

# Erik Barry Erhardt, Selected Poems

14 December 1974 —



*For Shomari Vincent Deluccio, my brother,  
and Darrell Whitney Royter, my friend,  
for encouraging my self-discovery.*

*“It’ll destroy you if you try to make it mean anything  
to anyone but yourself.”  
Henry Rollins  
(American Rock Singer, Author, Actor and Poet, b. 1961 Feb 13)*



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High school and early College.

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## Memory Maze 1991 — 1997

High school and early College.

*Memory Maze was initially called “Thoughts are Liquid in the Memory Maze”. The title comes from the three-dimensional mazes that hung on my walls during high school. Much in this section exposes me at my most naïve, just beginning to experiment with words. Since I did not grow up reading, this was the beginning of words for me. I did not keep track of when these were written.*



## Thoughts are Liquid in the Memory Maze 1991 — 1997

### My Only Fan

In my desk I see the color of time.  
Three small circles all in a line.  
I understand not your symbols and signs.  
All I care is for her to be mine.

Do you see the light high in the sky?  
And the small stone on the other side?  
The tools we use all are not fine.  
And the flowers we smell all are but dying.

I live my life entangled in sound.  
10 It is better alone, I have found.  
Watching people at life opening the ground.  
Jumping inside to join the crowd.

Truth's all-existent, it's not easy to see,  
Perception is not reality.  
I am more than others see me to be.  
They will never see the real side of me.

I will hide from their eyes as long as I can.  
Playing my Paul in my imagery band.  
And the sound will come and take my hand,  
20 And die, I shall, my only fan.

## Our Flight

That little angel I know  
unveils her wings and  
Lets the winds take her  
off into the vastness.

I watch her there, high,  
higher in life, but she soon  
Loses the winds and screams  
toward home where she wakes.

Unknown is her flight to her,  
10 for she is only *she*, in my eyes,  
And in my arms, but in the soul —  
we are one.

I watch her take the winds in  
her arms and let go the  
World she so fondly loves,  
and a man with her, I.

We soar into the blue, lighter  
than our own spirits, and  
watch what is around us  
20 take part in our joy.

The new environment nips my  
cheeks, and at my nose as  
We soar higher than the peregrine,  
and just under our hearts.

We stay for a while, here,  
far from eyes of others and  
Rules and strings. Only  
sight — sound — touch.

Here is where we play and  
30 are more comfortable than  
Anywhere. Here from a  
world of darkness and cold.

In our cosmos are the colors of  
imagination. Powerful golds and  
Yellows, pinks blues violets peaches and  
others express the feel.

And the light swirls and rumbles and  
soars with our touch, and  
Our warmth. My body trembles  
40           slightly as I feel her love's bliss.

I cannot see home from here, but  
perhaps I am there; in the  
Clouds, in her arms, in her heart.  
my hat shall hang here.

Time comes back, and the hour is  
late. We glide down the light  
Currents of the sky into their world, and  
light blinds my eyes here in the darkness.

I kiss her lip and step out the  
50           void waving my arm, as she turns  
In toward her world. I sit in my  
seat and turn the key, and into mine  
I return.

## One Funny Dream

I lie awake  
in my room of mazes  
The sky is dark  
on this side of the globe

The day's been long  
my strings are tired  
My legs sore  
my mind racing

10 Racing through mazes  
caught under a spell  
Images shifting  
constantly changing

I create conversation  
with a girl I've met  
The time has expired  
it's too late I lament

20 The shadow's too dark  
it takes me away  
A rolling thunder ball  
away from this day

I cannot see home  
it's all too far  
This world is a blur  
to my crazy blue eyes

Black to gray  
gray to blue  
I can see only sky  
and some clouds here

30 I feel a chill  
my feet are cold  
But it will not wait  
for me today

And with my arms spread  
and my legs  
I dive and loop  
and float in my dream

40 I am alone  
but I see them there  
They are far  
and grounded I regret

They don't look up  
I don't look down  
But stay a while  
in my curious new space

The light has expired  
and the shadow comes near  
I'm not so frightened  
this time

50 Its gentle black  
engulfs me again  
And returns me  
to where I belong

I see things clearer  
on this new day  
The picture is crisper  
the colors brighter

60 I have never seen  
such beauty  
Not even  
in my new world

I remember the girl  
and the conversation  
I want  
and need

I'll see her  
on Tuesday  
Three days away  
three ages away

70 The girl wearing red  
with the clip in her hair  
So elegantly she plays  
fingers of ivory  
eyes of opal

This is the beauty  
 I felt in the sky  
 With cotton clouds  
 and baby eyes

Next time we'll fly  
 her and I  
 80 Perhaps the lovely shadow  
 will find her too

And with a shiver  
 I turn on my side  
 And grip my pillow  
 my feet still cold.

### Lights on, Lights off

Each night I am able  
 to stare off  
 Into the suburban city of mine,  
 and watch the sky dim,  
 And the lights  
 glow.

Tail lights, head lights —  
 they're all the same  
 From my room upstairs.  
 10 none of them know me,  
 As I know none of them —  
 just lights . . . busy lights.

As much of the world I think  
 I have seen in my given life,  
 I have seen nothing  
 assessing the limit of  $1/n$  to infinity.  
 I am as anyone else is —  
 ignorant of detailed surroundings in our fractal world.

20 We spend so much time  
trying to see the big picture  
and how we each fit in  
That we neglect the pin  
hiding in that proverbial  
haystack.

I like to see the world  
as some lighter shade of gray  
where not all is  
sordid, and people intend virtue  
as well as I'd like them to.

30 Perhaps that is a  
premature notion  
Similar to "all are created equal"  
and "justice for all."

Our "supreme" society has  
provided the laws and ideals  
Of equality but sells out  
to greedy economics.

40 The all-mighty dollar  
is mightier than some see it.  
It is the desire that creates greed.  
And with greed appears  
The betterment of few from the  
belittlement of many.

It is an unfortunate and evil force,  
yet, governments have us convinced  
Of justified greed  
corrupting minds and morals of all  
born under the *machine*.

50 There is nothing that can be done,  
even collectively.  
The evil is greater than all of us.  
it blinds us then manipulates us

To the pleasure of itself and  
 When we break,  
 There are plenty of replacements.

It is the supreme weapon.  
 We have already been beaten.  
 There is no war, only casualties,  
 and with all that has gone on ...  
 60 The slaughter continues ...  
 ... and lights continue by ... forever.

### The Apple Tree

I'm a piece of the apple tree.  
 There are so many places I could be.  
 I could be the water that came from the storms,  
 Which sustains the tree and keeps it whole.

I could be the forking veins  
 That absorb the moisture from the storm.  
 I could be the sturdy trunk with rigid bark  
 To secure the tree from harm.

10 Or the many branches right and left  
 That hold the fruit so sweet.

But I am none of these.  
 Nor am I a fruit that hangs itself low  
 To fall early and rot or be picked or smashed.  
 And I am not an apple at top  
 Who would ripen and ripen only to spoil.

I have endured each of these stages to  
 Now have a choice on my where-a-bouts.  
 And now I make my choice.

20 I am the fruit neither big nor small.  
 I am the one who does not fall.  
 And as I ripen I begin to shine and  
 Beautiful fractally symmetric leaves spill around me.

When I am ready, I will know  
 For a lone child will pick me.  
 With jumping and reaching and grabbing and *challenge*,  
 I am chosen.

And after I've nourished and been eaten away,  
 I find myself under nurturing soil.  
 The water comes and I grow again, but  
 30 This time much more handsome — whole.

Love is where the water flows and  
 With that water transpires growth.  
 I have grown so many times and  
 Nourished so many more.

## It Is Wild

### It Is Wild

man's total abandonment  
 of art and talents of mind.  
 There are some seniors who  
 understand.  
 There are youth who butcher it with  
 misunderstanding.  
 This great gentleman before me  
 does not belong in this  
 10 money-trap marketplace,  
 but in concert  
 or entertaining those royal.  
 He is romantic, witty —  
 majestic modesty.  
 He knows complexity.  
 He understands elegance.  
 Listening, my thoughts naïve.  
 Absorbing his music,  
 seeing faces, seeing innocence.  
 20 I am earnest —

straight forward —  
 poignant —  
 assensitive —  
 self-enclosed —  
 dreamy —  
 floating —  
 spiritual —  
 impractical —  
 hoping for the best.

## Kneeling

I knelt by the couch  
   in which she lay.  
 My hand held her arm  
   and her hand, mine.  
 She was so full of sadness  
   her body shook, and I resonated,  
   not needing to understand,  
   to understand a need.  
 She said, through gasps  
 10   of breaths like hiccups,  
   when I find that special girl  
   show how I feel and  
   be able to talk about  
   anything, anything at all.  
 I know what she says.  
   I shift to bring circulation  
   back to my legs.  
 I want to say something  
   but I know nothing  
 20   I'm an emotional failure  
   I'm a social failure  
   I want to give her  
   a pint of peppermint-stick  
   ice-cream with rainbow smiles.  
 This is a problem not solvable

by such magic.  
She is more calm —  
exhausted from emotional motion  
I drag upstairs to leave  
30 her with the Christmas tree  
to sleep.

Two weeks before she leaves.

## Entropy

Thermodynamics law number two  
doesn't allow anything you choose  
I live as I do, working each day  
disordering more than I put away

Contributing entropy as I do  
I should assemble my own entroprise  
And being an entrepreneur I will  
consume fuels and untie shoes

10 I will shatter glass and disturb fields of  
electro-magnetic and gravity  
I will break symmetries of C, P and T  
and flow in time — imaginary.

## Tired Pendulum

The dials on the wall rotate in elegance,  
as artificial lamps overcome our star's brilliance.  
And while darkness surrounds the outer wall,  
isolation within is a soothing calm.

Alone with thoughts of scattered days,  
swirling violently in a tempestuous haze.  
Soon the lamps lie black and the world is gone,  
but the pillow will stay until the dawn.

Blankets lie cold on a lonely body,  
10       which thinks in geometry and threnody.  
And so often that body finds fantasy,  
          and shifts around in ecstasy.

There, the sun climbs once again,  
          to ascend and fall among the heavens.  
Guiding life through time and space and dreams,  
          and all other things which seem not to be.

### Leaving Summer Behind

A mist hangs over a sea of yellow-red,  
leaving the summer behind.  
Leaving and leaving,  
and the wind is unkind.

They flutter from tree top  
to house top.  
To the book shop  
to the bus stop.

They gather in our yards,  
10       swirl around our cars.  
Dance and play away,  
until they see the stars.

Then they slow, some hide away,  
they are tired from the day.  
And as darkness settles in,  
some find themselves a speedway.

They race by your windows,  
rattle your screen door.  
And when you think they've tired out,  
20       they sputter 'round some more.

These are what bring people north.  
New Hampshire's the big winner today.  
Families, couples, and stray photographers enjoy,  
till the sky's a dapple-gray.

### Withdrawn Wintergreen

Wandering through a crunching white,  
travel is slow this starry night.  
Breath crystallizes as I make  
footprints through the path I take.

I've been this way few times before,  
the lush nature is what allures.  
But not this time, in the snow,  
and in the dark, in the glow —

Of the moon, so far and bright.  
10 It gives a superstitious fright,  
To those who hold irrational fear,  
at scarred life their minds will leer.

Snow has its way to make  
generalizations of a landscape.  
Navigation is a trick tonight,  
landmarks and paths are hidden by white.

Hours it's been since the somber night,  
the horizon is never within my sight.  
I ramble this land alone, coyly —  
20 wandering inside this grand lace doily,

Of a land after crystals have drifted through time,  
benign to the air, crisp as lime.  
Yet, I'm still alone, in the after-glow,  
and behind me I carry a single shadow.

It weighs heavy as I trudge though time —  
 a chain on the ankles, as if from some crime.  
 But I have never, not that I know,  
 caused a trail of such sorrow,

30 As I have in the wood this lonely day,  
 so this is where I have chosen to stay.  
 Sheltered by cold and wind and night,  
 life gives me no reason why now I should fight,

An isolation so deep the top is unseen,  
 except by the rock and the wintergreen.  
 Weary are my eyes, so I sleep,  
 giving myself to the night to keep.

### Cynical Pen

“Oh, I don’t know”  
 the paper says.  
 Isn’t it strange  
 reading my thoughts?

And to know that  
 you are somehow trapped  
 And will read whatever  
 I spill on the page.

10 I can write of war,  
 of life, of love.  
 It hardly matters  
 to you.

You are just reading,  
 reading my thoughts.  
 And it should be sobering,  
 I’m not thinking of you.

You don't mean anything  
to what I write now.  
You are somewhere, I don't care —  
20 I scribble words just the same.

I don't even know that  
what I think is real.  
But it seems to be  
or could be.

But it hardly matters,  
why should it?  
Thoughts, words,  
images, emotions, feelings.

Those things don't mean  
30 anything to you.  
You can't relate to my  
mind. You can't!

I can't relate you yours.  
you have been everywhere  
I have not. But I  
have done the same.

A little different perhaps —  
unique is a nice word.  
I'm alone on a journey  
40 which knows no end.

Oh, but how ironic.  
here is the end.  
The end of my thoughts,  
the end of the page.

"I don't know"  
the paper said.  
Because the writer  
laid down his pen.

## The Audience Was Kind

The Audience Was Kind.

They speak quietly  
things I cannot hear.

I'm too busy voicing my song.

The irony of performing is that

I am not what makes it happen,  
it is the people.

They watch, fiddle with their fingers,  
and smile to the person next to them.

10 I am here for them, but more,  
they are here for me.

And somewhere mid my song,

everything becomes liquid  
and flows

without

thought

or

st

ra

20 i  
n

.

It just is, and I am happy.

They applaud.

Everything is smooth

Everyone together

As one voice.

Thank You.

## Mother's Day

Life is liquid  
and therefore the bond  
between mother and daughter  
and mother and son

From the gentle womb  
of liquid life  
through years of struggle  
of learning right

10 To years of revolt  
and teenage fight  
child remains coupled  
with inner sight

To mother with  
or mother without  
to mother with calm  
or mother with shout

20 The bond remains —  
often strong  
as when was heard  
a cradle-song

Soothing voice and  
soothing hand  
comfort child and  
understand

Mother as teacher  
child apprentice  
against hate and greed  
and prejudice

30 Mother as exponent  
holder of home  
by feeding water  
and reading tome

Mother as protector  
Mick asks shelter  
strong will carries  
and soft skin offers

Mother as heart  
sustains for whole  
swirling silently  
40 life's barber-pole

Mother as love  
strongest of all  
flows life over kin  
as Hawaiian waterfall

And so this day  
in honor of you  
within you have means  
few others do

Life is liquid  
50 mother's the love  
and so much more  
than what's alluded above.

## Stupid Poetry 1996 — 1997

College: London and briefly thereafter.

*I knew that not all poetry was good, or even marginal, but  
here I don't take it seriously at all.*



## Stupid Poetry

### Jelly Swan

Parchment on which jelly swans are left upon  
halloo, hello.

For with wooden stick, hot chia swirls  
happy in its lead sack of quill pens  
without foot in cheek  
tongue in fireflies dost make poor Lilly cry.

Oh Lilly — why, Lilly,  
did you leave for a hair cut so low  
and without frisky moonbeams to  
play your lovely flatulence upon.

10 Oh, if only I might have a soft wing —  
with bones bright — that I might munch upon —  
oh, jelly swan.

06/27/96

### Window White

Shining window without white lines —  
do you become cold in the night  
without blanket nor humor in the silvery wall?  
It seems the lurking screen finds its way upon you,  
but only when clumsiness finds wind without you.  
If gravity hath but one love, it should be that of bringing you down —  
down so that you open no longer, but on top, on fevery days.

07/21/96

## Distance

Distant as a midnight calm, I sit upon my ass.  
Some seem far with peacock wings and wine without cork.  
Yet, what is so near that distance does not scoff its warble?  
Yet, what so close that it is not removed?  
And in this light, though I may hold your hand,  
I could never touch your fingertips.  
Though I wish it not — not until you wash.

07/29/96

## Gravity Girl

Gravity spirals without use for water.  
Where is she, who falls so swift?  
The tender sand beneath her feels the  
absence of sun for a moment and wonders,  
“will I see our glorious light again?”  
And she in flight sees the sand.  
A terrible bond of girl and sand  
from gravity without water made.  
Thud!

10 07/31/96

## Ballerina Girl

Forever in position three  
indeed, of course, this is not me.  
But the ballerina girl so trim  
though cold enough to lack a grin.  
Tip-toe-teetering on a life not metering  
the acupuncture rhythms flip-flop-fleeting.  
So with little more than a far away sigh  
(for such display would for her be a lie)  
Falling from a high above place

- 10    holding skirt down, such a disgrace.  
      Finding the hollow tunnels shallow below  
      she remembers her character and now knows  
      That depth in life, though she lacked,  
      would make quite a long fall. Splat!

03/12/97



1995

College: London

*For Kristen M. Karlicek, college sweetheart (December First).*



## As I Lay Alone in London

Even as I lay alone tonight  
you resonate within me.  
I take hold of you and  
as I pull your figure toward me  
your back does not resist my pull  
and, as two liquids, we fold  
together swirling in tendrils of  
the most serious love for the other.

