

# The Pyrrho of Martinsburg

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## THERE WAS A MAN

There was a man who built me into  
a castle and I could not  
stop to eat dandelions  
or smell orange blossoms.

I worked all day on synthetic wholes.  
Logic spit at me,  
but I jumped away and caught it  
in the front of my shirt.

I went to the bathroom to clean it  
and saw a man building  
a tinker toy tower on which he put  
a can of stewed tomatoes.

He said, "You must submit  
to everyman's pleading."  
He was religious and wore  
rosary beads

and a large wooden cross  
on which Christ hung  
with yellowing scotch tape.  
He wore a black coat

and black eyes and gray hair.  
He said, "You must submit."  
I said, "I am working on a  
mathematical system."

## KOHELETH AND JOHN

### Koheleth

It was light among the drifts  
of snow.

I could hear the blowing,  
a tedious blowing,  
an endless round.

### John

When the wind stopped,  
the night was clear and cold.  
And the stars proclaimed light  
in the hard, black sky  
barely seen above the mist.

Koheleth

Why did the wind come?  
Where did it go?  
I wanted to follow it,  
but that would have been futile.  
Who can grasp the wind?

John

We cannot know why it comes  
or where it goes.  
It is a dark saying  
breathed out by  
an inexplicable presense.

Koheleth

We cannot know the meaning  
of the things that happen  
on the earth.  
We can catalog them.  
We can describe them.

John

You tire of seeing.  
You tire of hearing.  
You find the wind  
a tedious murmuring,  
but does its mystery touch you?

Koheleth

I rise up in the morning.  
I lay down at night.  
I find peace in the moment,  
in loving for a moment,  
in working for a moment.

John

All earthly things pass.  
All our work and desires pass.  
I looked for some permanence,  
some word spoken,  
some word called out mysteriously.

Koheleth

I have heard men proclaim  
their private visions.

I have seen men  
massing together to listen,  
no visions of their own.

John

I felt an irresistible calling,  
a mysterious moving  
as my breath quietly  
merged with wind, with air,  
with dark motions of atmosphere.

Koheleth

Who knows when my  
breath began?

Who knows when it  
will end?

My breath evaporates in the cold air.

John

A great love wells up in me.  
A great wonder fills me.  
The wind has become a man.  
When he touches me  
my body trembles with joy.

Koheleth

Men multiply words.  
It is a great burden.  
There is no end to them.  
How often those words have hardened  
into weapons of war.

John

All the words cannot be spoken.  
An infinite number cannot contain it.  
A few words suffice.  
If a man strives to follow,  
these words will guide him.

## Koheleth

I have sought wisdom.  
I want to know what to do.  
Laws and precepts have come down to me.  
I will follow them.  
It is all that I can do.

## John

When in solitude and quiet  
I listen and watch  
a deep wounding afflicts me.  
An old self dies.  
A great love is growing.

## Koheleth

What a burden has  
been laid upon man.  
The suffering of his days agonize him.  
There is madness in his heart while he lives,  
and afterwards he goes to join the dead.

John

It is not clear what we  
will become.

But we will become like him  
because we will see him  
as he is.

Koheleth

There is a great gulf between us.  
We both stand on the edge of the abyss.  
We both look into the void.  
I see darkness.  
You see light.

John

It is a small step,  
to listen for a moment to the calling,  
to trust for a moment,  
to let go for a moment,  
to be caught up to ride on the wind.

## THE FAIR

The glittering motion of the  
summer fair with rides and  
children and bees trying to  
drink from their cups.

He was a thundering shadow  
on the literal day.

The animals gathered around  
him to listen to him preach,

the screeching doe eyed animals  
with ears sloped back  
with humped backs  
like no animal ever had.

Those tourists,  
those mutilators,  
those buzzing flies,  
he swiped a them

on a billowing day,  
a sun freckled day,  
only marred by the  
odd stinking bum.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE WOOD

Peter by the garden gate  
and Susan by the wall  
could see the spirit of the wood  
slip in behind the stall.

It looked like the leaves of autumn,  
the gold leaves of the fall,  
but its eyes were like the winter,  
cold blue and practical.

And there was a touch of summer,  
of spring around the mouth,  
of heat and green fertility,  
of breezes from the south.

It made poor Peter shiver.  
It made sweet Susan laugh.  
It went over to the river  
to write its epitaph.

## STROKE

When a sudden pulsating of air  
made dark eyes flutter  
and the pumping of black fluid  
burst red in a warm night

I felt a dizzy light strangeness  
and my eyes became dry  
and I peered through the rising buzz  
of a brain caught fire.

I wished to bathe in cool water,  
in calm, cool water to float.  
I wished to let my body drift,  
free, free from all desire.

## THE TIME TRAVELER

The time traveler was not very old.  
She was a child really,  
but already she had become  
a vector across the fourth dimension.

She was often told  
that like the ring of a tree  
she was but a slice slightly random  
of a four dimensional region.

She was young, she was bold.  
She did not mind to be  
but one of many in tandem,  
one spirit guide, one of legion.

## THE BOAT MAKER

Once on a side channel far from  
the main flow of the river  
where the clever ones never go  
I met the boat maker.

Only few knew that he made boats,  
tiny boats of paper,  
folded in intricate designs and  
let free upon the water.

Once he let me come with him in  
the cool, early morning.  
He watched his small boats float away  
and sink without mourning.

I live close by now in the woods  
and sometimes he comes with me  
to sing in the lonely places  
and let the wild words free.

