water whose depths are covered with men
who rode down the zodiac on whales
who signed up on that expeditionary believing
they were headed to Central America
to collect gold lashes from the sun's eye

O lady, a harvest after the waiting, the deliberate
gathering of tools, the girding after waiting

I am ready the harvest is ready
the moment we step into the field

From LUNACY

THE PURIFICATION, THE TENTH MOON

Delivered again by your daemon
you follow an old spotted hawk
out of the light out of the moon

moon that reflects fire, and
out of thought we arrive surrounded
by a circle of fire, desirous

For fall of rocks and dark water,
for the place in me struck hollow
I sing your fullness, sing ripe
fruit and berries, sing spices,
your eyes and mouth to flower,
sing branches of your fingers

Abundant bowl of your body I drink
I sing the moon to lift its wings
in your womb, sing the opening
flower in myself where nothing was
In the region of fire you burn
naked. In your eyes trees open
leaves against a blue distance.
From your heated body rises up
cinnamon and all sweet sages

As incense we rise in the light
Your arrowed waist arcs us
to a field where the sun has slowed
and we hold it slower still
bridged between us. We can see

a silhouette of wings burnishing
a wheel turning out another moon
another sun in whose daytime you
give me bread and cheese in whose
nighttime I offer apples and wine
for your laughter and your weeping

X.I4.78
Zurich

FOR THE COLD MOON WHEN HORSES GET SKINNY I FLEE TO AFRICA

Here where the moon gives birth
to a perpetual sun Here where
the moon at night feeds on wine
of the scarlet bougainvillea

buffalo cropping noisy swaths
through our camp their darkness
and their black crescent horns
turned silver by the moon

Here where the lions wake us up
Here where your tropical body
lies fallow as a deep lake
under the mosquito nets

though the moon swells full
and red-faced tangled in the
wefts of the acacia tree

Here where lions' nocturnal
eyes and knowledge grow round
with the moon resonate the night
with equatorial cries

II.8.72
Ishasa Camp, Uganda

REGINA'S KINGDOM

where she holds court
talks to golden snails
and touching their wet antennae
calls them shy where she
waves a hundred fronds
of ripening wild strawberries
for a fan where she becomes
a black butterfly
chooses your arm for a throne

she spreads her mantle
beside hawthorne
and berry-brambles

every mask of creature
gnome or troupe
of magik beasts court her
sacred bees circle futile
to follow her motion

birds cry
O dance around her clockwise
Who comes young as She pleases
Sing hi Sing low
A May song never ceases
The other side of darkness
Her rising face releases
Sing ho Sing high

dark space white eye
comes the thirsty moon

Queen of prolific eyelash
her scepter a whippet tongue,
we wet as seals turn feats
in the moon's liquid
O lady of the wild and the tamed
gone rare gazelle gone
smiling gone into the moon's
open face closed eyes
blue-rimmed the night’s moon

only mushroom-gatherers were invited

a pilgrim and a panther shape-shift
at her royal pageant on the mountain

V.14.74
Dobrovat Forest, Romania

THE WATER-BEARING MOON

After a full moon came
after I predicted clear sun tomorrow,
a torch-dance of lightning over Mesa Grande
a flood coming down-mountain

two ranges still lit by the struggling moon
dragging the language of water behind her
the smell of wet rocks and white sage
the sound of water pouring off the cedar roof

Inside fire
from the crotch of oak limbs
almost unbreakable bearing years
that slowly split away my serious love

You remind me of how we love our teacher
and forget how we learn and forget
The fire is down rats are fucking
under the floorboards twittering and shrieking
like birds. Next will come a pounding at the door

Owl whoop and coyote scramble, where are you
in the rain tonight? My prostate pulses
when you cry--under a full moon and an owl
seducing in two tones, where are you? And

who rides beside me, slowly the saddle rises
and falls. We lope on a trail through the chaparral
and come here, seduced by a myth, and
in the seventh month of fearing. But

back with the full moon and the rain--
I rise from rocking on my knees
to the thunder. Its get runs from the flat roof
floods over the streaming patio stones
to the roots of whatever wants to grow