10 Often I lay behind you, facing you,  
you facing away. My legs and  
waist folded up parallel to you.  
Your heels touch my front ankle,  
your calves, my shins; your pelvis, mine.  
I hold you with my arm hung loosely  
over your stomach like a cotton scarf  
and fall into the rhythm of your breathing.

20 I breath into your hair and smell the  
deep, full fragrance of a perfume many  
hours old and I remember when you  
fingered it on, as we stood nude  
in your room and were just waking  
from a long night to a busy  
day. You held the elegant bottle by  
two fingers and smoothed it on with

Your index of the other hand. So  
gentle and deliberate you moved  
touching your finger to your neck and  
gliding it toward your breast.  
30 Three times on this side, three on  
the other. Then some on the  
wrists and you rubbed them together  
and looked at me with a small smile.

I remember tossing my things to the

floor and taking you from the chair  
where you were writing poetry and  
dancing about the room in a frenzy  
of laughing and kissing and touching  
and undressing. I remember the moon  
not low enough for me to see from the bed  
40 but not high enough to escape illuminating your face.

And I remember laughing loudly and completely  
when we reached orgasm, and you  
looked up wide-eyed with gaping mouth  
and when I kissed your forehead you exhaled  
and breathed deeply in complete satisfaction.  
We lie there sweaty and tired and  
listened to public radio playing Bach and Mozart,  
knowing love.

We turn on our sides, crumpled  
50 in this beautiful pose. Two lovers,  
understanding love and recognizing unity.  
Intensity of art and song, poetry and  
logic, food and emotion bind us together  
tonight in a world of one room, one bed,  
one warmth and one love as I  
lay alone in London.

19950924, 3am

1997

Finishing college.



## The Journey

We live at once, two lives simultaneous.

At one turn going round two circles,  
one in life  
one in death.

There are times the paths are distinguishably separate  
yet most, to each foot a circle,  
and so we tread.

19970105

## Song for Orion

Orion, my warrior Friend,  
I spread my arms to greet you.  
You are the first I look for  
the first I find when  
I look to the night for companions.  
Tonight you have brought your friends with you.  
And with them behind you, you nearly fade  
from sight before them.

10 I see before you the bright band which is  
my galaxy.

There are days when I look up,  
my star a bloody distraction.  
I search for you, but many times without finding.  
So today I found the highest hill so that  
I might be closer to my friend,  
so that I might be closer to the one  
who keeps me in life so many nights.

20 There is nothing I should tell you, for  
you are older than my star and  
wiser than God.

I just wish that I may distract you  
for a moment from your deep stellar contemplation  
so that I may peer into the abysses which are  
your eyes as you are spying me on this hill.

I wish never to be knighted by a King  
 or Queen or given an honor so blind and  
 useless in my life.

30 Yet, on death I wish that you might  
 awaken your sleeping sword from its  
 shiny scabbard resting at your side  
 and take my head so that I may  
 finally be at peace.

Orion, my warrior friend,  
 I open my arms to you  
 and bow in my love for you  
 and in your honor.

19970107 climbed Mt. Monadnock to sing and bow to Orion

### Sonnet

If ever, from within, you can find a love  
 Which, by spring's sun shining brightly above,  
 Yearns for the burning heart of another,  
 To be quenched either there or by rose water,

You needn't travel searching at longish length  
 Over mountain, stream — through labyrinth,  
 For about you is one, a heart of great fire,  
 And it be your manner and beauty he doth admire.

10 So if in your breast a love does stir,  
 An excited longing — again alive amour,  
 As lark with voice not wasting time  
 Not waiting till summer when so lovely's springtime

From my heart to yours, I embody great zeal,  
 Each body, mind and love from you, hence, do I appeal.

(for Rendi Bolton)

19970208

## Glow

Here I breathe  
the tripping waterfalls  
of candle light  
glowing gold against  
calm walls and  
softly falling upon  
mine eyes.

Here in silence  
so sharp my ears  
10 make dizzying screaming  
sounds so I know  
blood still in me flows  
as oil to a wick  
of a lantern burning.

Here I am living,  
though not ideal,  
but I know I live.  
In life now are feelings  
and so welcomed are  
20 they my restraint is poor  
and passions great.

The candle constant  
pushing from gravity  
sucking dark so much as  
making light.  
But, gently, gently  
and ever so silently  
glowing in simple life.

Its perfection in glowing,  
30 purity among light  
and warmth, matched  
in quality only by the  
wavering string,  
steady, constant, whole,  
bringing sound.

How, candle, I envy you

for you live and die  
 many times, each time  
 in life brilliantly bright  
 40 in death cold calm.  
 Though apparently simple  
 I know my complexity matches yours.  
 I know you fever at a touch  
 I know you burn without envy  
 I know you shine without difference  
 I know your purity of passion  
 I know you because  
 I know myself and  
 I understand.  
 50 The difference here though  
 is that you die tonight,  
 your time comes, no warning  
 though I am ready  
 my time waits  
 and I am happy,  
 I want to glow  
 I want to live.

19970215

## To Play

To play  
 to sing  
 to see  
 to feel  
 To stare into another's eyes  
 watching how she watches me  
 as I sing and strum  
 I sometimes barely believe that  
 I am here before these people  
 10 and that I should be giving sound  
 in song, giving feeling by sound.  
 I feel good when in song

where song flows, life follows  
It is a river through fields of  
time, spring with life within  
and about its shores.

Without so much as a melody in one day  
the day should be empty.

20 Here is why I carry in me music  
hence life flows about me  
keeping most things complete.

So tonight, as I sang, as I peeked  
into faces I did not know but that  
wished to know me, at least for that moment,  
I brought life and completeness.

I became part of the whole.

19970220

### Again by the bedside of a woman weeping

Again by the bedside  
of a woman weeping  
for her love lost  
for a man deformed.

Again knowing not  
my place in here  
for action for her  
my desire to heal

10 To still the rushed breath  
the choking tearing  
the thick thunder  
from clouds heavy in head

If I knew my place  
my hand could be  
sure to her shoulder  
bleeding pain into soft space

So the decision comes  
that I am weak and  
have others define

20      my place is untruth.  
Or, that I define myself  
        to live the passions  
            I know alone  
        I must now live these.  
I learn here to be  
        strong in the moment  
            and now to define it  
        and live as I am.

19970228

### Black Clock

The clock black, losing memory  
of sounds echoed in it moments before.  
For it knows not the color of time,  
itself being the embodiment of all.  
It counts without knowing what.  
It sings at tempo and knows not why.  
In its humility it loses sight of itself  
knowing neither the value nor destruction  
of its service to a populous blind.  
10      Man always planning and missing the moment.  
This clock, knowing only the moment,  
knows more of itself than the man who,  
in his lack of planning, glances brutishly upwards,  
his pace quick to meet a moment,  
only truly to miss.

19970312

## Stepping

I stand

comfort in my safety  
and lack of risk

Standing

I'm the one whom pushed  
does not push back

I lean

uncertain and anxious  
now in the danger

10 Leaning

I must now make  
the decision

I fall

I give myself to danger  
letting it have me

Falling

gravity now my master  
to betray

I step

20 catching myself  
securing security

Stepping

I recover from danger  
fighting fate

It changes now

no longer stepping  
now a series of  
fallings and  
catchings

30 Each time risking

Each time abandonment

Each time a critical moment

when the choice is realized  
or denied

Each time fighting the master

arguing the argument

that can not be won  
 Knowing that to fall is  
 to lose  
 40 to lose is submission  
 abandonment complete  
 to stand no more  
 I'm afraid  
 I'm afraid of stepping  
 But to stand is worse than  
 to fall  
 To stand is horrible  
 So in fear  
 sometimes blinded by it  
 50 I lean  
 I fall  
 I risk  
 I step  
 I transfer  
 I stand  
 I lean  
 And so I can live

19970320

### Giggle

The binding of the stomach  
 at the critical  
 nearly going over  
 though I bite my cheek  
 I sputter, giggling  
 just giggling because I'm tired  
 because I'm with people and I'm happy  
 because of subtleties logic makes illogical  
 I want to giggle more,  
 10 to laugh loudly and ridiculously  
 to ache and finally, after much straining,  
 to work my facial muscles

back to a relaxed position  
The joy of pleasant company  
the delicate comfort of  
fatigue in gentle circumstance  
reveals the puer and  
I giggle.

19970329

### Still wishing for stillness

Early Spring

Late Autumn

If I lacked a sense of history  
I would not know how to describe today.

Beneath the trees

Dry, crunching leaves,  
Brown without life, lay silent  
Until crisp wind carries them across rocks and into bare  
branches.

I think of my kite today

10 Resting in the dark of my closet.  
It should be at the end of its string  
With, on the opposite end, my happy hand.

Bundled in a coat

I feel I should have out from by now  
But the sun seems reluctant to radiate  
I know this day and who it's for.

I see children in coats

Packed as snowmen  
20 Running in circles, giggles,  
rolling, spinning, tagging, laughing, silly time.

I remember my childhood

Alone in the woods  
Smashing dead branches from the pine trees  
Climbing, jumping, daydreaming, counting.

Always my eights

Around this tree eight times

Then back 'round to untangle  
 Order those things invisible all but to a young boy.  
 Still alone am I  
 30 Still counting the world  
 Still persisting an order  
 Still wishing for stillness.

19970410

### Weaving Watersongs

A waggish woman wooed  
 with wild whispers wiling  
 wanting and winning.  
 A willful wallowing warble  
 whither winter wind or  
 winding windbaggery winnow.  
 A warrior's watchfire by water's side  
 the warrior withdrawn into welkin  
 in a whimsical whirlwind whirligiging wistfully.  
 10 Witful and wily the warrior warmly  
 asks here heart-whole  
 whither the woman would weave with the warrior.

— will thee?

(for Rachael Rivard)

19970416

### Baccalaureate Speech

I had a speech planned for this day. For weeks I had it. In it, I was the hard academic being critical but hopeful for our generation. That was the speech I was ready to give, but reluctant to do so. I went to my friend Nancy Monette with this problem and she said that I should come here [the Cathedral], spend time and I would know then what to say.

I went to the cathedral there on the hill as I have done about once a year to spend some time with the green of the trees, the brown of the

earth, and the sky of varying temperament.

10 I know I was very lucky to sit here by myself with the robins and chick-  
etties. I am very lucky to live in a place where life comes easily, the  
states. I say this now after putting myself through school. And I could  
do this because I know life is easy if lived simply. Simplicity allows  
for great richness. The reason I'm so critical of pop culture and the me-  
dia is that it is all too obvious. It is the face, the surface, the image in  
which everything lies. When I retreat to the woods, to the hills, things  
are simple again.

Two years ago I would have said things aren't simple. I would have  
been ecstatic to talk with anyone of the complexity of weather, of popu-  
20 lation fluctuations and the logistic equation, of the chaotic dynamics of  
a stream of water. Now I'm more apt to muse on the seemingly chaotic  
dynamics of a person's stream of consciousness, and let the water return to  
a state of simplicity, a state of truth, a state of beauty.

The Indigo Girls sing, "some long ago when we were taught, before  
whatever kind of puzzle you've got, you just stick the right formula in,  
a solution for every fool." This is why the hardest to learn is the least  
complicated. Though formulas for both relativity and quantum theory  
have been realized, I have doubts that a theory of everything will ever  
come about. Life is not formulaic.

30 John Keats wrote in his Ode on a Grecian Urn, "Beauty is truth, truth  
beauty, that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." I believe  
this. Those things which hold truth, have for me the most beauty and  
these things also often have a remarkable simplicity to them. Einstein's  
 $e = mc^2$ , Euler's identity  $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$ , the Mozart piano sonata, the Bach  
fugue, the Shakespearian sonnet, the tree, the stream, these old houses  
around us, all these have truths, many of them simple truths (like that of  
a stream), but that makes them beautiful.

For those who are skeptical of this, that beauty and truth do not co-  
incide. consider the contrapositive. That is, 'if it is not beautiful, then  
40 it hasn't truth.' This is illustrated by the morning hangover, clonings,  
pornography, missile tests, mass suicides, any violence-any violence.  
These will never be fit here in the hills with the trees.

As I walked the paths surrounding this cathedral I thought about the  
stream of water. A stream of water has one purpose; to exist in accord-  
ance with gravity and descend to bring life so that nature might ascend.  
As we are part of nature, we must all ascend (since if we didn't ascend

we would go against water and ultimately gravity.)

But to what purpose do we ascend? I think it is to live a good life.  
To live a good life as a tree might live a good life. It lives soundly and  
50 beautifully and lets animals and other trees live well because it lives  
well. Of kindness, beauty and truth, nature provides the greatest model.

Many of us here have been traveling paths guided by the qualities of  
kindness, beauty and truth. Those of us will recognize the fruits reaped  
by such a journey as whole in their goodness. We each have our own  
ways of expressing this type of journey in life. I describe mine here as a  
composer, one composing a life.

I know in my time here I have been as a composer of music, but not  
limited to a single discipline or style. Huddling over my desk from my  
hard chair, my back tired and my eyes straining, my fingers curling on  
60 my pen, I compose my life in delicate phrases, running up, then down,  
punctuated by tight syncopated rhythms, often without accompaniment.

In a pop world where so many feel obliged to listen only to others'  
songs, I feel a completeness for a community of people who choose to  
compose their own lives. I admit I have not rested much to take a listen  
to what I have composed so far, but I believe that very soon the time will  
come for me, and many of you who have not listened yet, to stop for a  
time and listen to our songs; often dwelling on a single wavering note,  
as though a whole composition could be based on it alone. And so, as  
70 in Old Bach's Canon per Tonos from the Musical Offering, where the  
canon ends one step higher in pitch than it started, so we leave Pierce,  
the class of 1997, so we leave Pierce steps higher than when we entered.

Thank you and live well.

19970418

## Movement

The movements of people about a desk.

Unaware of their subtle probing at its edges,  
the gliding hand across the surface.

The rap-tap-tap of the fingers  
pounding a thought out from its hiding place.

The movements of people about a tree.

Children running in dizzying circles,  
hopping, jumping to reach the branch just from reach.  
The shade pouring from the cool green above  
10 washing worries from the tired, daydreaming traveler.

The movements of people about a fence.  
Hands raking with bouncing fingers,  
grasping, tugging, pulling up and over.  
The quiet man walking lightly along  
content that his side is a good side.

The movements of people about a garden.  
Walking rows, dipping, touching, studying,  
deeply inhaling, raising the head, eyes closed.  
A man holding nature's garden as a  
20 woman's hand in his sight and in his heart.

The movements of people about a child sleeping.  
Careful that each step is gentle,  
whispers spoken and keys carried in clenched hands.  
But though silence is tried, still into the dreams  
the soft pitter-patter of sounds permeate.

The movements of people about music.  
Mingling whole bodily, showering with sound,  
bouncing, spinning, absorbed in the waves.  
The fingers running over the frets in  
30 delicate patterns, moving strings, moving man.

19970424

### Three Ways

1.  
Finding envelopes to physical possibilities and defying  
Burning holes in the fluid of life  
Driving their inner anger out upon the world  
Unaware of the hole they burn in themselves

2.

Walking without minding landscapes  
 Tripping, kicking, stumbling then blaming  
 Pushing against head and cross winds hinting  
 10 Fighting the energy not understood

3.

Pulled with the currents of our fluid space  
 Avoiding difficulty because the currents exert no effort  
 Gliding with whole vision, being nothing in everything  
 Freedoms infinite, life force eternal

19970425

### On the Baccalaureate Service at the Cathedral of the Pines

We gather today at a place  
 of Nature and Worship;  
 Still, we place our autos in  
 methodical rows on the uniform grass,  
 We sit in ordered benches  
 following a linear procession of events.  
 Speakers speaking into the microphone,  
 the birds are forced to sing loudly,  
 Beyond the level of comfort,  
 10 or to settle for the speakers' interruption of the wind.  
 So much empty wind is spilt today,  
 to the microphone's careful transcription.  
 I suppose we need this talking to,  
 so few know what the birds inherently do.  
 There is a message for listeners  
 who really know how to listen.  
 The birds know, that's why they  
 fly away from the gathering here.  
 The wind is speaking to all,  
 20 with a greater wisdom, a greater message;  
 The wind gives herself to us  
 because she wants us to know.

As I feel it, I let her take me;  
     I shiver at its, at first, coolness.  
 Then, when I do not fight it,  
     when I yield, I am comfortable.  
 I know the wind here, today,  
     as a messenger of Nature.  
 I know she speaks to me, because  
 30 she speaks to everything.  
 Today she shakes her eternal head  
     with me at the ceremony on the hill;  
 She's not understanding how the humans  
     can designate a place *for* Nature.  
 And, if that wasn't enough, then use  
     it as a lecture hall — ordered and barren.  
 I don't know how to respond,  
     I'm part of this silly ceremony,  
 But I protest its structure.  
 40 I take the natural way today,  
 I don't sit in my robe today  
     on the bench where I should.  
 Instead I wander about in sympathy  
     with the birds and snakes  
 who are disturbed today  
     by all these people and all this noise.