# THE WOMAN WHO CHOSE HER OWN FORM

In that not so future time  
of enhanced electronic norm  
there was in those bright networked lands  
a woman who chose her own form.

He who hid behind a thousand  
variations of perfect beauty  
looked with fear at one who would choose  
her own physical reality.

But fear turned to fascination  
and to a shaking of foundations  
and to years in her ample presence  
free from sensory computations.

## NO CUSTOMER TO SATISFY

He sits below the trees in the  
warm bright billowing air,  
his mind a calm buzz, his body  
comfortable in his chair.

And there is time for useless thoughts  
and fantasies of why.  
The how is still, no need, and no  
customer to satisfy.

# THE PYRRHO OF MARTINSBURG

I was eighteen years old when I  
let my old world die,  
the black wagons, the black coats,  
beneath an Amish sky.

It was then that I met that sly  
footnoter of footnotes  
who replaced my proud assertions  
with stammering and doubt.

We roamed the rural counties  
rootless and alone  
and I became a still stranger  
in my childhood home.

But now I live at my ease with  
linguistic politics  
and silently recite the heroic  
deeds of the heretics.

## DESIRE

When desire comes up beside you  
and wraps you in its woolen cape,  
you are to it a fruit past due,  
split open like the skin of a grape.

Or perhaps it is a thick web  
interlacing branches of trees,  
and you are patterned from it ebb  
and flow like curtains in the breeze.

Or maybe it is a fine gauze  
that filters the no from the yes  
and is thus the effective cause  
of all your pain and happiness.

## PHILO'S JUSTICE

Philo hovered ponderously  
in the garden path  
demanding his form of justice.

I went out by the compost  
and up the hill into the brush  
and Philo was there.

In my bed from the thick  
dampness his whispering voice  
settled on me like death.

In the heat of love his  
wheezing breath and watery eyes  
disturbed my lover's slick skin.

In the cold memories over  
years now in my old age  
he holds me to my bed like rope.

## HIS KINGDOM

The man who would build  
a world with words  
mixes breath with wind.

His blood mixes with glass  
by crystal walls,  
windows broken.

He stands close and  
whispers so that the ear  
buzzes and is deaf.

He looks deep in eyes  
and is blinded  
by an indifference of trees.

## A MOTION OF ORDER

The formal sequences of  
captured randomness  
are not for me a rose or  
any flower.

I try to fill the nights with  
the arrays for my  
trembling,  
stylized grasping for fire.

They would have me juxtapose  
or they would have me order  
my steps and in the  
hollows my sounds.

Or I would have myself fill  
it all with a quest for  
order in the casting of  
feathers and bones.

We have not found the true  
way for a striving wind  
to form and form  
a musical stone.

## WOOD SHED

In the wood shed we  
were joined by a crafty saying,  
a new tale of the ripeness  
of things that pass.

We they say were joined  
by craft, a new old craft,  
a hopeful art, that joined  
ever, a strange mixture, us.

We were joined in word only,  
in a confusion of word and solidity  
or a text of solidities  
claiming no words.

From the upturned stone of words  
I crawl out and do not  
find anything but  
a wild weed hovering in still air.

## FINE GRAINS

The fine grains of slipping cells  
ruined by the singe of my fearful light.  
The fine, fine containment of water  
in water and light.

There was no starting place.  
There was no real tree in the woods.  
We waited in the clear space,  
a joint motion of doubt.

We never for a moment felt  
the spark or the rough  
sand paper of our mouths joined.

You were a rattling of stones.  
I was a rattle, a thin whistle,  
a creaking gasp of bones.

## SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Break it open  
and fry it up.  
Set it out in  
a coffee cup.

And when it's cold  
turn up the flame.  
You're much too old  
to take the blame.

High, spry, little man  
kept his life in a coffee can.  
Ho, throw, grown-up boy  
counted his days with a wind-up toy.

But no one could hate  
the fine moss that he ate  
or the hollowed out tree  
where the little ones be.

He finally sliced out  
what he had to say  
and left the frame  
for another day.

One, two, three, four, ...

## FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

"Dip down in the pool and drink."

And he drank.

"Look through the shattered windows."

And he looked.

"Make of yourself a raw planet."

And he was raw.

## FIRST MOMENT ON SUCH A BED

She was bigger than I thought  
standing there by the circle of stones.  
She faced north surrounded by the nude.  
Steam was rising.  
It was cold like knives.  
She seemed quite composed,  
really at peace with herself,  
a true witch, lovely in her large bones.  
From where I was I could see  
clouds reflected in her eyes  
and saw pictures and felt  
her like a sponge.

No animals were in that wood  
besides snakes asleep.  
There was birch and ash  
and maple.  
There were asters turned  
brown with white tufts.  
There was brown clover  
and green moss.

I would like to list all  
that was there,  
by square inches.

In a clearing,  
in the middle of the clearing,  
there was a circle of pines.  
The needles were thick and brown.

## THE CELLAR

This is no time for such whining.  
We really can't have it.  
Buck up! Look lively!  
No one ever looked at the door.  
They didn't know it was there.  
In the cellar, oh the earthy smells.  
No one could touch the potatoes.  
I know where they are,  
and the turnips, good God!  
There is also a window  
into the damp walls  
into the earth  
for those who can  
travel as water  
sucked by a million  
thin fingers.  
Oh to sink into the gravel.  
Oh to be sucked up into the sky.