III.12.76
Santa Ysabel, San Diego County

WHITE PERTHIAN MOON

an old couple walks up the street
stride to stride slowly
they speak softly in Greek
their feelings do they move
to the shape of their language?

music and
the moon whirls down the water
a gashed way to the rocks here

what moves inside you there your
golden fields unfolding flowers

“the moon the moon” the old man said:

the moon rides behind the edge

still full on you tonight down latitudes

retsina, 10 cents a glass I sleep
with you not with you

the frighted wombs of the fig tree
they shrivel and sweeten outside
this window

VII.20.71
New Moudani

From BIOGRAPHIES: UNCOLLECTED POEMS: 2000-2020

TO MELVILLE: WATER AIR EARTH FIRE

According to the last chapter of Moby Dick
the underwater creature we've hunted all our life
will surface at the end with our corpse wrapped to it

in such a way that everyone will know we've been
practicing bondage all our lives even unto death

In the desert Crow carries an underwater eye
Owl lifts the whale's whistle into night air

Crow woman in dreams glides down our
Hatfield Creek through oak canopy at sunset hardly
hitting a leaf. Owl sits outside our night window
hitting one note over and over until in first light
we wrap until dark creatures rise our skeletons quiver.

Owl whistles up death sure everything lives and dies
dies and lives in the last chapter of Moby Dick
a coffin bobs up you drape over it and get your breath.
Add a broken rib to know how every sweet breath hurts.

Here we've fed our creatures, the behaving horses dogs
chickens on solid ground Mostly dust this time of year.

Under dust boulders. And under boulders water.
Below water molten fire breaches under our small boat.

NO SMALL THING

As the time of my life grows shorter
small things become more dear

Today's peregrine falcon hovering overhead
moss's green forest on these granite boulders

Each branch laid into the fire dear
more dear the hour I have spent

watching you in front of the fire
stretched out in the chair fallen asleep

care lines of your day relaxed
to beauty you have offered up

going into dark fire of those circles
of the inferno where blistered souls
of your wounded sisters wander
your eyes tired from seeing through

Acorn taps on the roof *Attention*
the wind has died down 10:30 Friday eve

you asleep on the recliner we'd never
have bought if I didn't need to lay back
to take the heat of intravenous poison
that saved my life they say

There you are on it
in front of the fire
more dear

THE WORDLESS GREEN

Moss gatherers in the Appalachia
and the Pacific Northwest sacked

17,000 tons of it this year The words
of moss can only recover 1% per year

In that 100-year-old conversation
I already miss some green local dialects

having listened here to the gold
antennae waving from the granite boulders'
velvet of tiny green forests suddenly abundant

after waiting for first rain
in this high desert, waiting these many years

When you lay with me your face shape-shifted
to every goddess of wordless green your eyes
wordless pulled me into the crack between worlds

I love the granite's stories of long inhabitation
love laying them up so moss and lichen grow

surrounding the house where we can listen in
on what they know about time and seasons

PLANTS TALK: THE JOYFUL ROOTS IN SADNESS

Plants get into us and want to talk
about our merger and to *spel*
their point of view of capillaries and sun
messengers bursting in every cell

Plants talk
they flap on and on about what
we need to learn from them
how long they have waited for us
to get on board the bus of galactic
wind compassionate suffering

that comes with turning and turning
through lifetimes of flowering and desire

Plants talk
Maybe in return we could write a weekly
column extolling their myriad strategies
their hunker-down wisdoms
of survival and excited reproduction

Maybe plant a row of snow peas
soak soak with a hose

Maybe write a poem that lets
plants get into us to talk
about our merger and to *spell*
their point of view of capillaries and sun
messengers bursting in every cell

And why would the plants title their poem
The Joyful Roots in Sadness?