19970517

## The Car

The master slices the shell, gets in, turns the key, impaling the steering column. The beast groans, howls, spitting death from her flaming innards, a grinding metallic hell, scraping, fornicating pistons trapped, caged, enslaved to the makers of destruction, to a life withering life, wrinkling space, compressing time until it is gone.

The master's foot sends the ingredients of hell's fire, where nothing lives, not hope, not viruses, nothing, nothing, turning, spinning, the universe now controlled by this new axis, a new center, in the caged heart

10 of this machine new universes one by one, born and expelled, like seconds on a clock, appearing almost nonexistently and then gone forever, unremembered, unknown.

The master ceases the pollution production of the factory cold to the world, yet with burning innards, to inject the fuel of industry, of time compression, into the delicate sore spot, unhealable from the bruises and scars left from its enslaved sufferings. To fight the pain she grumbles, spits fire, spins ruthlessly over animals, plants, stones, children's toys. She accepts credit for, but no responsibility for her retaliation against the suffering she endures. Her master presses on, uncaring, unfeeling, 20 unmoved by small obstacles, and unaware of the destruction brought by the pressing, racing, spinning, grinding of the caged metal abyss in the heart of a factory of death, spitting poison, noxious nausea, suffocating life left to die behind the master, rushing to be in another place, missing the moment, killing it so quickly and easily it never existed, like the squirrel running from the wood to fuse with hot, roasting tar — the place everything dies, the war with nature begins with tar and continues with the master's quick acceleration into space, erasing memory, flushing life and questions into burning certainty, cold dead consequences, finding holes, unhealing passageways and pushing hard, splitting the world into 30 past and future, dichotomizing a continuity meant to exist as fluid, a fluid the master half freezes and shatters into billions of worlds, half burns scattering dust and steam into a chaos of death and sadness. The master is unforgiving, uncaring, desiring forceful conquest of fragility. The slave of the master's kicking, hammering, forcing, fights the hell she is made to burn in her chest. She rejects all things forced into her, poisoning pure air, blackening earth's soup, igniting the fire water forced into the bruised, scarred tunnel leading to a hollowed, purged stomach where life is impossible. A world of dark, cold, asphyxiating fumes to fuel the fiery, churning, irreversible world of racing, grinding, spitting, 40 determined to cut through nature, ignoring balance, knowing only the impaling line to the ever-moving point of destination, the point of cool down, of death to the death machine, the waiting and rueful anticipation of the master's spearing into the hurt place, unhealing, unwanted. To die only to be reborn into a rebellion against life. A terminal machine.

19970616

## Skatepark

Logic denied  
The war against nature  
    against the body,  
        pressing, kicking, grinding against  
        metal, concrete, pavement  
Gravity the master, Newton the unforgiving enforcer  
    “You fool, you are in my playground  
        where bones are fragile cracking things  
        and flesh is laughable, splitting, peeling  
10 as paper on a gift, tearing and ripping at it  
        to expose the innards.”  
(Yet, that’s the perk of youth.)

19970617

## Naked Void

This is the unlife  
    unemployed  
    unprovoked  
    untempted  
    ignoring the challenges I usually set for myself  
I lie here doing nothing  
    hardly eating  
    hardly sleeping  
My mind has returned to the child’s mind  
10 I once had when I’d smash through  
    branches left dead on pine  
I’ve almost ceased to exist  
    ceasing to think  
    ceasing to learn  
    making meaningless motions  
Staring through my pen splitting it in two  
    I stare through everything before me  
I lose myself in a vacuum of space  
    as vision goes blank

20       as sound silences  
          as sensations numb  
I no longer understand what goes on about me  
I become more confused about my inner workings  
I only know life's in me by this steady inner disturbance  
Seeming to disappear I feel my body invisible and spaceless  
    holding the unsense as it passes through objects  
    in my rented cube  
Empty  
Time now makes great leaps  
30       No longer moving the smooth liquid continuum  
Dissolving into my bed sheets  
    dripping life's fluid  
    I no longer will for anything  
I haven't the strength to raise myself to eat  
    the dry bread and water from the night that became this morning  
    before my body gave in to the gravity of heat exhaustion  
People said there was greatness for me  
    graduating summa cum and doing everyone proud  
Here I am as I know myself  
40       the air of disappointment weighing heavily on me  
    as I waste myself in space's deception  
I focus on nothing  
My eyes no longer look  
    a resting eyed stare  
    looking at objects which are invisible even to me  
I find pleasure in nothing  
    I play games that have turned hollow  
    I go through motions unchallenged or uninvolved  
    I masturbate just to get to sleep some nights  
50       as casually and uncaring as taking another bite of the  
    dry bread and washing it down with warm water  
Desire is other people's disease  
But I would lie if I said it wasn't mine too  
I don't think I even write this poem  
    I lie here and it seems to happen  
It happens the same way razors cut the  
    cables of children lying alone in bathtubs

running water  
I desire passively  
60 as this paper desires ink  
I desire  
But I discard all these things  
I discard the world  
Trapped in what seems simultaneously  
infinite and infinitesimal  
I hide in my hyperdimensional bathysphere  
where I'm untouchable  
unreachable  
unknowable  
70 I hide out of apathy  
I hide out of confusion  
I hide out of lack of language  
The objects in my multispacial cage  
define a language without meaning  
one that's untestable  
undefinable in the inworld  
so I stay out from inadequacy  
I suppose I've misunderstood living all my life  
I've misunderstood cars and television sets  
80 beaches and cigars  
I will never be a part of this world  
I have tried  
I've read recommended books and studied prescribed knowledge  
but these things pass through me  
as pollen in heavy winds  
undirected  
unabsorbed  
unused  
I can barely write this poem  
90 these simple words allude me and  
I can hear the echoes from language's laughter  
as the child who does not speak  
I do not use words in my thinking  
only shapes, colors and sounds appear there in the  
spacious conscious

It makes behaving easy  
My mouth never shoots off  
    except when possessed by persistent sound  
    then one or two of the parts vocalize themselves  
100 I sometimes make noise for the feeling of resonance  
    my throat head and chest in steady synchronization  
    with the wavering string in my throat  
I think now I have gone too far  
I am lost in the mindlessness  
I no longer understand what thoughts are  
I disappear  
    fighting nothing  
    slowly slipping  
    giving in to the gravity of the naked void  
110 With my pen here  
    something in me dies  
    it dies  
And what was once me  
    is now left with empty pages

19970621

### The phone lies dormant

The phone lies dormant  
    its antenna retracted  
    its buttons cold from isolation  
face up like a dead roach  
    stiff and hard  
My palm presses to my forehead  
    the oil softening my fingers  
Dipping my head I roll my hand  
    about my head, fingering the short  
10     bristles of hair  
from the corner of my one open eye  
I study the steady vibrations of  
    red juice in a clear glass  
    resting on the table a foot from my elbow

my heart is moving the juice  
    this small bit of sweet juice  
    a chemist's creation  
    preservable for decades  
This juice moves with my heart  
20 The juice moves  
The phone absolute in its stillness moves me  
    — to desperate fatigue  
    to anger, to the common room of loneliness  
I consider the juice  
I drink the juice  
    it moves in me  
    it is part of me  
The glass now rests with the thin film  
    two lines converging where my lips rested  
30 In the bottom a small red circle  
    like a bullet wound, a clean entry  
    yet with a most undeniably horrific exit  
The juice splatters  
I reach for the phone  
    but I'm too scared to touch it  
My arm freezes  
My heart no longer moves  
The phone rests  
  
19970920

### 5 seconds with Becca

I grasp with my own, her eyes  
    soft deep eyes in the  
Warm shadows of a curved brim  
    of a worn cap.  
I could look into them forever  
    a heated delight knowing  
A most pure goodness lies  
    just beyond our matched gaze here.  
As she looks at me, something

10        passes from her to me,  
Like the life mother passes to child  
      or the heat from a body to blankets  
A heat nearly fevering and intoxicating,  
      my eyes grow dizzy and useless.  
Behind her the room glows dimly,  
      the low wattage bulb humming  
A constant hum that is  
      indistinguishable from silence.  
My heart beats. I feel  
20        it starts in my chest  
And the pressure splashes  
      about my face and limbs.  
She begins to open her mouth  
      preparing a word that is  
Living in the foreground of  
      her consciousness.  
My mind, shuttering,  
      takes up every conversation  
And tries to find what  
30        she'll say. I search desperately.  
Her lips part slightly,  
      making a circle like a lazy kiss,  
And draw forward where they  
      crinkle and become white.  
The eyes open and the brows  
      pucker in the center  
The place my brows connect  
      like two nocturnal oceans  
But on her this is  
40        smooth flawless flesh.  
My heart beats again  
      and I feel it in my shoes  
Laced too tightly and  
      worn too long this night.  
Her breath leaves her  
      and I take her two words,  
"Would you. . ." and wait for

a predicted ending but only receive  
“...no.” A word not punctuated,  
50 barely articulated.  
I notice the seconds change on my watch  
and see how we’re into the next day.  
We’re both tired and  
sleep beckons with dark gravity  
I make a personal noise in my ear  
and scream into it echoes  
How I’d like nothing more now  
than to take this woman to bed with me  
Carry her an intense maiden  
60 in simple beauty to the enfolds  
Sharing a warm spot I’d take sleep,  
sleep glorious as sun’s rise  
A moment that quickly passes  
but is eternal in memory.  
I let my eyes blink  
and in the moment when there’s nothing  
I weep that though we are here now  
it might never be again like this.

19970923

### Leaf-Peepers on Parade

Leaf-peepers on parade  
tomp, tomp, click, click  
Southern cars at B&Bs  
dollars, dollars, ching-ching  
Foreign people gratulating back streets  
marveling at dying trees  
Colors the fornication  
foliage the ejaculation  
While the setting sun a  
10 female insect murdering the male  
Taking from his, the life she gives  
refusing him so he’ll want her

More than life that's given nothing,  
nothing but these crude spectators  
Interested not in the life  
but, rather, in the killing knife  
Not stabbed in, but withdrawn —  
masochist's sickle of frustration.  
Leaf-peepers peeping poop  
20 left, right, up, down,  
Click, ching, fill'er up  
40 miles to Vermont from  
The intersection of 101 and 202  
Our Town, New Hampshire  
Half way to, in Keene  
stop to get a cup of  
Chinese ginseng tea to  
sharpen those photo fingers  
I sit here simply putting  
30 the woman's face in my  
Eye's blind spot but this  
fails to erase her fake courtesy  
Dropping 20s as the  
oak leafing life away  
Counting on Ginseng and colors  
to solve her mysterious miseries  
Try going home, talking to your kids  
turn off the television and live  
Put down the date book  
40 you miss any moment you plan for  
And all the time planning  
misses you — falling leaves, indeed!  
Like a supernova booming away  
dying away heroically  
So you avoid the important qualities  
sheepish ignorance, running looking  
For any part of you you never had  
seeing death and thinking it is life  
Watching misery and thinking glory  
50 take your city-eyes out from

Under those hundred-dollar shades  
mirrored on both sides  
And look away,  
away from the conveyer belt  
Of city life and memos  
spinning a downward spiral.

19971011

These people come in not knowing

These people come in not knowing  
what comes over these youth  
of Gothic get-up, piercings and  
laughs like witches on opium  
The khaki and loafer crowd  
see nothing from under their eyelids  
Eyes rolled back to a childhood  
of ice-cream and toy trains  
He never became that astronaut  
10 she never was that towered princess  
and they will never see dynamics  
beyond their checkbooks and dinner parties  
Here's a couple drooling over each other  
their hands, filthy groping things,  
dismantling the other of dignity  
speeding blood to those dirty places  
Click, Bang! That's the door  
helplessly issuing restless customers  
consumers blindly, helplessly buying  
20 what the market dictates to them  
a man smiles down to me  
I return it complete with exit wounds  
the limp smile falling like gloomy  
pocket change to the floor, ching-ching

19971011

## Sincerity dropped face down

Sincerity dropped face down

like a child's doll held by  
one leg loosely gripped,  
hand bumped and the doll  
trampled, stampeded, overrun  
somewhere at the crosshairs  
of Main's intersection with West  
to be scattered and forgotten.

Why is it that truth suffers

10 and the face glowing translucent,  
stick my hand through it, curse,  
stomp the ground so a stinging pain  
shoots from earth's center to my neck  
where I cringe, a tear, a shiver  
and I preserve the face by wiping my  
eye and steadying myself, distributing weight  
away from the truth, the pain, other's expectations  
and bring on a good happy-faced boy  
hollow, empty, betraying himself and the whole world.

20 Life is not this surface, where the dung of  
parasites spoils the flesh into decay,  
it is the inner substance keeping what's true  
through expulsion of vile waste to the  
surface to be forgotten and reused.

19971018

## I give my shade a quick jerk

I give my shade a quick jerk,  
standing on my chair, naked,  
save yesterday's underwear,  
to let the morning sun's light in,  
but it lengthens two invisible clicks  
and fails to retract, only making it darker.  
I try again, but this time

with my other hand, reaching out  
tugging on it expecting it to give  
10 and spin up in an artful introduction,  
but again my room grows darker,  
a heavy gray which makes my fingers  
indistinguishable from the floor or walls.  
I stand on the chair, feeling my way,  
tugging the sides in to look out but  
it's now blindingly dark outside except for  
a lower window in the adjacent house.  
A dim glow spills softly from a now  
visible boundary between window-frame and shade  
20 pulsating unevenly as though from a television.  
As I struggle in a cold room enveloped in  
darkness, just as all of nature outside me,  
light funnels in from a television,  
from a television — a television!  
The world prays for light — and  
television, in a delighted face, bestows,  
dumbly offering everything desired to those  
not worried about their own or nature's darkness.  
I give another tug and my chair gives  
30 from under me and I'm on the floor  
groping, hoping to find something to burn,  
something to give life's heat and light.  
My foot catches on a power cord.  
I follow it to the wall's outlet  
plug it in and in a burst of  
black and white warring, scattering specks,  
I submit dumbly, deafly, blindly  
to a light numbing and comforting,  
my anger pacified by this personal distraction  
40 I slowly decompose in a chair not meant  
for sitting in and forget the darkness,  
forget the cold, forget all of nature,  
forget my self, forget how long it's been.  
I don't feel or smell my own urination  
my own defecation I'm drowning in, diseased

I no longer exist before my personal  
 ministry of truth — does two and two make five?  
 What did it tell me on the tele?  
 Beautiful people, evil always triumphs,  
 50 wars, children, buy, buy, buy  
 send your money, tune in, laugh,  
 ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, HA!  
 Hypnotized into a void, feeling nothing,  
 no cold in my body, no stench,  
 no more light, the world compressed  
 makes no room for me,  
 now a passive victim who can't complain  
 because I've gotten everything I wanted.

19971018

### Heart-whole

Always, sincerity — unpainted,  
 unadulterated, unbetrayed —  
 is most important. There is  
 nothing that can alter this  
 in my mind.

19971021

### Today I am using my day to regroup

Today I am using my day to regroup,  
 to interrogate every part of my life  
 and ask the question, "Do you matter?  
 Do you matter enough for me to keep you,  
 or do I sell you, throw you away  
 and extinguish your haunting memory?"  
 I have kept so many things, at a great price,  
 and my spirit has grown poor;  
 Kept things because they evoke an emotion —

10       some an emotion which is not a pleasant one.  
Today I sever myself from many of these things;  
      I sell or trade these memories for space —  
for space on my shelves, under my bed,  
      space in my mind, which is so cluttered.  
And, I discover through this process that  
      life is deeper than these things;  
and it is this depth, amid memories and ellipses,  
      which is a likely centre for art.

19971029

### Minding the means

If I fight the page,  
      carving deeply and quickly,  
abrasively slicing the fibers,  
      the paper doesn't respond.

It already knows this sort of treatment.  
      It remembers its history  
more accurately than the history  
      we record on its surface.

10       When the pen slides slowly  
      soft and sleepily silent  
the paper is still and accepts  
      the ink like folding the hair

of a sleeping child in your hand,  
      carefully minding his disposition  
so his dreams are safe tickles  
      and he sleeps still.

19971116

“The stakes may just be too high at a coffee house.”

The first thing I let myself become aware of is the cold at the soles of my feet. It is plain, and I feel the draw of heat at the ball and heel from each foot in proportion to the pressure of my foot on the ice-covered pavement. My throat protects itself from the harsh, ripping cold, but it makes me spit. I seep from between two tall buildings onto Main St., a four-laned shopping area divided by a narrow island of grass and young trees. There are many cars parked on either side of the street but all is vacant. I look left before turning right, and see no life, just one car coming from the south, which soon turns before the post office and the street is again left dark.