## PLACE

What use is this land anymore?  
Do I care about it anymore?  
It used to be our food and our life.  
Now it is just a commodity,  
a factor of production for distant markets.

This town was founded on land.  
Each plot was related to a farm.  
Now most are allocated to workers  
in placeless, abstract institutions.

And our lives revolve around  
consuming and planning to consume  
things produced far from here.

And our inner, deeper life  
is very little tied to this place.  
It is sucked out through electronic portals  
into a placeless gathering of images.

We are no longer a community  
making our own way  
with a little surplus to trade.

We are washed back and forth  
by forces beyond our comprehension,  
or anyone's comprehension.

## A COOL, BLUE TIME

The time was a cool time.  
My heart instead of its usual  
insistent beating was cool.  
There were birds fluttering about,  
their feathers drifting in the air,  
getting caught in my hair,  
lightly touching my blue skin.  
It was a cool, blue time.

I went down to the waters to drink,  
to sing of the old place.  
There were many weepers there,  
singing of the old place.

I think we each sang of  
a different but same place.  
In the distance a yellow light  
was rising above the waters,

now yellow and blue,  
yellow and blue in waves.  
My feet dangling in the water  
could not move.

A woman there looked at me  
with a strange eye.  
In the breezes her hair  
was a brown motion.

## PHILOSOPHY

Some say words have power.  
Others that power controls words.  
All I see is a summer shower  
and a scattering of birds.

## POETRY

I don't need poetry.  
Poetry doesn't need me.  
But a wildflower  
will find its opportunity.

## DOUBLE BIND

Because overstated, patented  
by frequent use and old,  
we are made mute though in its  
language our lives are told.

Because we would not make light of  
a clarity new to us  
we must approach obliquely its  
ancient commonness.

## BILL'S ADVICE

Think of spirits and dreams and death  
and imagination  
as rays split from the same light  
by the body's prism.

Think of the plurality of  
inner and outer worlds  
as a complex flux captured by  
the thin net of our words.

Select from texts and counter texts  
a slice of reality  
and gathering in your desert tents  
worship its fragile beauty.

# THE LITTLE PEOPLE OF THE TREES

I have found you cannot please  
the little people of the trees.

For if they spy you through the glass  
as they on summer breezes pass

they will want your bedtime dreams  
to dance with them on moonlight beams.

So if you hear their rustling whispers  
do not heed their bristly whiskers.

It is better to stay safe in your room  
than dance with them under the golden moon.

## THERE WAS AN OLD MAN

There was an old man  
who everyone knows  
would shout out loud  
when you stepped on his toes.

He would shout out loud  
when you stepped on his toes  
and stick in your face  
his strawberry nose.

There was an old man  
who would huff and puff  
when any little children  
got into his stuff.

He would huff and puff  
as everyone knows  
and then stick in your face  
his strawberry nose,  
yes, stick in your face  
his strawberry nose.

## MORNING SONG

Little, little munchkin,  
lost in the labyrinth  
of the thick bedcovers,  
what will become of her?

"I can't see east.  
I can't see west.  
I must be flying!"

# A CONVERSATION

Do we survive?

I am alive.

What will we find?

Your own free mind.

What should we do?

Give each his due.

What can we know?

What you can show.

What of prophets?

Ask who profits.

An absolute?

We still dispute.

## FREE SPEECH

Let me state it plainly:  
you have a right to speak.  
Some will love it.  
Some will hate it.  
They'll ignore it mainly.

## THE DISTANT ECHO OF WORDS

The geese on the creek.  
The poison ivy berries.  
The woodpecker beak.  
The winds the tree carries.

The water's rush and swell.  
Brown leaves shaped like birds.  
The squirrel's red tail.  
The distant echo of words.

# SUGARLOAF

We cut you bare  
a hundred years ago.

Now you look down  
as you cover with snow

at the old town  
with its windows aglow

that does not care  
what history you know.

## BY THE WATERS

By the waters  
by the marble pavilions  
among the lemon trees  
speaking of lexicons.

Behind muslin curtains  
I heard them mumbling  
reciting ancient stories  
speaking worlds into being.

I found the one who spoke my life.  
"Can it be changed?" I asked.  
He looked up for a moment  
and returned to his task.

## PROSPECTS FOR AN ADJUSTMENT

He walked on a spinning plane,  
on smooth steel up and down he walked,  
jostling the others, jostling,  
"Excuse me, excuse me," he said.

"This is a song that never ends.  
Yes, it goes on and on my friends.  
Some people started singing it  
and have forgotten what it meant."

Lines of children balancing themselves  
on the ground, singing and laughing.  
He looked around for the controls,  
the sky blurring, the children singing.

"This is a song that never ends.  
Yes, it goes on and on my friends.  
Some people started singing it  
and have forgotten what it meant."

On a cool night he counted the stars  
on the top of a runaway train.  
With a certain serenity he counted.  
Forgetting himself, he counted again.

## GOING HOME

I still think of it as going home,  
off the highway, going home!  
Down the back roads into the hills,  
safe from sadness and the world's ills.  
I still see it through a child's eyes.  
I see the clear blue Christmas skies  
and the smell of coal in the air,  
and all good food comes from there!  
And the house is full of talking  
and the air is full of laughing.  
It seems I was always free from care  
and bold and brave and willing to dare  
cold nights warm on the backporch bed.  
And when one of the people said,  
"Oh, you're Mrs. Rector's grandson!"  
I knew that I was really someone.