Maybe we should give up explanations
announce our engagement & quick marriage
to a cactus flower's ruby one-night exuberance

HORTICULTURE

Make corporations be people
deny their passports when diseased

Govern the International Monetary Fund
with day laborers on the Board

Pay the Kansas wheat farmer his fair share
maybe ten cents a loaf instead of two

Profit the Palestine goat herder
milking her doe for aged cheese

Slow time Let Juan
feel when corn is ready to pick by hand

Value attention

and care

We are too many
when we want too much
Efficiency becomes a false god we worship

so a Vietnamese worker falls into the hamburger grinding vat
in a Dodge City meat factory and probably we eat some of him

Which fits with what I'm trying to say
about interdependent systems

Some precious thing got lost in *your* house
you think you only misplaced it

actually
It's Juan the corn farmer moving to the barrio

THE PAUSE

found a curved corn-planting stick
just the right size strong branch end

burned from that October Witch Fire
laying right at my feet waiting

Kneel down to plant sweet corn
end of May sun on bare belly and back

light particles that have been waiting
in the sun's core for 8 million years
unbind and reach my skin in 8 minutes

in the strawberry patch a plant inches down
body parts being eaten from underground

I find the shovel shovel for a critter turn up
a garnet for its first reflections about this light
and for my seeing beauty magmatic

crystallized thousands of millions years ago
or only tens of millions years ago in my hand

I shovel to open gopher dark tunnel circuits
Go down on both knees plug my hand

into earth up to my left elbow
jewel in my lifted right hand
solar panel on my back

SPRING EQUINOX 2003

Gratitude matches privilege two wheels
on the night's chariot of constellations
pull us through branches alive again

rain new leaves flirting owl songs
"Where *are* you?" "Where are *you?"*
and frog survivors of three years of drought

sing to the wheeling Equinox stars
while this nation's chariot goes to war

riding one wheel of privilege the other
wheel obscured by smoke and flames

DANCE

It’s a slow turning dance
life being long for many of us
who under the wheeling stars
tell births of grandchildren and
stories of lives now gone

We seekers of divine silliness
have done it again laughing tonight
about it all how strange attractors

towards work and joy draw us
into the next circle
and the next until the last of us

see every hillside bare of trees
plains stripped of anything to eat
or burn for the last warmth

where again we will dance in caves
raw earth where the last survivor
on this planet will fill her belly
with clay eating there at the last

the cosmic dust we first were made of

CURFEW SONG

What they call earthquakes
are the mutterings
of a perverse man

who sees the land around him
as closed as a cave,
gets drunk to look at it

to look at himself
from the constellation Orion
the hunter in western skies,

sees himself bloodied and stupid
as strong drink can make him,
and both throats moan night
wolves' long-voweled resonance,

What in other drinking men
would be nausea and vomit
he makes into strange music

he as a child who read
hieroglyphics from the mouths
of large-bore rifles

GOODBYE TO THE WIND

for Dan Connor

I wonder how the leaves feel stripped from oak so the wind can blow
through so the tree won't
break or topple I wonder how the leaves feel

All my life I've hated winds hot Kansas after harvest winds from
Texas when sleeping outside only helped mosquitoes or sheets of
hail and tornados screamed by

Fleeing to Wisconsin winter cold blowing under coats and even in
full sun no snow melts
my face froze stiff in that winter wind

Albuquerque wind howls against the Sandia mountains' ancient caves
above it all a calm niche an open mouth smiling on I-5 traffic
the Rio Grande valley fowled by blowing sand

Down the Santa Fe trail to San Diego out here in the foothills
the Santa Ana devil wind routinely knocks over semi-trailers
blows incessant all night day after days
tops 100mph in huffs of firestorm

Oh ye winds crack cheeks blow gratitudes
ye have more lives than me and thus I love you

I wonder how the leaves feel stripped from oak so the wind can blow
through so the tree won't break or topple I wonder how the leaves
feel

THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

For Leslie-- scripting around your midnight visit as a moth

Picked up the firestick to
lift and roll a new log's
cuddle against flame
ruby fire whisper pine smell

Crickets and
a distant drone

into clouds a hundred humans go
strapped into rows of chairs overhead

From overhead ten thousands of
toads all young and samely
mottled fell on Brignoles France
September 23, 1973.

some speculate UFO cargo
or leaked from a parallel universe

Not all falls of life forms need a
storm

. . .on a calm Louisiana day 1947
tons of frozen fish fell out of fog

Raining cats and dogs out!
they'd say in Kansas about
gully-washers With so much
unexplained why not you as
moth visiting
just when I wish you here