I stride by the theater and its large open entrance which is gray and echoes. I whistle a short burst to hear its sharp return, then a thin fading note behind it; the intonated sound of water at a shore, or of a thought. Above, there is the old theater’s sign hanging over the sidewalk with lights on top and bottom of each side. Each bulb counts to itself, “On, off, off. On, off, off,” so that a steady stream of light trickles from each side, converging at the outermost corner. On one side, an advertisement reads, “The Nutcracker,” and on the other, a G & S Operetta’s advertised. The Major General’s song comes to my mind and I’m reminded of all the mathematics I’ve done - and all for what? I have a hard enough time trying to justify my existence without trying to account for small parts of it. Gilbert is so clever! I wonder if the Major General is the same lad who served a term as office boy to an attorney’s firm. Next is the great window of the coffee shop, and the handle of the big front door. I climb the painted steps carefully (metal, water, sneaker soles), and take survey of the crowd before touching the door. If there are no tables for me to take for myself, I won’t go in. I do not come here for the tea. I will pace Main Street for a while, with my cold feet until the shop clears a bit, or I will take to the pub for a Guinness. At least I can always find a seat at the pub, but it’s so noisy and when there’s music, the jukebox vomits the same 70’s rock to an untiring crowd, dull and pleased not to be at work or at home. Each of them disguises something with those tall glasses.

But the coffee house is quiet. There is a couple sitting in a corner, intent on looking at their cups and hands on the glass tabletops. They each continue to wear knit hats though their coats hang stiffly from the back of their chairs. The young man is slouched over a small cup of

black coffee while his older companion straightens her back and looks  
 down over her glowing cheekbones. He's struggling for something to  
 40 say, tapping with his finger the rhythm from the music playing smoothly  
 throughout the room, wishing his fingers could speak.

Several small and round, glass-top tables fill the floor of the coffee  
 bar. A dense-blue cushioned couch rests across from the counter. A  
 young woman lounges there alone, reading a thin novella. There is a  
 hutch, with teas and coffees lining the shelves, and a large bookshelf,  
 mostly occupied by political texts and large, glass jars of beans. In the  
 back is a U-shaped booth with a tiled table. Above, a painting of soft  
 colors appears to me to be some abstract map of roads in a desert, or the  
 thoughts of a waterfall.

50 Green stencils line the walls, and branches hang in a fanned array  
 from the wall above the couch. A pair of wooden skis with cracked  
 leather straps hang crossed like lazy legs between two strips of green  
 paint, like pillars dropping from the ceiling, and dividing the flat white  
 like trenches.

“The fire moths counting cold  
 the snow, soft and silent, lay”

Jazz from vibes and a soft woman's voice ripples through me and  
 following the sound makes finding my usual table slow to a crawl. The  
 young woman across the counter reaches for the tea box on the high  
 60 shelf when she sees me. She knows my usual and drops a bag of English  
 Breakfast in a steaming cup of water on a white saucer. Hot black cup,  
 dry white saucer, and a dollar, drop fifteen cents in the 'good karma' cup  
 and dip the bag, dip the bag, dip the bag and study the photographs.

“A child remembering then falling back  
 ‘purrr,’ the snow compresses to his head”

The sugar like digitalized silk, and honey (translucently analog) with  
 a spurt of milk, stretching and folding in a Smale mapped avant-garde  
 ballet — this is my tea. Starting sterile and protective, I inject sweet  
 mother's life spreading this tea open, resigning passively and opaquely.

70 I fire straight for the heavy German army coat I slung over the shapely  
 wooden chair, the right sleeve reaching for the small shoulder bag on the  
 floor. I take my seat, turn up my collar to cover the scars on my neck  
 from youth's acne and to keep my closely shaven head warm. I want to  
 take the booth so I can sit back and rest my neck, but I am one person,  
 alone. I consider a woman, soft and strong, sliding in across from me. I

look up from my page and she looks into me.

“To be alone but so close  
to bear you near and bare”

80 How perfect that voice is. It would be my companion’s voice if I let it, if I imagined it. But I don’t indulge the temptation of self-pity. I take my chair and look out over the tables. My friend Gerry says the stakes are too high at a coffee house. He and his wife, Ruth, were arriving as I was, one night, and he invited me for coffee. We took the booth, a space many share, and Ruth started, “So, are you married?” I laughed openly, the idea so far from probability — and said so. Gerry suggested some bars and restaurants that had lower stakes than the coffee house — so philosophic, so cultured. I was wondering why people had to meet in a place of consumption. Why didn’t people fly kites and meet in the park, or on the bike path. But every time I had developed something to say,  
90 they had gone on talking, and so as a matter of my mind’s slowness, I became an audience rather than a participant. They rose to leave and Ruth made a joke about her coat not fitting over her six-month stomach. I smiled and waved, almost apologetically for my slowness.

I watch a young woman and a foreign soccer player enter. She speaks loudly and shrilly and he listens but does not seem to understand her uneven aria.

I consider the stakes. I was once a mathematician, one who’d consider flighty probabilities. But this one was quite from my reach. I attempted some Gaussian and Reimann stuff but ended up with some wack-shit I  
100 couldn’t figure out. On this page slashed with sigmas and epsilons I fill the empty places with windows, like that of Dali’s “Young Virgin Auto-Sodomized by her Own Chastity, 1954.” Knots and impossible figures float in the sky outside the window, or hang on the wall — or the floor — it becomes difficult to tell. But, I scribble over this. A young woman would never meet me in an art’s-improbable cafe. And a probable woman would clearly see the unsatiated searching in the window, and phony decorations on the floor — no, the wall.

“I see stars and waterfalls  
and wait till everything”

110 A tall woman, all ablaze in orange and yellows, takes a seat, back to me, with her notebooks and coffee. This is a common occurrence — art a la estrogen to constantly wash against my conscious longings.

“Did an angle speak?” I think. I pass some wind, thin and fragrant.

“Where ever you be, let your wind go free,” Joyce wrote. Indeed, that is one of the most indulgent and least mentioned of human processes which brings both comfort and music. If life were a series of natural processes only, what a comfortable and gratifying life we’d live. All natural acts are good. It is when we stray from these that discomfort comes, where the pain begins and infects. When we work against Nature, against the body, warring bodies, we torture ourselves, often imperceptibly, so that a numbness blinds us to the constant and insistent suffering.

“Then you sleep.”

I sit and read for a long time. I keep my glasses off so my eyes don’t work so hard on the page, but I miss the subtle movements about me. Occasionally, between tastes of tea, I replace my specks for a quick snapshot of the room. In a continuous dynamic I take discrete glimpses to keep an idea of my safety and company.

The colors change outside the book, in the corner of my left eye. An autumn glow rises like a crashing wave against a cliff. I place down my book and reach for my glasses, while following this bright sweater up to a face which asks me, “Why do you wear this German shirt?” I place my glasses on my nose, and the features of a tall German woman are distinguished. I lie to her. Her ears support a pair of thick black half-moon glasses. I speak to them how I’d like to learn German and that these clothes act as my constant reminder. I don’t tell her that despite my hate for war, these army fatigues are a feeble connection to the Germany of Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven, Bach, Kafka, Wittgenstein, and my ancestral Erhardts. America is so blah! So nothing. The epitome of image, our history is the face, our culture is the face. America is lacking almost completely in substance and it sickens me — so big, so numb, so much open space for emptiness — then we fill it with malls, condensed existence.

She tells me she’s a student here from Berlin studying dance therapy on scholarship at a local college, an offering Germany lacks, apparently. Spinning and gliding, I dance slowly, and look into the eyes of this foreigner. I watch her thinking in the language of the umlaut and smile. Then I begin in the language of the shape and sound, I open my mouth but my thoughts are not language and I am silent. I lose the opportunity and she leaves, crossing the street and starting her car. I lose the, “Won’t you have a seat?” the, “How beautiful you are (in German).” I lose all

these things which now exist in a branching space-time, impossible to see the other branches from here.

...

19971116

### You have come to a coffee house

You have come to a coffee house, you can't take it with you. That small bit of chocolate cake you enjoyed without completion, leave the end of it here on the plate. Lay your fork next to it and indulge in the satisfaction of consuming all that pleases you and no more.

20 19971215

### How the men watch you

How the men watch you, as dullards at a television or a blind child at fireworks. They remain entertained by your every motion, by every sound you make — clinking cups and saucers into the washer or the whipping frothing of the foam. One dumb bullock sits with his hands dead at his sides, a magazine flopped heavily in his lap as though just receiving a bullet to the temple but not realizing it yet. His face, thick and gray, pasty and unfinished, rests in a black sweater; from there his body is formless, becoming part of the couch. The thick black mass at top crops his scull so that only the dull eyes, expressionless as concrete, are noticed, set in their clay-like weather-proofing. From his waist, the forearm, like a stilt, raises to support his falling forehead. He grasps the hanging locks and pulls forward. He pulls so his hair straightens its full length, then a bit more, a bit more so his other hand rises to grasp the growing extensivity. Right arm, left arm, accelerating like a mate at a shipyard landing a ship, tying it at dock. These thin strands cover his lap like cables and begin to roll at his feet, folding over themselves, rolling on the floor. Washing like waves to the left and to the right in tide with his arms, it flows. The mound grows slowly, and his arms are no longer seen, just a rhythm of a machine turning and lurching. No one notices.

Then he's gone. But I swear I saw something. As I was looking at the young men at their chess game, I thought I saw the darkness collapse, as the sand in an hour glass, until the silken mass was sucked down completely into the couch folds, the cushions fluttering slightly and letting off a sour yellow gas. An older woman passed with a hot espresso and the steam neutralized the yellow stench, silently suppressed. She sat down, looked about, searchingly. Stopping, she took the magazine from the couch and flipped through, back to front.

30 19971216 —scribbled in the back pages of Nikolai Gogol's *The Diary of a Madman*.



1998



## I take pleasure in the meaningless poem

I take pleasure in the meaningless poem. It is my temporary happiness that brings meaninglessness — like that of admiring stars or butterflies. It's the dreamy boy who resurfaces in these, and that's not so bad.

19980113

## The reasons I.

What do I write?

That which can only be of interest to me at the moment, and to those who seek to understand when I am gone.

When do I write?

When I am not in me; when the fevered depression and anger evoke the havoc. When a thought disturbs me and refuses to be ignored. When death tempts me with three glowing fingers, tickling only those places too hidden to touch.

Why do I write?

Medication against suicide. In that light, it is for others to whom I'm important, for my life interests me only while I'm living. After, it is for the earth's taking.

How do I write?

With a black .5mm Pilot Precise Rolling Ball Extra Fine Liquid Ink pen held betwixt the three usual fingers, rotating it a negative  $\frac{4}{3}\pi$  radians every one to six words as though it is a pencil, I write. Its cap snug on its back end with the silver clip aligned with the words provides symmetry. The center of gravity is elusive, the liquid inside working itself forth and back as a wave in a motorized distraction piece. Also sipping Twinings' English Breakfast tea with honey and milk from a circular cup sitting on a napkin off-center of its saucer.

Solitarily.

10 Where do I write?

In my mind, through the nerves pushing forward to the fingers which  
navigate the crude device upon the white lined paper.

Who do I write?

Subject to the interpretation of the reader, critic, drunk, flunky, child  
and woman who got away.

19980118

The reasons II.

What do I write?

Tripping the incestrial waterfalls, lifting those parts of stained-glass  
memory forward, only what I haven't known spills and  
I'm covered by techo-color virtual insanities, which,  
filtered by laws of grammar and language, sit silently in  
the stark dichotomy.

When do I write?

Between the moments of darkness and light, hunger and satiation,  
sickness and birth, if the moon looks the other way and  
the second sun rises violet against a somber sky, anon  
before a crowd of none and never in the hymen of  
money.

Why do I write?

In a crystalline sphere beyond the reaches of real people's lives, lives  
a void where zero Kelvin stills even the most fragile  
parts of a tinkling circus show. In a side ring I chisel at  
my fingers, chipping each into needled play toys. When  
I finish I must restart again with the healing ones.  
Without this I would be either alive or dead. Chip, chip.

How do I write?

Stenciled in the stone cabinet, pure and petrified, an extracted essence  
of how history's interpretation by sirens blew past in a  
silent bathysphere, calm and cramped, stutters one  
familiar word.

Where do I write?

Growing gargantuan, where sharpness is reduced to the  
mono-molecular, a bald dome supports the particles  
between hunger and depravity. Deep below, centuries  
from this moment, is a vacant and ignorant eye which  
looks within to see the third heart. Pap-pap, pap-pap,  
pap-pap - it sends me singing.

10

Who do I write?

Kiss me? If cut from the inside out, I glow. Without the pawn, the  
bishop is powerless, giving crooked a crooked hand.  
Taste — no, stop! — slowly, taste. Plod to stodge,  
martyrdom - deaf not dumb. Lick, find the tender spot  
and suck till, numb and bruised, a silent trickle calls  
with a scent of bleach or sour sweat. If one and one is  
two, then that must be twice this clouded heart: thick,  
tenebrous and tendrile. Breath, if it is sent any other way  
it could cry, hesitant and choking until too thin for  
sensation. Yes, I mean, because it often comes like this.  
See.

— The first tips of memory departed from our dear James Joyce must  
have entered me here. Come stay.

19980118

I'll let you win

I'll let you win,  
you simply have to play the game.  
I'm here, I'm ready —  
waiting and smirking.  
I have to run into the traps  
you set for me,  
I watch you lay them,  
the small pathetic snares,  
and I step directly into them,  
building your confidence with

10

each turning mechanism releasing  
     its potential — swak!  
 I fain play this faena  
     diluting realia, almost soubrette.  
 To you I'll seem dealate,  
     impotent of flight from your venoms,  
 but here my protected debauchery —  
     you, in a great cloak of confidence.  
 As a samara, I'll appear predictable,  
 20     spinning downward — *modus operandi* —  
 Into your hand I'll seem to spin  
     slicing space, sluing deftly.  
 But your ego hard-wired to coordination  
     makes the space between your fingers  
 wide and slipping though a  
     sure and uninhibited reaction.

You, I'll let you win,  
     the game you'll win.  
 But not without my crushing,  
 30     butchering, mocking every part of you.  
 And in the end, I'll stand.  
     And you, at my feet,  
 on my floor, will be dropped  
     your first place — face first.

19980209 and 19980214

## Impasse

I.  
 Today I awake:  
     half present, half unreachable.  
 I pick things up, but drop them.  
     Either I forget I ever held them  
 or sensation is severed somewhere  
     beneath the skin, somewhere just  
 before memory and after the fact.

10 I see objects before I cognize,  
very little gets through to me,  
the rest I'm separated from;  
I'm partitioned from the world,  
so petty and surfaced.  
Maybe there's nothing to see,  
nothing to feel, nothing to hear.  
My impasse to the world,  
the filter of greatest judgment,  
allows only the essence, the substance —  
everything else: rejected,  
20 shot back, reflecting the face upon  
the face, one on one, again and  
again until there are millions.  
But, still, they don't reach me.  
More and more desensitized as the  
market hollows the world out,  
cutting and gnawing at the marrow  
till even its surface is brittle  
and still, as I touch it,  
it is not felt, and dropped.

30 II.  
I do not improve.  
My insensitivity matures.  
There are sounds and colors  
that reach me in whispers,  
letting me know they're not  
giving up, not popularizing.  
But they come less and less,  
and time travels so slowly.  
Even my thinking at times  
40 is blocked, and my thoughts  
don't reflect back to me —  
invented, then lost forever.

III.  
My memory, faint failing, stays.  
Feigning my own universe

which lacks all things,  
all those many myriad things.  
(I was much happier as a child).  
But is there a center  
50 without a surface? — the perimeter  
keeping it all in, providing the  
depth of essence with recognizable,  
distinguishable, communicable symbols.

## III.

There is, there is, there is.  
Now to find a way in.  
This should be easier than  
the Law or that forbidden tower.  
But how wide and tall,  
60 even when I'm close it seems  
miles away, then I reach my arm  
and . . . nothing.  
That's the face,  
smiling — pure silence.

## V.

I've given up understanding  
this nothingness of being.  
Whether insensitivity or  
hypersensitivity into overstimulation,  
70 I release the numbness back,  
back into the world  
where it's needed,  
where it's breded.  
Without it, existence like electrocution,  
Fizz, bite, zzip.

## IIIX.

It's mostly murmurs,  
some light bouncing and a glow.  
I'll soon forget everything,  
80 I'm on my way out.  
I feel an aperiodic pull

like a gravity unknown.  
My attachment . . . but, I can't,  
without it I . . .  
I feel it pulled taut,  
but I'm attached and determined.  
I soon give up, though.  
I resign for the first.

IIIX.

90 I've survived all this time  
within the impasse par excellence.  
I came into this world  
and now I'm forced out;  
Never was I able to truly  
penetrate, slice through.  
But so much experience I lacked,  
so new and weak and fragile.  
There's no other choice than  
to start over, reenter the cycle.  
100 The deep fatigue grows fierce  
and it is all too convincing.

IIIX.

It seems so long, so distant,  
but I recognize its repetition.  
The great symbiosis of  
presence and absence —  
A wide pulse between lives  
where truth dominates.  
And now I realize there's  
110 no in to necessitate an out,  
no depravity for desire,  
no freedom for nature.  
I started in without beginning  
and will stop without ending.