## OUT FROM PYRRHOTOWN

Once when I journeyed out from Pyrrhotown  
I found you in that place of pain and peace.  
It seemed at root that each of our lives  
had been posed as a problem of diversity,  
yours of people, mine of opinions,  
but both on the forge of struggle and pain.

Since then we two have journeyed together,  
side by side or at a distance of mind.  
And when I am far in my native land  
I look over the hills to where you live  
in the land of multi-colored roses  
where even now pain can have a purpose.

## RIGHTEOUS ANGER

The hurly-burling man,  
the roly-polly man,  
large and offensive,  
pushing back the air  
in his wake.

He rolls, he rumbles,  
he pushes down trees.  
He turns a put-down  
into a test of strength.  
"To hell with you!"

He rolls, he rumbles,  
he shatters rare china.  
He turns their contempt  
into a badge of honor.  
"To hell with you!".

## THE HOLLOW ECHOES OF DECISION

In the desire  
there is a whir  
of round and round,  
of ignorant bliss,  
of looking and looking,  
of all wants found  
and all faults dismissed.

There is peculiar hope,  
a peculiar amnesia,  
a strange looking the  
other way when learning,  
a narrowing of scope  
in a desperate hysteria  
of needing and needing.

There is suspicion  
of caution and reflection,  
no waiting, no waiting.  
Waiting is losing  
the chance, maybe the last.  
We cannot be dissuaded,  
jaded by the terrible past.

And later in the cool time,  
after years and intertwined ropes  
of commitment and obligation,  
after the tremulous revision,  
we set aside such hopes  
and live and live with  
the hollow echoes of decision.

## BREATHING CREEK

The town said, "I am well connected."

The creek said, "I underlie you."

The man said, "I have been distracted."

The state said, "I will keep an eye on you."

## UNCLE FESTUS

You old philosopher  
falling into the ditch!  
Still they paid you to  
tell them they knew nothing

as you performed the rites  
of the civic religion,  
a good citizen, solid,  
with a hollow core.

Still I grant you the peace  
that comes from not caring  
and the peculiar safety  
that comes from not choosing.

The existential hero,  
the pragmatic hero,  
the dancing bear balancing  
between dogma and the void.

# THE GREAT PINE FOREST

I will speak to you again  
of the passionate appropriation.  
I will speak once again  
of the objective uncertainty.

From the surface of Venus!  
From the pine forest clearing!  
From the path to the Eucharist!  
From the haunts of the swamp man!

When the gray men stepped  
from behind the veil  
to tell us to sing the songs  
of a technical education.

It is strange at last to  
settle in middle age  
on the insights of youth  
gleaned from a dream of Denmark.

# ASHRAM

Meditate on the word in your breath.

Gather for satsang.

Listen to the inner music, see the inner light.

Gather for knowledge.

"And we're spacing out  
in the kitchen  
and we don't even feel ashamed.  
Tralala. Tralala. Tralala."

At the household meeting  
we ate a simple meal.  
We discussed and decided  
it was OK to be nude.

"And we're spacing out  
in the foyer  
and we don't even feel ashamed.  
Tralala. Tralala. Tralala."

## WINTER VACATION

Now we have come to the  
season of poetry.

Now the garden sleeps  
and dreams fly the hawk's sky.

Now the stolid prisoner  
is given his winter furlough  
and the dormant vines and tangles  
tremble to light and grow.

Now the little ones buzz  
and titter and dance  
and the wise old man shakes  
the hundred worlds with his glance.

# LITTLE ONE OF THE SEA

Little one of the sea  
rise with the tide in me.

Far the waves rise and fall  
down to the timeless wall.

And the delicate web of song  
will last for the real as long.

The gray sea, the blue sea, the green  
from my eyes beyond what is seen.

Spread thin in the salty wind,  
flit far where the spirits send.

And swim where the sea oats grow  
beyond what the clerics know.

## PYRRHO AMONG THE PIOUS

Among the worshipers,  
I worship.

Among the meditators,  
I meditate.

I plant my seeds,  
tend the crop,  
and enjoy the harvest,  
without worry.

I see skills, practices,  
linguistic structures.  
They see truths, lies,  
hidden realities.

Watch us, look at the results.  
Do you see a difference?  
The difference is in talk,  
and in my diffident eyes.

## THE NARROW PATH

Some call it a rose. I don't know.  
I think of it as an evasive light.  
When I turned I thought  
for a moment I saw it.

They say it is closer  
than your life's vein.  
They say it is ethereal air  
breathed in your breath.

Let's make a list:  
a puff of brown autumn grass  
moving in low light, a motion of  
leaves high in the locust trees,  
  
the rocks, the water, the moss,  
my daughter's face calm in sleep,  
the music in the high temple of golden air,  
the infinite regress of reasons.

When I saw that the ladder  
was higher than I could climb  
in endless days of climbing,  
I thrashed around in confusion.

I built tiny shelters each night  
and left them behind each morning.  
I raged and raged against a silence  
that could not be caught in words.

That silence while I dig the beds,  
that silence while instructing the machines,  
that silence in the laughter and the crying,  
that silence in silence looking east.

One night I heard the buzzing silence.  
I followed it out into the cold,  
the sky black with stars,  
down the path into the woods,

water black, moon on snow,  
I followed it, and found fluttering  
in the raspberry thickets  
an old book with yellow pages.

It occurs to me that  
I should be more direct  
and tell you exactly what I mean.  
It is only this.