I push oak bodies closer with a
firestick for an arm wanting to learn
from their ease
into other forms of light

Surrounded by crickets dogs
excited to bark coyotes
star fire burning overhead

Let the midnight special shine a light
on me *Let the midnight special shine*
an everlovin' light on you

THE SIGNS

"Every day is terrible and wonderful"

First, the sycamore cut off too early
turning leaves gold in September

Tonight something runs through underbrush keeping low to
the ground padded with fur it could be you as rabbit or
kangaroo rat
or bobcat ravenous tracking the wind

Listen at the screen door! Another message from the
woman of the oaks humming under the moon-drenched
dark canopy her song the shape of an offered hand

At midnight a westerly breeze comes up
cool with clouds and smelling of ocean

Some provocative being with long skirts pressed against her by hot
winds
from the desert has just walked east

What to make of these transcendent signs? Tomorrow the
radio will report her as unexplained shift in atmospheric
pressure.

Around us is mystery We want to know
why every day is terrible and wonderful

but the message unwritten on old papyrus
What we want to know or ought to do
is in another language even if we could
read it after the windstorm the rain's melt

BIRTHDAY PARTY AT THE RIVER

Driving up river farther from motels not knowing where we'd end
up what do you remember about the log cabin the painting on
the wall that watched us not making love where we didn't have
TV thank god

A fixed memory was the guy hollering across the Delores
River's noisy ripples where we floated lines for a trout
breakfast: "Are you from California?" he yelled about
planes ticketed for California turned into terror we
huddling around the car radio to listen to try to understand

But first the birthday cake miraculous baked in a raw cabin and after that
Mozart on your deck in a reality different from anyone who came before us

and who we were 10 years, 1 year, two months ago all be changed after this tower
collapse and cake together
I pray this may all things be well I pray

THE TRIP

The moon travels an eye above the earth by day we're a blue
marble to her by night grey light splays black shadows from
canyons spokes of darkness radiate into night sky

The moon travels over seven oceans whose thighs arouse
and lift to her intoxication the moon shoulders through the
horizon and leaps into the telescope

of your eye the moon will let you look
at her all night but will answer you nothing

the moon rolls over ticking clocks mates time zones millions of
moaning lovers
give off a harmonic web humming the earth

When the moon slides the south horizon she enters your
bedroom bold faced or
shows just the glimpse of a bare shoulder

The moon looks at her casino hand
decides whether to double up or slowly fold

A heart of light swelling and constricting the moon passes
over our own passing into the breath of clouds sooner or
later

Watching the full moon just overhead under clouds running
east hundreds of years ago the same Basho tripped
and fell backward into the irrigation ditch

got up all wet laughing @ this life's follies

July 2007

THE QUESTION, THE STORY

Today Tim came up with a prepared question like usual because he
maintains curiosity
“How do they make hashish?”

I embellished Ed Dorn’s story about naked boys running through fields of
pollinating marijuana
in the heat of the day running and sweating

Gave him men waiting at the end of the rows with long wooden
knives to scrape off the sweat
laden with golden dust like bumblebees

I told him about buying hashish in flat pages
in Istanbul but not the whole story

FAMILY MEETING

Some Indian women come walking down the dirt road When they get to where the orchard is now
they see us about the same time we see them

They pause in confusion a grandmother some strong middle-aged a young woman with child and a toddler

It's November acorn season the oak's supply of *wiiwish* has been stripped and piled by east wind off the desert

that whites first called devil winds their weatherman now calls Santa Ana conditions the Iipay named *enyak-wik* and sent prayers to ride all night winds to the source

We draw together at the sight of the women gathering in their own huddle to point out the familiar grinding holes

agreeing yes this is the family place where we collect from the *esnyaaw* to shell and pound Winter food singing

Who are they in this place Who are we in this place? When we gather as a family to walk up the earth road up the trail to greet them they are no longer there

When we gather as a family to walk up the earth road
up the trail to greet them they are no longer Here