19980214 and 19980217

So here it is

So here it is —  
the giant puzzle  
with pieces wanting to fit  
but deliberately left out of the box.

19980215

The Gaze, Consciously Diverted

Ya, prismca obscura  
semi diffused meld  
into those gestures  
keeping so much distance.  
How the position  
inflates, eyes pointing  
out and over, almost  
deflected by insecurity.  
Will there be another  
10 vision of the other  
vision where the edges  
curled to an internal  
flutter, quiver, where  
those many arrows  
pointing in, piercing  
so many parts — zing!  
Like great hordes of  
blood thinning hornets  
coursing veins and stripping  
20 all protection, layer  
by layer until even  
fake glances penetrate  
to disturb, until beaten,  
the internal resonance.  
(Do we reflect equally  
against both our sacred  
mirror and this, our

modular world?  
Are the projections  
30 toward each issued  
and retrieved in  
like measure?)  
Beyond the surface of  
which sphere, so mirrored,  
is a penetrable aperture  
to a world connected,  
where dynamics are  
coupled, interdependent,  
and Nature is no longer  
40 separate from Freedom.  
Will culture bring halves  
once again together?  
Will TV and Hollywood  
bear the only witness?  
Will the world of  
the diverted eye,  
modest amour propre,  
strengthen in blindness?  
Or, despite these,  
50 will the hunger of  
one's feelings — the  
physical origin and  
universal wish to be  
loved and protected by  
something stronger than oneself —  
open this closed universe?  
Is it the heat  
of the tea, or  
that of the smile,  
60 or ereutophobia which  
brings this veiling  
pre-perspirative glow,  
covering in a colored  
crimson camouflage?  
I'm stilled, this world

moving so hastily,  
all its many glances  
and diverted eyes —  
passive hostile elements,  
70 semi-sadistic infestations —  
where a blink cuts,  
dichotomizing all of time.  
Where matched eyes  
slow, then skip,  
continuums made sparse  
then dense, tickling  
with prickly fingers,  
marring delicately  
the surfaces below the  
80 face looking and hiding.  
Still knocking on  
the glass, neither  
looking in nor out  
(nor as a mirror)  
but turning in and  
fighting the need to  
look away, look away, look away,  
and looking in,  
eyes glazed over —  
90 so much an unmirror —  
the silence smeared on  
thick and separate.  
Keeping distance —  
the ethered barrier  
dissevering every part  
needing connection.  
Shadows without origin,  
absent images whose  
keepers hoard without memory,  
100 keeping only a moment.  
An ecumenical collection of  
forgotten moments, shuffled,  
so that each appears first

if the moment's his.  
And while this moment's  
here, it seems still.  
It is again the first  
and I'll forget the rest —  
forget diversions, distractions,  
110 I flip through long moments  
to get to the next moment  
where pupils hold their likes.  
Traveling this way diffuses  
time, trivializing the glances  
that are carried past,  
or shot through,  
and keeps only those  
just reaching me  
so that I might hold them  
120 and live through them.

19980307 — 19980311

(the gaze, consciously diverted) II

(Where are those  
I once knew who  
could look, smiling,  
and not look away?  
How different this all  
seemed when youthful  
and how imperceptible  
the many changes.  
Why is there strength  
10 in an arrogant eye —  
one not curious for  
another eyeful expression?  
Are these more scared  
than I, with those  
many hidden eyes, afraid  
to double direct visions?

I suppose it's all  
    very important, somehow.  
So I undo haste's coverings  
20     to admire its cold nakedness.  
And it's slow to realize  
    how vulnerable it has  
always been, how thin,  
    how fragile, how far-sighted.  
Slowness and the cohesion  
    of water consider  
haste's separateness, but are  
    too coherent to mend it.  
Naked and soused,  
30     difference dissolves making  
one indifferent many-face  
    moving in every equally opposed  
direction, lickety-split,  
    no where.)

19980308 and 19980318

The poem written with the cap left on

19980310

I am my only child

At what point did I become my own child,  
    or has it been scattered along this continuum  
so that at each moment I grow

more as father, more as child, more as one.  
The whole world reorganized as a synthesis  
of the mature and naïve, the creative and destructive,  
the yielding and stubborn, endowed with body,  
drawing in warmth, expanding patience.  
The child protesting in me against  
10 the shock, anger and numbness, and  
the father despairing over him, hoping to  
pull the agony away and feed his own contemplative depression.  
Both rolling and drawing and thrusting in storms of need  
and drinking it all in in sizable portions.  
Oh, how it disturbs my gutty-wuts and expands  
the need, the searching, and the change.  
Here the fatigue and apathy renewed in a perspective  
both embodied and separate in a slow pulse  
between joy and precision counting all the  
20 many battles I confront myself with.  
As the yielding child, I bend and survive.  
As the rigid adult, I splinter a fragmented death.  
How many the lessons passing both ways  
and always inside me.  
Searching for the one in mind, I've lost —  
a laugh, the name imbedded in words,  
a shirt, the back of a head.  
Reorganizing the elements into memories entrenched.  
Here thinking slows, drawing in warmth,  
30 manifesting loss into positive memory memorials.  
A laugh, and what a joy, remembering  
how his laugh would carry with it whole worlds.

19980518

Yes, I know

Yes, I know. You'll understand because you've been shut out. You'll find familiarity in these words because you've had them with yourself in the night when time and distance flutter into existence as echoes. All of this is unquestionable because this is shared separateness where millions

at a time lock themselves away from everyone else and life is forced to pass, and dreadfully slow. Imagine what it must be like for the man or woman with a memory that does not forget, but hoards all moments crisply in a state of constant mental exhibition. How the time must  
 10 refuse to pass, and the madness and havoc build in an unsuppressible growth of memory upon memory until echoed resonance tears him or her apart. What an energy! There's pleasure in the consumption where all responsibility is absorbed by the havoc and all temperature flows inward from that place just beyond the fingers.

19980714

### Autumn poem

In early September when I walk,  
 I see how well everything leans on each other,  
 How the alive support the dead,  
 and how they're all one.  
 The ferns make a good shady hiding spot  
 for the chipmunk gathering nuts, nibbling mushrooms,  
 Daddy longlegs pace the path with stern precision.

Along the paths, I find many places  
 I would like us to spend the night.  
 10 Where the smell of the earth is pungent  
 and the moss and rotting wood give to  
 The weight of my body and thoughts.  
 Across the rocks I swiftly trot, holding my bag,  
 But by the gurgling stream I slow down and listen.

The air filtered over the stream tastes lavender,  
 it is sweet like lilacs or wintergreen.  
 Sparrows and chickadees, with their short cries,  
 disappear then reappear in the leaves,  
 Playing the game people do.  
 20 The doves no longer play this game  
 But sleep through the night hearing two breathes and the wind.

19980901

## Shadow poem

There is a road I know in New Hampshire  
that feels its way along in the dark,  
Past fields without fences  
and straddled by small streams.  
Beneath the pavement like an old man's face,  
and the supporting layers of sand and gravel,  
are crushed animal bones, moles without faces and  
earthworms bumping their rough mouths on  
smooth stones like the many fists of children.  
10 In the field where the grass, shaped like soaring birds,  
lick the humid night air, a doe stands tall with her feeding young,  
speckled with the colors of forested earth in autumn,  
rich with a fresh bed of pine needles and small granite stones.  
When the wind stills I think I hear them chewing,  
and the earthworms below me, but mostly I feel the deep  
pulse of life in me extrapolated into a child's imagination  
which I pull from the darkness.  
Deep in the mud where the toads hide from winter,  
my shadow dwells all summer.  
20 It rises with the shortening of the days and  
is with me when mature toads press their faces  
to the earth to escape the falling leaves.

19980926

## Acorn

Pock! A great oaknut falls freely from its  
tight-fitting beret left at the tip of  
one of the thousand knotted and gnarly limbs,  
landing at my feet, still in the cut dewy grass.  
Acting on my first thought, I lift it from the  
green and place the moistened globe like an  
unyielding waterdroplet in my palm, smooth and cool.  
How brightly the sun pokes through the soft, shifting  
white. I hold my hand under it like a child by a waterfall

10       and hum a phrase from 'Angel Eyes.'  
Holding it closely to my eye I study the fine vertical  
ridges running from the circular scalp to tip  
like a healthy excited nipple.  
With my smooth fingernails I scrape away the waxen  
skin by the scalp and like a topographic map three  
distinct bands appear as a history.  
I consider returning this seed to my mother, but like  
thoughts of sleep, it is too familiar.  
Instead, with great pressure, I form two cracks  
20       and peel the shell. Its seed is veined and has the  
fragrance of maple sugar candy.  
I continue to pull it apart in my hands, then  
let the individual pieces drop to the ground like  
friends traveling back in time.

19980927

### Stiff winter months

In the stiff winter months men breath the cold  
deeply in and spit.  
Great distances are traveled in this way,  
past fences held together by tradition.  
The air is pulled apart on opposite sides of buildings  
then in the fields it's formed again.  
Beneath the simplified snowy surface are whole worlds  
of life we don't see.

19981002

### I can not distinguish what is important.

I can not distinguish what is important.  
Everything in this country lasts for a few minutes,  
then we need more.  
The kids all dressed up for Halloween, arranged in

tiny formations, drift along on the conveyor belt  
of doorsteps. The parents watch their little  
munchkins, they have forgotten the tricks  
(they couldn't stand to think), and after an  
hour choose a child and bring the little  
10 monster with the candy sack back to watch  
some favorite American rerun.

In the Autumn there are three sounds:  
the first is the common one; cars, fluorescent  
lights, fans, little motors, sirens, the neighbor's  
stereo, laughing and screaming.

The second is rustling, when the first sound  
passes the leaves swept to the edge of the  
street, people walking on the sidewalk, the wind  
lifting them in tight whirlwinds.

20 The third is silence, the combination of darkness  
and cold, the one we all need most.

In the silence the streetlamp casts my shadow slowly,  
starting with deep contrast then stretching it out  
to cover the length of the street, until it is  
eaten up by the light of the next — a metapulse  
of the one within me, slow growing darkness.

19981025

I'm beginning to question consequence.

I'm beginning to question consequence.

Before me is a set of woman's lips, colored deep crimson  
and shaped as an architect would shape them —  
sharp corners and edges with slight French curves.

This seems far too deliberate so the only accident is  
probably that I was able to see this.

19981212

**Before a cemetery**

Before a cemetery, where the dead bury their living parts,  
 up the slope where in Winter we'd sled,  
 my father and I lived.  
 In a condo was a forest  
 and we were the hunters.  
 I didn't understand the weapons,  
 at the time they went unrecognized,  
 yet I turned them many times over in my  
 fingers, polishing them smooth in my sleep.

10 19981223

**Within the umber folds of violet curtains**

Within the umber folds of violet curtains,  
 petals with curved edges enclosing the  
 intimacy and fierceness of thunderstorms,  
 lives my female deep in the torso swarming with  
 longings and secrets, calming me.  
 Yet, as it does each Winter, her geometrical maximum  
 from the surface of sickly palpable flesh  
 has become a vacuous cavity.  
 My body fakes a tickle low in my throat hoping  
 10 that I might cough it out, expel my now massless center.  
 Some say she's both invisible and poisonous;  
 in her left breast he carries three drops that  
 wounds men to death, *modus asphyxy*.  
 In dreams she reveals convincing stories sweetly,  
 and in consciousness all is sensation and inspiration.  
 Having escaped me, I imagine a fallen limb on this trail  
 absorbing my female for the somber Winter.  
 I check branches bent backwards over stones  
 and those deeply slumbering in snow beds.  
 20 Some hang from above having not yet reached the ground.  
 In the clarity, both tenebrous and frore, I ambulate  
 with silent steps beneath slender clouds veiling the moon.

The path shattered as the skin of an old man's face  
turns my mind as young fevered dancers.

I think of childhood, I think of my father.

19981227



1999



## The snow tonight fell slowly

The snow tonight fell slowly  
as the sumara seeds from the maple tree.  
There is a small pocket of air at the very tip  
of the seed's wing, and like a black hole, we can't see in.  
On the cars and steps leading to houses the snow lay  
like weightless beach sand that never tires from the sea's visit.  
Land laden folk go to the water for the sun,  
which is everywhere, and miss the cold hole filled with dark water.

10 It is a great shadow whose sharp tongues  
lick at the sky, its torso moves all by itself.

The snow dry as this, the air deceptively warm,  
makes the night appear light, though in my sleeve  
I carry a thin sliver of pure darkness that  
I keep all to myself, a secret gift of my father's.  
When, as a child full up with energy, I'd grow thirsty  
from hours of sledding or snowball fights or  
exploration in a forest made from scratch, sounds not yet added,  
I'd drink a plain slushie from my hand, reclined in a chair fitting  
perfectly.

20 Then I'd relieve myself by spelling my name in the snow  
or see how far I was capable.

The pine trees would steam with the warm liquid,  
I was an animal and I claimed the world as mine.  
Winter days in snowy woods are almost entirely without shadow.  
The shy parts of the branches are lit from below by the reflecting sun.  
The night refuses to share its dense shadow with the day.  
Not knowing of such things, the day doesn't miss it.

19990108

## Discovering Contra dance

At one time many of us were as the moon.  
We came forth from the mountain upon the world  
that offers no home.  
We returned again to the mountain.

Deep though we plunged into the rivers of tears,  
we came upon occasional snags of remembrance.

That place we once visited, separately, where  
three Rhinemaidens sing in resonate waters.

In each, in the left breast, are three drops  
10 that would wound and kill. That is their secret.

I have tried one drop from each among  
moray eels and rays, and it has made me strong.

Also I realize I was never of the moon,  
but only of the earth, where Ophelia returned.

The whole night reaffirms my origin,  
translucent spirals of breath against an opaque vestige.

Twirling and weaving beginning with a rise of the chest and  
continuing with music, lovers and husbands in rows  
whirling round and round to a fecund fiddle,

20 our burly desirousness is eaten by the wolves on the hill.

19990130

### Waltzing Partner

It was a moment when time filled up and overflowed, nothing more  
could happen; or if it did, would go unnoticed. Normally time is much  
too big and passes idly, but this moment presented time a bottleneck,  
bringing it quietly to a standstill. The change was sudden as a downpour  
that begins without any warning from the wind, who is often so telling.

It has been a long full day of dancing; rocking up and back, twirling  
and spinning, sharing weight, turning by this and that, Polska and gypsy,  
even a handstand entered my day. Now it is midnight, the first minutes  
10 of St. Valentine's day pass and thoughts of the womb my bed would  
seem to me makes my face and tummy warm. There's waltzing in the  
main ballroom and I intend to passively watch, in my fatigue, the beauty  
that are men and women spinning and smiling together with triple-time  
piano.

Fifteen minutes pass. My saliva is sugary, my body warm; I am com-  
fortable. My head has cleared from the opaqueness I'd felt after the long  
contra when I danced without any reservation, getting in as many spins  
as I could. My feet feel swollen, but are rested.

20 The music is not as far-reaching tonally as I'd enjoy — no pulls from  
minor tones or sustained resolutions. Instead it consists mostly of cas-  
cading chords like a small electric recycled waterfall over stones that  
makes a thin humming noise, distracting from an imposed tranquility  
which is false anyway. An apparition who tickles the corners of my  
eyes approaches my chair; when I look up to see her, her eyes pull me  
up from my own weight, effortlessly.

My tepid gaze being broken, I thank her for disallowing my body's  
fatigue to override my heart's yearning. She and I take firm hold of one  
another, the fingers of my right hand tracing the corner of her scapula,  
she is good to share this solid hold with me. Her fingers with delicate  
30 pressure on my lower back relaxes me. Our bodies rest gently together  
as overlapping shadows upon a plush carpet at the end of a deep hallway.

*Enter Music*

We begin our waltz step, slowly building momentum so that we are  
soon turning evenly through the other dancers. I shift my focus from the  
people about us to her eyes, and how startlingly indulgent a change that  
is. I realize this is not my choice, this adventure is happening to me.  
[My mind's back chambers amiss think that something is beginning in  
order to end, it only makes sense when dead.] My eyes feel clear and  
diaphanous like white wine while her lovely eyes speak of a fugitive  
40 tenderness I so want to know. At this moment I now someone is watch-  
ing us, noticing all those things which are invisible to young people.  
Our intense gazes are two mirrors eaten away by rust spots, reflecting  
and reflecting back something I had long abandoned now embodying a  
living intensity which does not allow itself to be ignored.

I feel comfortable with her, already, as I did with my dog when I  
was a child. He would stop by where I'd lie on the floor building card  
houses and lick my ear, then lay down pressing his back to my leg. She  
offers her name in a voice as a fiddle resounding over moss laden stones,  
something that sharpens one's senses and lets him know he's awake,  
50 which I very much am at this moment, against my body's immediate  
wishes.

My consciousness curls up upon itself to hold the sound and for this  
brief time I remain tongue twisted, feeling I've crossed into a foreign  
country. Then, with a blink of her eyes, suggesting a hemidemisemi-  
quaver, but feeling as a lunga pausa, my passion, which was waiting  
on the alert, pounces unforgivingly on me — it flows through me, I am

filled with it.