## ADVENT SERVICE

My little day.

The sound panels, gold, high  
in the old chapel.

"I am afraid of directness.  
It is so plain.  
This trivial directness  
can't hold my pain."

They are so sure.  
The march of diverse certitudes.

My little day.

"I am afraid of directness.  
It is so plain.  
This trivial directness  
can't hold my pain."

Let me say.

The liturgy, ah, that brings me back.

## PLATO'S LAUNDRY LIST

It seems to me, my buzzing bee,  
that you hide your faith in irony.  
Do you doubt or do you believe?  
It's either/or, so don't deceive.

My dear dogmatist, naive apologist,  
life's more complex than Plato's laundry list.  
I think you'll find a thinking mind  
must leave these simple pairs behind.

## GOTHIC

Look down the stone walk and stairs,  
strawberries spreading in the cracks.  
All those years we never saw  
the crumbling, sandy, dusty facts.

The cats creeping by stone urns  
pause to stretch and scratch a word  
or two into the feline text  
and yawn a silent yarn they've heard.

The mist at night quick settles in,  
cool and thick and gathering damp  
so that at last some drops run off  
where moss and lichen wheeze and stamp.

And trembling by the dripping walls  
a tiny human moves and calls.

## PEVSNER PARK

In the dirty city the park has stones  
that stop the parachute games and dogs,  
but old men sit there and sweat  
in their beards, dripping liquid air.

I want to ask them, but by definition  
they cannot know, can only read  
and dance the book around the tents  
by the harbor where the answers swelter.

And on the mountain like smoke  
the golden dome puzzles me and shines  
and the Greek columns shine white  
and baffle the deep blue Mediterranean.

I wish I were in a German village,  
but that is too old, two hundred years.  
Then I wish I planted my corn in Virginia,  
but they have long since moved to Kentucky.

## A GREEN VALLEY WITH FROGS

I was still in a cool, green valley,  
no eyes but mine, and I stretched  
and laid down in the stream like a log  
and the water was sweet and clean.

The water was sweet and clean  
and I could make books of leaves  
and the frogs laughed at my questions  
but I merely included them in the text.

Measure for measure I measured  
and cut the legs from the ladder  
but the angels still descended and  
were just breaths or winds or fingers.

I counted them for days and nights  
but soon did the proof of natural numbers.  
It all seemed like a briar bush  
and my skin like thorns and filaments.

## DANCING THE WORDS AWAY

She dances the words away,  
with light, ironic touch  
along their pinions of gray.  
A few suffice her lonely brief.  
She holds them like a mantra  
against the nothingness of belief.  
Nothing much, nothing much.  
She loves the play and extra  
comical combs of sodden halls  
or coral filaments of reef  
and blue or nothing at all.

She dances the words away  
and holds them tight when  
like black coated brethren  
they most rough her day.  
She needs them like rostas  
and curls and fragrant fruit  
that in their murmurs suit  
a feeling of cool white pietas.  
She loves them and needs them

and dances them tenderly  
like a program or an anthem.

## A FOREIGNER ONCE REMOVED

There was a gray battle ship  
in the blue bay,  
but all was peaceful,  
no worries.

The sailors walked around  
in twos and threes,  
loud and friendly,  
shuffling their American dollars  
like cards.

I met two going down the stairs.  
They gave me a tract in Arabic.  
I told them in English  
it should be in Hebrew,  
but they just moved on down the mountain  
to convert the Jews.

Of course, I didn't speak Hebrew either.  
I walked around in my English bubble  
in a buzz of incomprehension  
until these jabbering Americans  
came by and made me  
a foreigner once removed.

## A FIELD NEAR TIBERIAS

Red anemones, yellow groundsels  
dot the new green field  
spotted with stones.  
It is a rough place for a profusion.

An old man sits in a tin shed.  
It is an old spot.  
Many others have sat here.

Olive trees grow here and there  
and goats roam,  
speaking some language  
I don't know.

It will be brown again soon,  
for a long time,  
but the sky will still be  
brilliant blue.

## SACRED SCROLLS

They are close to the grave  
these old mystics in the park,  
and if at times they seem to rave,  
I still nod, respecting the dark.

# HYENAS

I thought I heard hyenas  
laughing in the night.

They tell me it is  
impossible in the city.

But maybe they sweep up through  
the wadis and foot paths at night

thinking to claim what was theirs  
for ten thousand years.

## LYRIC CONTINGENCIES

She didn't start free from  
the desire for belief.  
She still liked a story.  
She still defined a self.

But pebbles floated in  
contrary, changing winds  
and so her hands lifted  
up to touch it depends.

And so the monks chanted  
and their breathing was winds  
and she bent to the ground  
to pick up it depends.

## CATS OF HAIFA

Theirs is a parallel city,  
brutal motion despite scraps,  
hard jointed mean with cynical  
eyes and ecology of rats.

But the kittens still purr  
and you want to pet them  
as they totter and look  
and spin and totter again.

You want to pet them or  
to set them free, but where?  
You know they will scar soon and  
yowl at night like cats of Haifa.

## PYRRHO AND TERESA

He wanted to ask her.  
Why is faith a problem?  
Aren't we beyond all that?  
It died long ago like sin.

He wanted to ask her.  
But he was a buzz to her  
and she was a wind to him.  
Their meeting was just summer.

The trees hushed up the ground like  
a breathing gnome, like a quarry  
long since overgrown, stone benches  
and mosquitoes, she was sorry.