The music pauses briefly and she stays on for another waltz, I breathe deeply. I feel like a great hole full of dark water moving all by itself —  
60 like the sea, salty and shivering.

This dance I bask in the fun of it. We're past the formalities a first dance can carry on its head, its neck stiff for balance — on to an exploratory one. Now's a smile showing teeth in her fluid and sparkling face; the language of old times hiding in a closet with a friend trying not to giggle, hoping to be the last two found. I laugh because I hope to be found with her. I look about for a second hoping someone will point us out, crying out, "They're here!"

Like the silence that becomes the bath when the water stopped, the music ends and deeply we press into each other's bodies, as though we  
70 were making impressions in clay. My mind clears, I become aware of her shoulder, and of her necklaces, and of our sweet fragrance together. The seconds pass precisely one at a time until they run out. I am perfectly happy. We part. Stoically, I occupy myself by trying to devalorize the dance for it could be a siren's song tempting my heart.

Time skips and flutters as a bird with one bad wing. From the far end of the ballroom something returns which helps to link the scattered moments of the day and solder them together and which gives them a meaning. I would like to take hold of myself: an acute, vivid sensation would deliver me. Between the dense moments I long to capture the  
80 horse with only one hair from its mane. The great tortoise from the mountain passes before me, his claws like princes' swords splitting rug's fibers with each shift in weight. If I were alone I would ride with him away into the darkness.

*The dancing ends*

Beginning to ride away, myself, I gather my things while looking over my shoulder. Everything changes without my making an effort. My bag, jacket and water bottle which consumed my space are now joined by my exquisite waltzing partner. I feel the air open up, as though I am reaching the crest of a hill and am looking out over a lake thick with  
90 greenish water. Our hands dance together by themselves and we watch them.

Along the floor people have chained themselves as a Jacob's ladder, the head of one on the stomach of the next. A laugh would bubble up and trickle down the line. I am firmly pulled by the arm and we join the

end of the chain, my head on her stomach. I let out a breath I have held in my torso for three years.

*This moment was extraordinary. I was there, motionless and icy, then overwarm and tingly, plunged in a blissful ecstasy.*

100 Someone is taking care of me, holding my boney, sincere and spent body, moving her fingers like weightless flightless birds over my arms and back: I am being held by a woman; this hasn't happened to me in years. Because of this, entirely out of my control, my thoughts turn to this young woman, who brings great floods of desire from my center, where it has hidden from me. My body flushes and I feel for a moment like I've plunged into a hot spring, pockets of air rising about me, rolling uncontrollably up past my skin. Following her hand with mine, past the small wrinkled patch of skin at the elbow to the shoulder and neck, I caress in the opening of cotton the white ecstatic flesh which falls back gently, touch the blossoming moisture of armpits, the elixis and cordials and fluorescence of flesh. Beyond this moment no promises are made, yet there is no need. We are quiet; happy at being together, happy at being seen together.

110 The chain of people begins to rise and shrink away a link at a time. A sweater is substituted as a stomach for my novel partner, as we are thickly entwined in each other like the roots of an aspen forest. So easily could this become the morning with sliding shafts of light making warm pockets on the sheets.

120 She is as hot honey-sweetened tea; if I drink of her now I could be severely overwhelmed and fear return, but if I am patient and allow for a tempered clime, I could drink deeply of her with great delectation. Still, how sweetly she smells and the lure of the steam rising from the swirling surface. I endeavor a sip. Oooh, Mmmm. How wonderful, but far to feverish for me, already so consumed with the steam.

The night cools my head, my breath condensing in tendrils of undark. I follow the feeling in my feet through the soles of my shoes, past the unforgiving pavement, to the dirt which man moves recklessly about, through clay and springs to a center where I will again return. I replace all the air in my lungs with one breath.

130 *While I often follow the flower down its stem to the soil from which it rises, tonight I pleased myself with the petals, pistil and stamen; ah, bliss! If I pass this from my hand, then the opportunity to know the rich soil may be as sprint, soon in coming.*

19990220, 19990221, 19990302 and 19990304

## Man and rock

In late spring a man climbs a rock face, his fingers dense with callous. Where he stops to rest, halfway up, he hangs out by one arm like a shop sign. He lets his skeleton do the work and allows his mind to wander. His eyes follow a small river, beginning at the pond directly under the sun, where it had fifteen minutes before reflected into his eyes, southward to a second pond where he spent a whole day with a woman. That day they paddled the perimeter by day and floated at its center through the night, so that the stars were for them only; he was happy.

10 He looks back at this great rock which he clings to like a parasite. It will be here long after he dies. In a crack, inches from his ever gripping hand, lay a small quartz crystal submerged in moisture, ferric oxide, and shadow. He draws his other hand up and plucks the rock from its quiet home. "Always six," he thinks: the first perfect number, the number of years I cried when my father died, the fingers of a snowflake. Tucking the rock into his breast pocket, where it will warm and resonate with his heart, he again looks out over the landscape to follow the river down further to the marsh where its flow seems to stop.

20 Again rested, he continues his climb with more energy than before. The wind gusts are wonderfully strong. Sweat that starts its ant-walk down his face is turned over and rolls sideways and off his eyebrows by the wind between his body and the rock. Sometimes he lays against the warm rock and he's reminded of sleeping in the summertime on table stones after late evening hikes. When his body is fatigued the rocks always soften to him.

30 He is a good listener. He has listened to the wind and rock for years. Wind hushes, screams or is silent. Rock is quiet for a long time, then lets a thought fall in a whisper or ululation, then waits for a response. He does not fill his world with chatter, the senseless dust of the mind that many tend to shake about. Instead, he allows for clarity, as an azure sky of deepest summer. The seasons change, he is constant, neither fearing death nor keeping secrets.

At the top, he rests, laying flat on his back with a patch of moss under his head. The clouds that travel effortlessly for miles consume him. He

might have been a cloud in his climb, for he made no effort, but found himself always higher than before. Venus reaches his eyes as a single pinprick of light when the sky appears darkest between moats of water and dust. He closes his eyes and sends his mind out further. Two sharp-winged birds slice past him, but he stoically contemplates the colossal  
40 oblong orbs, all resolved to be an outer roundness of a star at their center.

He is struck by a fit of cosmic anguish. Poor planet, dark, cold, hurled into infinity. He feels, weighing on him, the real presence of Neptune. The dark and icy star weighs on each part of his being. That crushing mass of darkness, of hopelessness, of desolation and abandonment. Like a bad dream and yet, how very real. He opens his eyes, he has made it back to Earth! Back to this planet full of flowers, rivers and people. How beautiful it is, our Earth. How beautiful. With its changing skies, blue waters, continents, islands and hills. The life that trembles in its womb and rises up toward the light. He stands, feeling like the world's  
50 first man on the first hills.

His heart swells with awe, joy and gratitude. He thinks of forests, wild animals, of flies, elephants — he loves elephants — and of men. There's nothing more wonderful, more gentle than man. Their wars, laws, their justice, for him these are just pranks, sound and fury. They have a song for their pain, for their selfishness, and their hypocrisy. Man's selfishness is as lovable as that of a butterfly or a squirrel. Nothing in man is evil.

He removes the small quartz crystal from his pocket and places it in the ticklish spot of his palm. Always six, with sometimes small port-  
60 holes or rarer windows to alternate parallel universes, places of transcendental plurality. He wonders if he could make it back if he were to pass through one of these windows, an atom at a time; would he want to return? Glass is a liquid yet he trusts it to remain the same for his whole life.

He drinks more water. It is full like the sky around him and fills him up uniquely. Yet, his mouth remains dry like the inner walls of a chimney, so he eats fruit from other continents. Wind comes to him again, unexpectedly, and he shivers, his skin becoming goose flesh. He weeps. The wind accepts his tears and delivers them to where Neptune  
70 makes a sea.

19990307

### Last night, as my mother left in her car

Last night, as my mother left in her car,  
the first snow began its intrusive and shy decent.  
Aware of this I would have taken out my long  
winter coat, lifted the hood and walked for miles.  
Instead, newly accompanied, I hid in the basement  
of the large house playing ping pong with a woman.  
The furnace warms the house from the earth up,  
pipes hanging low alternate scolding and frigid.

10 I go to bed with this woman, and try to recapture  
the darkness and moisture and walk through the night.  
Though I try — many times — I can never leave.  
I am kept at her side in dreams, unable to escape her magnetism.  
At morn I leave the car alone and walk to work.  
I am not where I would have been, but closer to myself.  
Work is frustrating and unexplainable and plagued with problems  
without solution.  
I walk home, cursing, looking down. My breath is shallow, as in  
sleep.

At home, I claim the night from the woman and walk out  
with my hood drawn. The pebbles poke through the thin soles of my  
sneakers.

20 I have given up walking the stride of a stoic,  
it wore me out long ago trying to fit those shoes  
where I would not feel the ground at all,  
nor get anywhere at all since it did not matter where I would be.  
Instead, the wind bursts up my sleeves bringing water to my eyes  
and feelings that accompany a sneeze, without one.

I am thinking of my father who is barely living out his fifties,  
driving seventy miles each way to work, spending time at home at  
his computer.

He is as absent as ever. When I was his child, he substituted  
video games for his presence. I conquered every one looking for him.  
I miss my father. I miss his love and attention and companionship.

30 I miss these though I hardly know these qualities as his.  
Just two days ago we sat at the same table and did not speak,  
but later shared a half hour of cooperative video game play, in  
silence.

My father's father died long before I was new, and my father  
sits at his computer each night knowing this, perhaps mourning.  
His mother keeps her house ordered and clean; no boy can play there.

In her house, a boy leaves himself outside like filthy shoes for the  
visit.

Thus he passes on, knowingly or not, a great and overwhelming  
deprivation

which he is unable to go back and reject for something dark,  
moist, covered with hair and generous without strings.

40 So deprived is he that he's forgotten that such a condition exists.

His mother would say he has done her proud, fulfilled her  
to a happy death. My mother would say that he can't help it.

I have rejected my father so that I may start anew,  
so I may discover my father as he is unable to discover his own  
father.

He has adopted a model that may resemble his father of the fifties,  
valuing early to work, responsible labor and admiring discipline  
and by doing so has disappeared into the woodwork.

When he dies, it will be silent and invisible —  
later there will be an explosion.

50 19991108



2000



## In a hut with one light on

Inside the body there's a healthy field of violets;  
earthworms wind their way through the soil,  
they make no plans and things are fine.

The rain comes, the sun, night leaves dew on the furry leaves.

I find a day left all to myself and  
walk out on this frosty field, barefoot.  
It's like someone has begun a long journey  
and his shoes are dry and unmuddied.

10 A large ebony bird, both powerful and graceful, approaches  
from the easy and I watch as it comes down  
low over the violets. Their petals quiver in its westward wake.  
It soars toward the hut by the wood with one light on.

The hut is short and squat like a healthy child.  
Inside it is warm, and when the door opens  
it exhales into the cold like a father  
leaning on his shovel, the driveway clear of snow.

The large oak beams overhead hold jars of vegetables and jams.  
Below the stove there are ashes I have never seen.  
As I brush my hand over them, they are still warm.  
20 I take small handfuls and rub my arms, the hair of my chest,  
the back of my neck, my heels and ankles.

I am dry and black and clean, like an old man in a fairy tale.  
I crawl on my belly over the large wooden floor planks.  
Pulling a splinter from my skin, the ashes cure the wound.

There are so many distinct smells, my saliva runs.  
Greenbean casserole, meats and cheeses,  
delicate desserts with shaved coconut and whipped cream.  
Ah, how happiness floods me!

30 Flowers and vegetables abound along every window ledge,  
in each corner, from each nook in the wooden frame.  
The hut is a sea of life both in high and low tide, both stormy and calm,

both salty and sweet. Closing my eyes, I touch a finger to the tip of  
my tongue.

I bundle my things, give and receive a hug and kiss  
and walk back out into the world.  
After several steps, I pause and turn toward the hut.  
Light comes off the snow so that the whole

40 field, the many trees and plants, the great bird  
perched on the eaves, the mist, me with my  
hands out of my pockets full of ashes, everything glows with  
the light and life from the little hut.

In the wood there's a stream where, nuzzled in mud,  
box turtles dream. A salamander grips a dry granite rock.  
When I throw a stone into the current, a ripple never appears,  
like the mites in my eyelids, it is not seen.

Rivers and streams are much too much in a rush,  
they have no patience and talk nonsense.  
That's our daily lives, hurried and confused.  
The days of the stream flow into the life of the sea.

50 The sea breathes and breathes in the moon's wake.  
Among the cliff hollows it rises in the rock shelves,  
hurrying into long crevices, rising like a woman's belly  
as if nine months pass in a second.

In me the waters swell, the ashes wash away cleanly.  
The mouth of the spiny urchin tickles the water a molecule at a time.  
I dip my hand into a pool of water warmed by the sun,  
the tiny hairs dry white with salt.

Remembering Ann Lena Vickers, 82  
20000131

## My nethermost beast returns

Psseesaweeeusss!

My fingers descend from my lips  
and return to their folded position  
at my navel.

My nethermost beast returns,  
excited as a puppy, yet standing shoulder-high.  
I let him pounce me, lick my face,  
all the while his claws tearing at my skin.

I am so happy.

10 He sleeps on my belly.  
I labor for breath.  
My shoulders are pressed  
fixedly against my shadow.

Below are boar's tusks, deep pools thick with algae,  
an ogre with bat wings, rageful women's malice,  
A large cook tending a seething pot of thick stew  
whose bubbles send droplets over the edge and into the ashes.

20000512

## What were the delights we felt in childhood

What were the delights we felt in childhood  
before we gave our lives over  
to pleasing other people,  
or being nurses to them  
or doing what they wanted done?

10 Inside of me is a great castle.  
Like all castles, there are towers  
with peaked windows,  
walls eight feet thick on all sides,  
a great hall with three levels,

each leading to many doors,  
a garden with many plants in everbloom,  
a stable with powerful horses,  
in the basement is a kitchen,  
hot and fragrant,  
and below, a calm that has lasted for  
thousands of years.

I am currently standing in the great hall.  
Heavy changes have occurred in the last year;  
20 all my decorations, hung carefully over  
banisters, over each door to identify it,  
everything removed and replaced by unidentifiable,  
meaningless symbols. A year I lived in  
confusion, so I neglected the hall.

Upon entering the hall again now for the  
first in that lengthy time, I find dust  
thick on the stairs and doorknobs,  
rodent droppings, tarnish and rot.  
There is work to be done.

30 I ascend the staircase to the third level  
and, in turn, try each door.  
As once they swung freely upon the slightest rouse,  
now, even with all my force, the latch stays.

Shaken, I descend to the second level  
and again, in turn, try each door.  
With all my effort, enhanced by a growing rage,  
still nothing. I strike the door with my  
boot, and the hall sounds with the dead *thud*.

I descend further to the main floor.  
40 At the first door I yank with viscous effect,  
the door freely swinging open.  
In surprise, I release the handle which imbeds  
itself into the wall, which I then can not undo.

A cold wind blows across the door,  
whirling the dust and rat droppings into a  
grey dancing spout from their previous stagnation.  
All my treasures are gone. But the room is  
not empty, there are traps of all sorts awaiting me.

20000514 (last 2 lines 'All my . . . me.' 20000612)

### You ask me if you still make me nervous

You ask me if you still make me nervous,  
and I fumble innocently, now knowing what the answer is.  
I quip, with unsure expectation, of hopes I  
still scare you, not knowing if ever you've been.  
A part of me is scared, and resonates throughout,  
and I joke because I have, by this, been shaken.  
Yet in this feeling you've made so many warm impressions,  
like the form a lain mountain hare leaves in mountain grass,  
that the wind is but impotent to shake.

10 for AnnFD  
20000518

### Silence

I'm in a dusty room of the old cathedral building.  
through the colored glass a dull yellow line  
leaks onto the floor, dribbling into the cracks and  
pits of the damp cement with the scent of spiders.

I am finally alone, and what I hoped for and expected  
of the silence betrays me. Where I thought I  
would find nothing, finally nothing, my heart beat  
surfaces, my slow and shallow breathing rasps  
the tender flesh and thin mucus in the front of my neck.

10 Blood, which in these tricky shadows seems to leak from  
my skin, then dissolve into again, this same blood I hear  
rushing past my inner ears, the muffled sound of a waterfall in a  
cavern.

The only moment when I truly knew silence was  
when my friend John unlocked the cabinet to his  
mother's gun and we stood by the river studying  
its slender black body and smooth wooden butt.

We were nervous and giddy — this was real danger.

We each began to fear each other, my mouth tasted  
foul, stomach acid and sour milk, my hands sweat a  
20 sticky film that got over everything, my eyesight  
seemed to sharpen but my mind no longer was able  
to distinguish what was what and I had to sit down.

John was full of energy, waving the twin barrels here  
and there. He tucked the shiny butt into his  
shoulder muscle and took aim at leaves sliding effortlessly  
past us down the smooth water, at birds that flew  
past high above, or any rustling in the brush.