A different discourse alas  
was needed and at last came.  
Irony and awe joined just  
finger tips on winds and mountain.

## THE POLITE SILENCE OF THE PREACHER

In the old country church  
one bright Sunday morning  
the Preacher's certainties  
dissolved like laces of light.

He still preached each Sunday,  
but of daily mysticisms  
and justice and common kindness,  
of holding the people together.

He visited the sick,  
comforted the grieving,  
joined the young lovers,  
sent the dead on their way.

After a few years he quietly  
retired to a carpentry shop  
where he wrote delicate  
verses of wood and words.

## GAMBIER GEORGE

Time was when George would come by  
and we would play chess or cards  
on a log in the garden  
and talk of inference and yards.

He held that it was all a game  
and that turf grass was a crime  
somewhere close to patricide.

But I never took him too seriously,  
until he started quoting Rorty  
in his rutabaga patch.

## GEORGE'S RELIGION

Ol' George never seemed to quite fit in with the Baptists in town, but he went to church at least twice a year and he sent his kids.

Once I asked him about it. He said he liked them having no creed except the Bible and "The Bible is one hell of a book!"

Now his wife was something else. She taught Sunday School each Sunday, went visiting and witnessed up a storm. When I asked him about it, he just winked.

## BAFFLED BY MY MONUMENTS

I change. I am changeable, yes.  
There is no other way to say  
it. I am not steady or firm.  
I flow and go every which way.

I could say it is the world,  
that I merely imitate, fit  
myself to its contours but no.  
It's just me. I roam. I flit.

It might be right to say I am  
too open to cadences and  
the fine voices of the other,  
stuttering shifting winds in sand.

I don't know. I guess I just seek  
and don't find or find for moments,  
even weeks, sometimes years but then  
stilt, baffled by my monuments.

## MOMENTS MOLASSES

He is very tired today  
and wants to run away  
and hide in the drifts like  
river bandits with frog eyes.

He is a time bomb today  
and ticks away like fumes  
as his stiff time ebbs and  
runs through gray rooms.

He is joined to old chances  
and can't form a coherent  
line or draw a picture  
or get one letter sent.

## AFTER HERESY

Old friendly source, old home,  
I remember the silence  
we talked the days from.

Many varied houses we built  
around that quiet fire  
and when each evaporated  
like dew in misty desire

the fire would still warm me  
long nights after heresy.

## AN EXERCISE IN PUZZLEMENT

The filing of papers in the rough day  
was all I had that time.

I wondered where the mongoose was.  
Once I had grabbed his brown tale,  
that was the end.

Speaking by the Carmelit stairs,  
the stones comforted me somewhat,  
and the stone dust.

My breathing was labored and nothing came.  
The little princess and the tide warmers  
blossomed in the side garden.

The clouds painted a different color of  
blue on the washed out blue I was used to.  
And the river bed had been dry for centuries,  
they tell me. I have nothing else to say.  
No, what I have said is nothing.  
Perhaps a dance, perhaps sand blasting,  
perhaps a shimmer of marble dust.

The saw startles the will to focus  
and contain seed beds or rock gardens  
until I look on all that came before  
as an exercise in puzzlement.

## NUMBSKULL PUDDING

Once the moorings came loose,  
I started to spew again.  
I had tried to contain things,  
but the results were not good,  
did not flow, were stilted,  
forced, and all of that.

Now I see it as a starting place  
from which to mumble out ten  
new volumes after I delete these.  
I don't know what I was doing.  
It was nothing perhaps.  
Now I feel freer and will dance  
when the moon stones are ready,  
complete with local references.

## TEN MINUTES WILL DO IT

Fifteen to ten and still no sound.

I have bucked the time warp and tried  
the refugee river captain and run past  
the fountain with lights and jars.

I have been a little timid perhaps and  
thought of something beyond ten minutes  
of running fools with helmets in the  
dim passage, a fulcrum of runners.

Now I think that I will project out  
and pull in my mummy wrapped in  
cactus paper and pollen ink bottles.  
Yes, ten more minutes will do it.

## RIDGE PATHS

I don't know why there are two  
silver flowers by the olive tree.  
In all the centuries since I came,  
no one has explained it or tried.  
I am not about to start a new pattern.  
I can't really. I am not equipped.

Once when I let the water trickle  
like magnetic moonshine in my native  
mountains  
I filed a thin passage between  
my pointing finger and the artifacts  
of corn farmers in the hollows.

Or at least I wanted to pluck the tunes  
of large stones and hidden sassafras root  
and copperheads and bean poles  
and potato cellars, just for a thesis.

Now I think I will unwind the tense  
coil and lay down on a warm stone  
and let a mist of mountains  
filter though my eyelids.

## BEACH WITH POLL JUMPERS

There are very few reasons  
to continue in this light.

He looked to the beach and beyond.

He ran past the ridge runners  
and the farley pumps.

He looked at the steel groomers  
and laughed for twenty years.

"Look," he said.

No one looked as far as we know.

## DIMINTIDE

One time by the creek at night  
I heard them jabbering  
in the tree tops.  
I had placed my palm on the water,  
to greet the creek.  
I smoothed back my hair with the water.  
Then I heard them.

I looked up to the tree tops.  
Clouds were passing in  
front of a three quarter moon.  
It seemed like the leaf  
bottoms were winking.

I heard whispers.  
The hair on the back of my neck bristled.  
Then there was a fluttering  
about my ears  
and a buzzing sound.

"The delicate song will hold  
you like a silicon web.  
Sing it till dimintide."

Down the creek bank  
a wind brushed its fingers.  
I dreamed of boats on a silver lake.

## THE CENTER OF YOUR CONTINENT

Strike up the warm waters,  
little tom boy.

Circle the wagons and  
dig in the prairie with a stick.  
One whole day on the road  
and there you are  
pretending to be a farmer.

The sky lowered and turned purple  
and fingers of red reached down  
to touch your hair.  
I shouted them back,  
but they ignored me.

Small professor,  
in the center of your continent.

## REPRISE FOR TUTTLESVILLE

Time within the similar vein  
has repeated a tone and a song.  
I really love it!

No, I said time is a swizzle of  
motion and the desire for motion.  
Sell the toys!

OK, let's see, time is half over  
in this life world if we are lucky.  
Oh!

When the rising rivers in Ohio  
failed to make off with the toads,  
the frogs danced and danced  
until my dear sainted best friend  
forgot who I was and poked me in the eye.  
I can tell you,  
I stayed home from school that day.

## KANSAS

"Lay the bricks softly," she said.

"Lay the bricks straight."

Ten years ago I would have listened,  
but now I would like the houses  
to build themselves.

Can a random pile of bricks ...  
silly speculations!

Once I was hitchhiking to Colorado.  
The cars on the Interstate became silent  
as they streamed past  
faster than winter.

A confusion of forms danced up ahead.  
I drank some water, and dust and flowers  
circled around me  
like crystal or amber.

Now I only write about such things.

## CLINTON COUNTY

Ridge runner clouds the spear.

"Look, man, no realize. Put!"

The stones and alpine tires  
are not the ridge runner.

When the water runs sweet,  
oh sweet, sweet, tender mercy.

The hollow is filled now.  
My grandmother with a walking stick.

Copperheads danced when I was born.  
No, really, springs bubbled.

When the rains fall bitter,  
oh bitter, bitter, tender mercy.

A jar in Kentucky or across the border.  
She teared in the corn patch, trembled.

## BURYING GROUND

The old stones are the best,  
they are more like corn fields.

The moss is thicker with dates  
and epitaphs and pocked stone.

Let us set up the fallen stones  
to remember the old farmers.

The children still cut through  
the graveyard to school,

still red-winged blackbirds,  
still bees and violets.

Old ghosts, I don't know,  
rough hands, cider, raccoons.

## MONDAY MORNING

The grim looking glass spins  
and she sees herself only in flashes.

She drums the tune among the wild flowers.  
We will be home soon she tells the seed pods.

Never will she give up the ripe still  
morning, smelling like leaf mold and oranges.

Her day rings the timely tipler.  
It may be a waste, but she likes it.

One year ago the demands were less intense.  
Now the cars are like tornadoes in dim light.

When the river asked her the reason,  
she just splashed, her first swim in twenty  
years.

The quiet pastels, especially peach and light  
orange, and a washed out green like olive trees.

## ARJUNA 2000

A smooth motion on the slippery palm  
and a run through the pillows where calm  
soldiers focus on their inner center  
and rise like leafs in the brown of winter.

The calm soldiers flash their eyes swift  
glint to the falling snow, falling gift,  
through the runners sliced soft bread,  
their calm, swift prayer to the dead.

Can they be these inner warriors when  
their tools are just machines, not men  
but operators, no blood on hands but  
scattered by metal to metal hand gut?

By the streams of Babylon can they weep?  
They are exiles and in a sort of sleep  
hang their battle terminals on the trees,  
let their calm breathing rise and release.

## STORY BOARD

He ran through tangled trees and vines  
wiping garden spiders from his face,  
busting into a clearing to suddenly  
freeze, the blue land crab timed out.

Philo asked like a professor,  
"This is a narrative, isn't it? There is  
nothing political here."

Thirty years later, he met Philo  
at a falafel stand on Mount Carmel.  
The professor of course was older.  
He asked, "Why do you think that  
poetry can affect politics unless  
it motivates?"

The platform on the banyan tree.  
Thick leaves, succulent leaves.  
Questions, questions, questions.  
The air is still, thick and warm.

Thirty years later, on the stairs  
from Hillel, two kittens tumbled.  
Up the hill, two old toms yowled.  
They seemed to be saying,  
"This is my answer, back off."

## A COOL BREEZE

A cool breeze in the desert,  
other widely used figures,  
crowd up against it and run  
fickle through the thorn bushes.

Let's deflect it, a plodding  
amulet, wallet card, hopeful  
clutching time tune roamer,  
no, no, don't be that way.

A cool breeze through trees  
never fails to please, ah  
let's all sing the day, quiet  
over by the blue bay, cliché.

But to play, to let the thread  
spool spin out scarlet and green,  
there is no shame in it, really.

## APPEARANCE

Philo says the rain will fall  
like red birds on a golden floor.  
He knows it will happen.

They parted the trees, looking  
through into a false reading of  
summer and other dialectics.

You may be thinking that I really  
have nothing to say, but aren't  
there silver petals of noon?

Philo is a rogue of sorts.  
He leans against a beech tree,  
not wanting his initials to show.

Long ago he was a dancer.  
He would brutalize his audience  
with devilish toes of print.

He worked in a warehouse once  
and would sing of full fathoms five  
and pearls and eyes and flies.

So his appearance here is not  
for nothing. He is a central  
figure in some drama, whichever.