He even once pointed at me, causing me to leap up in  
a panic, trip over some dead branches full of leaves and  
30 crash onto a stump, cutting my forehead and elbow.

To this he hollered, turned thirty degrees and flexed his finger.

[silent pause]

In the three seconds that followed, before the tinny  
ringing from the stratosphere of my mind crept down to  
keep pitch for an orchestra of one, there was silence.  
I felt I was watching a silent movie, John tumbling  
backwards from the kick, a branch snapping in  
three under his heel like a brittle bone, one end  
swinging up to meet his calf and leaving its signature by  
40 carving two long parallel lines into his uneven flesh.

I was too shocked to be mad yet, and my eyes  
instantly filled with the sea, my jaw and sphincter tightened at once,  
my breath was held by the moment so that I wasn't  
even able to cough. My skin felt thin like cray paper  
my forehead covered with fur and legs missing.

I inhaled hard, and the choking breathing stung my chest.  
It was then I heard the stream, it was like my

arm was being twisted, the paper crinkling and tearing.

But if that's what true silence is all about,

50 I'll stay here grudgingly satisfied with my body and mind —  
being one entity now separate from soul, which I gave  
away as dirty coins moments ago in the collection basket.

20000805



2001



## Today is a day not on any calendar

Today is a day not on any calendar.  
Today I'm crazy, absentminded, wild, disgraceful.  
All day and night there's music and silence.  
The day and I are lover, bread, and gentleness.  
Today there is no room for confusion or belief,  
all the clutter and business have evaporated with the dew.  
The beauty I love today is what I do,  
laboring for wealthy men is replaced by  
my newly discovered taste for pleasure.  
10 Instruments bringing music and dancing, we are  
animals in ritualistic pursuit of beauty, sensuality.  
Today I'm nimble and quick, youth abounds!  
My hands are not crippled from repetition,  
my attention spreads and covers as stratus the whole day.  
I'm strong and balanced, my heart does not  
climb the walls, always reaching the ceiling.  
Today my heart swells and bursts again and again,  
my vision penetrates people's faces and  
I realize I can not resolve their pain,  
20 but instead share intensely in their joy.  
The caretaker my parents trained in me  
I have given a magic potion and he will  
sleep now for a hundred million years.  
I do not control my life today any more than before,  
I have simply stopped trying.

20010114

## Mirror

The door creaks open,  
nervous and desirous.  
Four large black shoes,  
thick soles,  
fat laces.  
A constant jabbering,

the sound from a stadium at kickoff.  
The man's pelvis,  
metronome,  
10 toward the woman,  
against her jacket, arm,  
staring at her moist lips.  
Off balance,  
ghost pulling his sleeve,  
his body is querulent,  
his mind is obviously clear.  
He finds a mirror,  
lovely mirror.  
He sees a genius, a sex fiend,  
20 a hero.  
His image is an obsidian dagger,  
sharp, spiny,  
atramentous.  
He cuts through the obese air,  
leaving pieces of it behind him  
in disheveled piles,  
the rest he tucks into  
his inside jacket pockets.  
She's a frosty tart,  
30 fragmented cold,  
spilling over with indifference.  
On his side she clings  
like an ornament,  
lifted up what seems  
a thousand miles.  
Tentacles  
of woven flesh  
flutter into the air  
diced up into pollen-like dust,  
40 perfume, parts per billion,  
overwhelming vacuity of substance;  
she passes above me without issuing a glance.  
Tonight, vagina,  
a steaming fig,

the sweet hollow false fruit,  
pulpy flesh,  
opens,  
the lies staining the sheets,  
knocking headboard,  
50 carrying through the ceiling into thoughts  
where before was  
sweet calm sleep.  
And after, he finds a bit of  
sensation  
beyond the retracting numbness,  
umber folds,  
replaces the mask,  
slinks down  
behind his childhood towers,  
60 encircled by a moat of shame,  
guilt crocodiles  
with twin fangs of  
sin and depravity.  
She calls after him,  
but he's long gone behind his semen,  
like shellfish,  
petri dish,  
Bunsen burner  
stir the civilization  
70 around and around  
with a large  
dollar bill,  
the marketers, advertisers,  
and propagandists  
at their big party,  
celebrating another containment of  
thought and desire,  
pantheism adored,  
squirting out around the edges,  
80 catching and flaming up,  
too far from the mucus tunnel,  
flagellation (a worship of love in the highest)

then all lost,  
burnt dead crisp,  
scrape out the dish or throw it away,  
unsalvageable.  
A winding, tubular  
desideratum,  
though slick with clear slime,  
90 an image that moves from grasp,  
pulling at you,  
taunting you with  
twitching fingers,  
with need to survive  
and suffocate,  
world ending,  
blasted out of a solitude  
under the afterbirth of the sun,  
onanism after  
100 onanism.  
Man and woman watching  
but from opposite sides of the screen,  
it's all said, done,  
done, said again,  
repressed,  
comes out hollow,  
snakes around but wisdom  
intentionally left out,  
shit out, rewrite history,  
110 the opulent to control the masses,  
to become slaves,  
instill conformity, the family,  
the most important job with no training,  
with no training,  
push you into it,  
shove it down your throat  
with no understanding to wash it down,  
choke it down with  
a hard slap,  
120 a scream,

a shatter line moving  
through a mirror,  
splitting his image of genius,  
of lover, of hero,  
into broken pieces,  
the healthy parts here,  
the diseased parts here,  
the happy and sad parts,  
and each part of him  
130 living and loving incompletely.  
His images split and meld,  
estranged and condensed,  
dividing precipitously,  
multiplying himself  
out of control,  
marketers putting him  
into their pants,  
their films, their automobiles,  
his mental stock invested in  
140 an outward body  
where the nation's soul lives and  
where we are meant to suffer  
in silence,  
complacently,  
our egos bought and sold on Wall Street,  
and resold to us  
again and again  
to pay for a privilege we never see.  
The hunger unguates  
150 like the cocoon of a forgotten moth,  
writhing,  
dripping of reddish-yellow acid,  
letting off invisible fumes,  
it is then shrouded by a base  
pinkish liquid  
flowing out from the  
public relations industry  
the one-in-six-dollars ad industry

to the satellites  
160 in through the parabolic dishes.  
Fill a glass of clear water  
with salt you get salt water,  
with shit you get shit water,  
with greed and insecurity you get  
our country,  
ununited consumers in a corporate feudalism  
and we forget each other,  
live for ourselves,  
forget the revolution,  
170 hoard and guard like  
individualistic little nations,  
but only that which we are *meant* to desire,  
forgetting what we originally hungered for,  
which is  
alive, subtle, energetic,  
flexible and vulnerable.  
Will we ever see that ever again?  
Will we ever see,  
see a single true image of ourselves  
180 in one mirror,  
all of us together,  
staring back at ourselves,  
watching,  
zeal,  
noticing the sly motions of the hands,  
the irony in the eyebrows,  
the crackling sounds made before voice,  
no-one nervous?  
The battle zones missing?  
190 An undone flower bed swimming  
in a spa of its own fragrance,  
pungently sweet and magnificent?  
Or will we always be fed,  
as serfs in the deep and foul corporate ocean,  
one broken piece at a time,  
to the hunger

of the missoner's teeth,  
digested,  
forgotten,  
200 loving every minute of it?

20010201

### She sits on his lap

She sits on his lap, his legs are spread wide apart, she sits on his right thigh. It will soon be asleep. He wriggles to get his arm behind her back, where it won't be cramped up in a ball trapped behind her; she isn't comfortable either. They think they are sharing in something romantic — this is an infancy of sex. They are wrong. They are sharing a discomfort, too chickenshit to tell the other that this isn't working, it's painful; his leg is now numb, she feels foolish up so high. He's extra careful not to spill his coffee on her when she speaks with animation.

10 It's not about this one moment. It's about minutes and hours and years and torsion, that selfless twisting of the senses, including desire, which works tirelessly against itself.

We put ourselves through so much trouble through our silence, a month of this ends a relationship, a century and the corporations have taken us over. We look around, not knowing what happened, slink into bed and try to weep, but nothing comes. We feel out of place, our feet are too big. The sky sinks down low to meet us and we feel it pressing down as the ground hardens below. Our voice chokes and we no longer recognize the sounds as our own. We are left desirous.

20

20010203

### About Softball in College

The sun was a cantalope on the horizon, as dusty and tired as we were, the peel strewn about the playing field. It was the last inning and we were each relieved to be in it because it meant the invidible ending was near. This game was not going very well for us. We played badly and we knew it. It was less about bad play so much as incomplete play.

A strong shot to short grounded expertly would, on the throw, dribble  
to the left of first and out of play or soar overhead, a lead goose in  
early migration. This is how it went, a series of half events each finding  
10 completion with a sense of relief that it did not continue to go on.

These were gloomily happy times.

20010220

### On Dancing

I remember standing on stage, the reel-to-reel machine at my side on  
a small table, and a large microphone on a stand that was taller than I  
was. I was four years old and singing 'Honey' to an ocean of square  
dancers, amongst which were my parents. An ocean of waves, stars,  
and allemands. Each square like a whirlpool using an alternate set of  
physical laws.

20010325

10

My shoulders sank as I entered my kitchen

My shoulders sank as I entered my kitchen

I dropped my jacket on the chair and  
It hung there like a moldy slab of meat —  
precisely how I felt.

I was tired, completely worn, on the  
threshold state of a headache — and I never had them.

Why? What is this for? Fuck!

If I work all week at something I don't  
enjoy and it takes so much from me that I  
10 don't have enough left over to do what it is I  
really enjoy, then something is painfully, sickeningly wrong.

Do I go dancing? — Sag. Hhhh.

Hell yeah I go dancing. I'm doing to dance my ass off, all weekend, my sweat is going to bleed into my whole wardrobe, then I'm going to sleep all week. They'll call me at home, but I won't answer. I'm not your slave, I'm not stooping over and managing the data for you, build your own code to harvest the money that never reaches, nor is important to, me.

20010325

### A thick leslied electric hollowbody

A thick leslied electric hollowbody shakes throughout the room. At the window seat, shifting nervously back and forth, waits an overdressed teenage boy. A blond child with flushing pink skin. A beautiful specimen.

He leans to the window, follows the sidewalk with his eyes out in each direction, then returns to his cup, where he dips his forefinger and rubs it between his thumb like saliva and feeling it dry on his skin he remembers.

10 He remembers good-bye kisses from his grandmother's mouth, planted squarely on his lips, those cold kisses, wet with bitter saliva. Dogs that nose his crotch with their moist prodding snouts, dew drops on the early morning handrail, seashells on the northern coast.

These events change the air around him, he notices the moisture. It can become filmy, or electric, or muted like the sounds of sex from the apartment above his. He licks his hand and rubs it on his face.

20 When he wakes in the middle of the night his legs are too hot, the covers thrown about, his chest is thick and breaths shallow. Throwing the covers, he lowers his body temperature in an instant, he gets chills, sneezes, his legs and torso are moist and shivering and his fevered brow protects a brain that exceeds in complexity and beauty of any machine, which will never know nervousness or the white bubbles of saliva.

That guitar is thick, I try to put it in my mouth, opening wider and wider, but the sound does not fit there.

When I uncurl my palm and blow a focused fountain of breath, it is cool and I remember the pressure of fingers and the heat two hands produce with the refreshing cool that indulges upon release.

Either no moisture or sopping. The ideal lives in the extremes.

30 It is the middle ground, the space between the neck and the navel, that  
bears out the subtleties.

20010329

I remember when it used to be important to me to feel accepted

I remember when it used to be important to me to feel accepted.

When I'd sweat for hours at the side of a girl — just a girl — feeling  
tough and sinuous like a grizzly piece of meat, wanting  
to fall from the grill into the coals.

These days she and I pull all the blankets from my bed, an open stage  
with all the lights on us, and play for hours, then sleep  
for hours, play, sleep, play in our sleep, call into work  
with a groggy voice, “uhh, I'm not feeling well, I may  
be in today, but not until late, at best,” while she rubs my  
back and legs.

There are no shadows to hide in, no glances dripping of doubt, no  
secrets. I have opened up the world and pour myself  
into it.

I did not open up the world,  
I realized it had always been open.  
I opened myself up to it.  
There is no reason to hide —  
there is no reason for any of us to hide!

10 When I give of myself, the world receives a great gift.

That is true for us all.

If I give of myself incompletely, I betray.

If I hide, I am a motiveless thief.

If I do not share what others give,

I do not understand the virtue of generosity.

When I stand on my feet,

the earth holds me up.

When I stand on my hands,

I hold the earth.

20 20010331

### In Propria Persona

This is not meant to be the work itself  
this is the paralipomena. That slip of paper  
that slips out, slides between the cracks,  
lost under the bleachers for years and years  
covered by soda bottles, bits of food, flakes of dead flesh,  
encumbering the vacant purpose, the afterthought decomposed.

20010518

### Fight

As a boy of tender youth  
I had one brother, one dog  
two parents and acres and acres  
of woods. But no neighbors, no friends.

My brother and I would seldom fight  
and my dog could wear me out.  
Retiring to nap with my head on my dog's belly,  
the shafts of afternoon sun panned across my arm.

10 School-age stole me away, and isolation from me  
The replacement was an orthogonally-tiled, antiseptic,  
order, packed with children confused as I.  
I longed for my crooked branch of mountain laurel.

My social inefficacy bore few friends, and they'd say,  
"we're friends, but let's fight!" and we did.  
When we bled we'd stain the victor's shirt,  
to make his mother ask the questions.

At eight years I had the chicken pox.

My grandmother stayed for two weeks.

20 I patiently taught her how to play Donkey Kong on my computer,  
but kept the two pox on my penis to myself.

Long before ten my parents were close friends,  
but then they changed to distant fighters.

My father's distance baited my mother's infidelity  
he exploded, punched and slapped, then disappeared into the  
woodwork.

When my mother turned to me, her eyes as magnifying glasses  
brought her helplessness very close, it was a hulking presence.

She was not my friend, but my mother, and he  
my father, and I did not know how to fight so well.

Mother, you are not my friend, I can not fight you,

30 I can not help you.

Father, you are not my friend, I can not fight you,

I can not help you.

I love you mother, I love you father.

I am clean, naïve, simple, pure  
and unable to solve your hurtful problems.

Stop looking at me, magnifying the sun on me,  
stop looking at me, the knotted eyes in the woodwork  
Stop looking at me, STOP LOOKING AT ME!

I learned distance by counting my steps

40 and from an early age could run by myself  
at full sprint for hours at a time  
before requiring rest or water.

In middle school the boys in the neighborhood  
would play football. We were friends; we fought hard.

When we hit hard the boys would circle, looking down,  
waiting for breath to return, then lift him to his feet.

Sometimes I'd look down at the hurt boy.

Other times, I'd look up at the groins and faces.

50 We each knew this type of pain in the same way.  
We shared the pain, the brotherhood, the agony and love.

By high school friendship had evolved and dissolved.  
It was the attention of girls for which we fought  
those days were both immediately critical and lastingly trivial  
our fights were like a play from which there can be no victory, no  
exit.

When summer came we moved. Sitting on the grass' edge  
sifting the sunned sand through my toes, time had  
slowed to a sleepy dream. When the sun set  
the black flies would poison my neck; I turned all night.

60 ...  
20010521

When the door sounds its resonant creek

When the door sounds its resonant creek  
I know it is the furry demons issuing into my room  
I ask them why the blue green sea so loves the stars  
and why the wind makes trouble for desert snakes.

20010530

On the first day of life

On the first day of life the baby opens his eyes  
and even this is too much.  
He cries out when they put a cap on his head.  
Too much, too much.  
When he grows older the whole world will reach out  
to touch him and he won't even flinch.

20010612

## Twice did a woman cross my path

Twice did a woman cross my path  
but only on the second did I rise.  
No origin is like where it leads to.

After we spoke she walked off  
a black wave of ocean leaving a mist on my body.  
I watched until I no longer knew if she  
approached or receded, then I watched until it  
was only horizon splitting the speckled night  
from the starless earth.

10 20010612

## Few people take risks.

Few people take risks.  
This thin flagrant episode before you is no example.  
I'm not half a common squirl hurling  
itself from tree to tree, slender branch to  
leafy mass.  
I made such a jump or two when I was young,  
was either hurt or scolded.  
My world shriveled like a plum in the sun,  
hordes of insects pulling back the skin and  
10 removing the flesh in a frenzied orgy of restriction.

20010625

## The Pond and me and her

Outside the door,  
the car door,  
a parking area of padded mud  
leads to the pond's grassy shore.  
The damp night air mixes  
with my evaporating sweat —  
the coalescence of  
the thick rank smell of swamp with  
the fresh pungent smell of the sea.

10 "I have some good news for you, Erik...",  
There's her hand,  
the rest I can't hear —  
carried away,  
drowned in the aquatic shrill  
rotting seedbed  
singing into the mouth of the  
pond's slimy green water.  
Big frogs, iridescent beetles, cattails, snakes, ferns.  
Hot breath coming  
20 from the nose and mouth  
at the same time.

It's like a love affair I have with this water.  
All the noise and smells  
we share with each other.

After hours of dancing,  
lights and music all around and through me,  
I have navigated a specific series of  
hills and turns,  
serpentined through the otherwise  
30 uninterrupted speechless road,  
to this scrodum-tightening skinnydip.  
Naked, I enter slowly,  
the mud bleeding up twixt my toes,  
I don't always know who I dream of,

knee-deep,  
surrounded by fragrant foliage,  
rustling, frog noises,  
and the strange mingled fresh-sour wind.  
Alone dreaming,  
40 but without her ever looking away.  
It is impossible,  
I close my eyes as the  
air fills with the  
raw, vulnerable smells our bodies  
with age  
have learned to produce on their own.  
Diving forward, I submerge myself in the pond,  
black and brown and green,  
the every-colored water,  
50 pockets of air rushing past my frenzied skin,  
bubbles playing themselves out on the  
sensitive hairs lining my arms and legs and chest.

I wade, I urinate, I wash, I shiver,  
I get out, I dry.

“Now that that’s out of the way. . .”  
We steal back to her cabin,  
no phone, no toilet,  
and slept out the long and wild storm.  
Our dreams settle gracefully into the  
60 erratic framework of our  
tangled-up needs and struggles.  
(Will we ever realize these subtle expressions?)

I wake with itching eyes to  
jam and butter on English muffins.  
We relax and talk together until  
long after the sun has done its business,  
the storm passing in disregard.

She tries again to explain:  
“I have good news for you. . .”

70       The whole thing is a kiss.  
          The whole thing is touching our adult bodies.  
          The whole thing is filling yourself with  
              your lover's music and  
              playing back their most secret music with  
              your arms, your whole body.

          She speaks the good news right into my mouth;  
              dangerous, congested, substantial, fluid,  
          so that it is as though  
              I am saying the words myself.

80       20010703

## Program

A.

This is a program.

      What I am reading has been programmed.

      All this began a long long time ago.

I was first touched in a significant way  
at birth.

      the egress from the state of subjectivity par excellence

      the ingress into socially constructed reality.

      The means by which I understand myself had fundamentally  
      changed.

10       I'm days old and already required to  
          identify with recognised modes of behavior.

          Screw that! Watch me shit myself!

          Despite my excretive resistance, my identity is  
              slowly incorporating stereotypical modes of behavior,  
              laying me to rest.

Years pass.

      Language chaperons the way I think so that even in the  
      slap-happy absence of religion

      I receive the ideological codes inherent within that language.

20       Yet, language is only part of the code matrix,  
          the visual, verbal and written occupy me.

These codes and conventions are not neutral;  
 what I express through them are not neutral.  
 No one is immune, no one is innocent.  
 Our culture is not innocent.

B.

The program has been fixed.

I will never win.

To the degree that my discontent is due to  
 30 the culture I seek to criticize,  
 I live in a moot position.

But we can catch a fleeting glimpse of  
 what is predominantly concealed.

Our received social reality is produced and transferred  
 through ideological codes from a dominant hierarchy.  
 (what?!)

To say that more simply,

or in the regressing level of the main-stream media:  
 everything we are meant to understand about our world  
 40 we understand in a prescribed way.  
 Recognitions defined by our culture allow us to  
 understand these sounds as words,  
 their combination in specific ways have specific meaning  
 potentially leading to ideas, even dangerous ones,  
 and all of these exist within a framework  
 we have learned. This framework being  
 an encompassing body of ideas on which our social system  
 is based given us by culture, the dominant culture.

We, as audience, need to undo ourselves,  
 50 allow ourselves to question and criticize the  
 codes used to communicate  
 to expose the machinations of cultural production.

Our language is a system of centered ideas  
 repressing and marginalizing other cultures and societies.

Thus, I live within a natural and correct viewpoint  
 while the marginal and unnatural viewpoint lives without.

This is all part of the program.

So while globalization suggests a community,

60 it is obviously the opposite —  
 we are open to one end only:  
 to positively enable receivers of *our* information.  
 Ship our LCD replicas on a one way road out of town.

## C.

The program is a virus that weakens us,  
 makes us sick, numbs our taste, retards our thoughts,  
 which are underhandedly part of the program.  
 Resistance to change in a comforting similarity is a  
 cancerous cultural artifact.  
 Boundaries are set in place  
 70 dividing things from each other,  
 marking out our representation of reality.  
 Categorization. Organization.  
 Stagnation.

Wherefore lies a remedy?

Creativity is a collective experience,  
 it is accumulative.  
 Our Art is not a product of individual genius,  
 but an adaptation from a determined condition,  
 built on what has gone on before.  
 80 We draw on the collective environment to  
 challenge,  
 adapt,  
 reforce and oppose,  
 grow.

## D.

Transcendence of the program is a rare and precious event.  
 We create the culture that creates us.  
 (Participation is not mandatory,  
 nor is it suggested.)  
 90 Through our expressivity, poetics and artistry  
 the aesthetic can transcend the inherent boundaries of language.  
 We control, to some degree, the nature of the  
 recognitions we produce.  
 And because we are mediators in the

transference of ideological code,  
 we can intervene change in the act of communication.  
 In fact, as artists, that's kinda our role —  
 Hack the program!

E.

100 How to communicate in the refined ideological language  
 an extra-program event? Describe the program and degate.  
 Our culture is but two qualities:  
 Spectacle and consumption.  
 As such, commodity capitalism  
 stands for and devours everything.  
 So we must celebrate  
 rejection and deletion  
 to creatively understand its injustice  
 and eventually come together to oppose.  
 110 (what I express is not neutral.)  
 This is not a vision of a nihilistic culture,  
 rather, a fundamental shift allowing both  
 sense and possibility  
 to reign over marketplace banality.  
 Advertising,  
 the supreme weed of suffocation,  
 intrudes and overwhelms in a one way  
 transmission of information.  
 The audience is merely receiver and consumer.

120 F.

Crashing the program requires a runtime mind  
 in debug space to examine and trace,  
 expose and flow  
 circumvent the fragmented logic  
 imposing a confused immobility.  
 Creation and creator.  
 Conformity and rebellion.  
 The program allows us to act,  
 and we can not somehow liberate ourselves since  
 130 the program allows all our activities.  
 If we are to further evolve,

the only way now being through the evolution of ideas,  
then we must find an end to  
the structural pressures of the market and  
the self-censorship of those imitating the  
world around them.

We must open ourselves up to criticism  
and end the consensual silence.

Resistance is existence.

140 G.

The program is a lie,  
promising lies, replicating lies, dominating us with lies  
so that we are left with  
lie to support lie to support lie.  
To the climatized mouth this tastes like truth.  
New forms of censorship have been emerging for some time.  
We need to crack open the lies and  
expose the hidden agendas at work.

150 Recode or crash,  
question and criticize,  
communicate,  
intervene change,  
resist.

20010807

### Program (to poem)

Born from the slimy ocean of subjectivity,  
my form, free from geometry, suddenly structurally  
contained in orthogonal social reality  
cries out! Aaahhhh!  
Already stereotypical modes of behavior overwhelm me.  
Everything is too much. I submit. I lose myself. Years pass.

20010808

## Gretchen, take five

We spoke today just after noon  
 late morning for both of us  
 and decided not to take the long journey to  
 meet for the day.

Hours later I am alone reading  
 I am taken by an intense urge  
 to get to my car and drive south  
 to where you are not expecting me.

10 For five minutes I attempt to bring consideration  
 to the rescue, but there is only urgency,  
 the rush of you:  
 olive oil, rain, salted sweat, fiery, confident beauty.

For five minutes I count the seconds  
 I count the spaces between seconds  
 my fingers between your shoulder blades  
 your boyish nose bathing in our breath.

20010812

## Form

## I. Form

A. without

## II. Content

III. A. 1.  $a_{i_1}$ . Form at the expense of content.<sup>1</sup>

B.  $\emptyset$

C. 18.

$b_{j_4}$ . Formalism

$\alpha_{\beta}^{\gamma}$ . (is forbidden)

D. [This line intentionally filled thusly]

10 • Logical Structure.

$\frac{1}{4}$  invokes the question of sincerity,

---

<sup>1</sup>Structuralism for its own sake.



Zz. We're face☺to☺face with the ultimate ytiugibmA:

y. living and partly *living*.<sup>mediated experiences</sup>

x. rooted and partly *rooted*.<sup>holding on</sup>

2.718281828459045. 4.. 3... 2....

50 20010823

## Speed

[patter]

Some live are devoid of symbols,  
utterly blank.

Let what is outside get inside.

Eyes reflection of keyboard.

Ears turn flat, hear only a soft hum.

Open mouth, throat dilated, laughter wags tongue.

Voices like distant insects.

Tall, dreary, young. Unmatched feet.

10 Hopeless ambition. Grey-yellow eyes.

Zero eyes, like eyes of foreverness.

Boy is conquered, is prey of every hand of discipline.

Men lift feet, unconsciously.

Clock tells correct time, but is somehow false.

The mirror reflects the world, hell, heaven, at random.

You see what flashes in your face, there is no choice.

Reports are split and scrambled.

Grey retina fizzing behind chapped yellow glass lens.

Dime on grass reflecting far away light.

20 If I look at it, it moves away.

Monotonous job of feeding hunger.

Aladdin's lamp burns on greed.

Taste of sulfur dioxide, stale oxygen. Suck poison air.

Smell of coffee, cigarette smoke, settles on clothes, skin.

Coffee catching in throat, then spraying into esophagus.

Livid, terror, metallic, pinched.

Grind teeth to little white kernels.

Traffic whirls into a dense vortex,

30 drivers, passengers, smiling, arguing, smoking,  
wiping their mouths.  
Quick as ...

[pause]

too quick.

[patter end]

We are *obsessed* with speed ... and speed.

Caffeine, nicotine and the pursuit of happiness.

There to get people working on their own version  
of the great American Lie.

To put them into a state of paranoia:

40 delusion systematicus.

Where they think they're losing themselves:

losing their minds,

their lives,

losing their status.

It works in our culture.

It only works in that it cuts off

certain parts of us.

Life's contours flatten, the body no longer responds.

No reprieve.

50 Some of us are beginning to see those things.

Pause for a moment and image with me.

Image that we switch from our

haste-reeling speed culture

to a loose and relaxed dope culture.

Duuude!

Dope is legalized.

Speed exchange programs are put in place:

"Turn in your cigarettes, coffee and soda

for dope, your passport into the new culture."

60 We start using dope to the extent

coffee and cigarettes are used now.

Imagine that.

People would start showing up to work at 10 o'clock.

The need for car horns and panic buttons

would be replaced by  
afternoons beneath a shady tree.  
Life would be more fluid.

I don't think basing a culture on any drug  
is a good idea.  
70 Any drug cuts you off from some things  
and ties you into others.  
But some drugs might have a positive effect.  
Maybe we can relax some of the  
squinched up sphincter muscles of our culture,  
allow us to lose the 19th century rules of labor,  
they no longer apply, 40 hours, mandatory overtime,  
we no longer live and work in an industrial age.  
But we're still locked into that.  
We have centered work in our culture as an ethic.  
80 This is inappropriate.

I see this as an experiment.  
The variables for speed are all in place.  
A child is born in a bright room of disconnection,  
rented by the sterile hour.  
Moments later, thousands more are born in the same way.  
Let the speed parade begin!

From an early age  
we subject our children to huge doses of refined sugar,  
huge doses of caffeine,  
90 irresponsibly, immeasurably, automatically, disastrously,  
and to mindful cultures, unthinkably.  
We subject them to sitting-in-front-of-the-TV families,  
watching the set flicker, 60 times each second.  
We're not supposed to have televisions,  
we're not meant to sit motionless for hours,  
at the very least, you're not supposed to  
sit a kid in front of the set  
until he's six years old,  
so you don't distort his perceptions.

100 So our children are strung out.  
Do you remember feeling that way?

So what do we do to help this condition?  
Pump them with ritalin!  
Then, we sit them in rows,  
in chairs designed to fit no body comfortably,  
with all the other strung-out kids,  
shoot them mercilessly with facts,  
within an incomplete context,  
while, each hour, ringing a bell at them  
110 to have them scurry through a maze of hallways  
among peers with mixed-up messages,  
shit-out texts,  
a barrage of signs and expectations,  
and find their correct seat in the correct room  
in three minutes,  
pass or fail.  
Push the button!  
Reset the mind for the  
new environment,  
120 new topic,  
new thinking, behaving,  
new way.

Can you guess where ADD and hyperactive disorders come from?  
And pretty soon they're waking up at 5 am for the bus  
to do this again and again.

We are each trials,  
we know the results.  
What do we do this for?  
What can we get from this tortuous whirling?

130 This tired treadmill is an illusion and a lie.  
I'm getting off here.

## Awaken

In what sense do we make love to the world?

What transfiguring intensifications are necessary to  
mistake one's self for someone else?

Awaken one's relation to the world.  
Insist upon where objects begin and end.  
Venerate what light and color do.  
Seize what gravity forms have.

The dislocation one may feel seems intended,  
the purposeful psycho-physiological transmogrification  
10 of one's sense of place, the grotesque dilation in the import of status,  
the dehumanization of values.

Share in the surrounding environment  
gather and engage one's percipience.  
Confront and admit to the secrecy of the phenomenal world.  
The brightness of the present moment.  
Extend premonitions of events to come.  
One finds interchangeable motives for one's universe.  
Quickly objects vibrate, coming apart,  
precisely to play upon the nerves.

20 The incentive for situational receptivity is vast.  
Both place and objects are real  
but their condition is perilous  
(we are like them),  
their permanence is in doubt.  
Transformation (breakage as opposed  
to metamorphosis)  
is present in real life.  
In art, permanence.

30 One's context.  
Both eternal and transitory,  
both real and non-existent.  
Feeling of instability.

Thoughts roaming through space  
states well unreal —  
a dream, a suspicion —  
can make reality itself  
seem unreal.

Sins of the dreamer,  
when committed,  
40 are sins of thought, alone.  
Intensity springs not from the reflection of fulfilled love  
but from 'adolescent' desire,  
the particular intensity of which depends  
singularly on its non-fulfillment.  
A world of speculation and longing.

Stillness  
an expression of a refusal  
and simultaneously its exceptional vibration  
intimates a desire for it.  
50 Desire is both ambivalent and anxious  
delineating thoughts that can not or should not be completed.

Desire in its intricately diverse forms  
trespasses upon every moment.  
Desire never stops feeling like madness.

Need  
takes what it can get,  
obtaining satisfaction where possible.

Erotic desires  
obscure the comprehension —  
60 sparks between sexual pleasure  
and the destructive impulse.

Emotional negotiations.

Lust  
erotic craving seeks to prolong and extend itself

beyond psychological need,  
to intensify and protract itself,  
to revel in pleasurable torment.  
Learned structures of signification  
of meaning  
70 of pattern  
of purpose  
assemble in temporal proximity enabling  
interpretive links, even in absence of familiar connection.  
Links are established, setting aphrodisia in motion.  
Voluptuous desire fragments  
affecting the organic body  
dissolving unity, deliquescing utility.  
This craving does not involve  
passage from  
80 formless nonsense  
to a body offering  
sense and meaning.  
Rather, it disarrays and fragments  
the resolve of a certain purposiveness.

Impersonal sexuality has the explicit power  
of passion without relationship;  
people can be  
narcissistically fascinated  
by one another's bodies and  
90 their own sexual pleasure  
while maintaining distance from  
strong feelings and  
emotional complexity.  
Impersonality frees the imagination,  
but imagination isn't sufficient.  
What is usually required is  
more of them and  
less of us.  
We have to let a certain amount of them in.  
100 That absorbative exposure can seem most frighteningly difficult.

The overt irrationality of our

emotional negotiations lay manifest  
in the primacy of the erotic.  
The desires of instinctual life  
versus  
The repressions necessary for the maintenance of social existence.  
A struggle between reason and madness.

Feelings demanding articulation remain blocked,  
language is both powerful and powerless.  
110 I'd rather not put it into words,  
transfiguring sexual desires into words,  
vividly suggesting significance  
without ever delivering satisfaction.  
Statements are  
meaningful in allusions to the theme and structure  
yet  
meaningless in the interpersonal context.  
It is very much a process of anxiety.  
In the end I am a  
120 captive of denial  
just as everyone else.

20011114



2004



## Wounded Bird

Today a neighbor with unclear conscious  
placed a lamed bird outside my window,  
where it trembled in the flashes of light  
filtered through the tree's thin canopy.  
Two young girls busy making a moss garden  
for snails, gardians, chasing away a cat  
by hissing and kicking. Let the cat have it!  
But that was not the way for today.  
Today, in a land shaped just precisely so  
10 through human intervention in nature,  
humans interviened again. So I took the bird,  
smashed its head and discarded the box.  
Nature is meant to be cruel.  
That is how beauty so elegantly evolved.  
But when it goes only so far, not finishing,  
ugly interference is what we call "polite".

20040903



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## Notes

The symbol \* is used to indicate a space between sections of a poem wherever such spaces are lost in pagination.