## PYRRHO AND THE GREEN MAN

He poked his head in.

"Now! Leave now!"

He was very sure of this.

I could tell by his

incisive idiom and

green tie and suspenders.

I didn't leave though.

I would just hang out

on the liberal fringes

quietly stirring heresy

into a cauldron of blue

book covers and web pages.

But later he seemed to

gain some kind of hold.

He was poking around here

and there, spy stuff really.

He wanted to turn me in.

But he was a good man.

Many years later we sat  
together by the ocean  
close to Table Top Mountain.  
He still was a green man,  
but he could see blue  
and he had a kind heart.

## MAYBE PERVERSITY

Where there is a ride to ride  
I will ride it and look, hide,  
and perhaps dance, prance, but  
this is not much, just a door shut,  
just another random line of  
data lost in the knot, love  
is all that it can be, or wizened,  
or my fair night of joy likened  
to a tapestry of rivers and trees  
or a man simply asking, please.

Where there is a story to tell  
I will listen, not tell, well  
below the horizon of assertion  
silent waters of sweet perversion,  
or maybe perversity, are the way  
I would have them, if they stay  
and provide, hide, in the web  
of a day just tumbled, just dead,  
a story that tells itself, nature as  
the book we read reading us.

## LIKE SOUL FLIGHT

The size of the giants, well it  
was the size of the giants,  
and clouds for blankets.

The obligation of self definition  
is said to be a freedom and to  
be free from it a self made freedom.

The struggle for a calm belief,  
a belief in which to rest, can only  
be found in suspension in dim morning.

Another one, being unto death,  
true, but not worth dwelling on  
except for planning purposes.

If you do no harm, do as you will.  
This is a sort of freedom, at least  
a freedom to dance on a wild hill.

But I would do no harm. I don't  
want to do any harm or to be harmed.  
A crystal bowl in clear water.

When the river bank fell away  
I saw the gopher's hole and the  
little ones in brown baskets.

When the basic functions start to  
shut down, where then is freedom?  
In a flight like oranges?

No, let's build a solid house.  
It may be a shack but it's paid for.  
The chimney sprouts silver feathers.

Back to the topic. We can see that  
twenty years is a long time. But  
forty could be so much better.

I demand, I demand, I demand.  
The soft bed feathers prickle at  
least a little in the cool noon.

OK, freedom is just another word.

I know. I am just quoting.

Freedom, ah, freedom, gentle freedom.

Now we can feel it like an old  
insight, like breath and spirit,  
like soul flight and winter chimes.

## MOTION STUDY WITH ART STUDENTS

Now there was down there in  
the Dimmis Don Divine  
a middle-aged girl,

a middle-aged girl with  
frightful curls like vines  
and eyes a little bright.

You might object that she  
was a woman, not a girl,  
but she would not agree.

She had eyes a little bright  
and she could dance free  
like a nude in blue light,

but to her it was not a painting,  
it was her body and the movement  
of color patches and sources.

## MEFUS

Mefus was an ogre boy,  
a lad of the low lands.  
He built his house with oranges  
in a city of apple trees.

Mefus was a man of means,  
a king of the high stones.  
He had his nursery among pines cones  
in a country of beechnut trees.

Mefus was an old sage hermit,  
a scholar of the hidden ways.  
He pitched his tent in sand dunes  
in a county known for tulip trees.

Mefus was an uptime spirit,  
a ghost of broad textual tracks.  
He wrote his poems in ether air  
in an otherworld of puzzle makers.

## MONITOR

He finally got out of himself.  
Sitting at a console he monitored  
the flow of virtual and real worlds.  
Configurations of language, experience,  
and desire like exotic ecosystems  
spread, then died off, then suddenly  
expanded again and then were gone.  
"It's just history," he said to  
his inner friend and he smiled  
and leaned back and his own  
configuration quietly glowed on  
the screen like light through trees.

## MUSH AND MILK

Does a fiction need a purpose?  
Is it really a fiction?

It is a text or an image that  
is used as if a truth, a fiction.

How do we use these odd texts?  
To pass time? To think about things?

When we have items pegged, we feel  
like we can rest for a few minutes.

The need to have a working map,  
it is a survival instinct.

But more, to have a song, a story,  
we feel at ease if we know they are there.

So one more spin on experience  
needs to be sorted and listed.

One more evening in the flat,  
at least one funny story or jingle.

The old fallen fictions didn't really  
make more sense, they were just familiar.

So do the books on my orienting shelf  
define a project like fire songs.

But withdraw them all, just sparks and  
shadows and hollow breathing and pains.

He baked me my bread and brought me my ale.  
He sat by the fire and told me many a fine tale.

## BEYOND

He came out the other end  
and, as it happened, it was fall.

Leaf piles for the garden and  
good, black compost for the beds.

She understood him and he understood  
that she had created it all.

At first he had hoped for something  
beyond, but it ended up very human.

Human creations, ah, human creations,  
all of them, except for leaves and trees,

except for cool, crisp air, except  
for everything except the house and

the book and the road and the family.  
She had created those in secret.

## LOVE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

She says she wants to.  
I can't say I saw it coming,  
but I will put forward a thesis.

She is a little distant,  
wanting to like playing tennis  
in a still forest with crickets.

She wants to, yes, she wants to.  
I am not denying it, just wait a while.  
It is leaf raking time.

Two years ago today she took her stand.  
She was a little hostile,  
kept looking my way and squinting.

The autumn was beautiful that year,  
clear blue and cold with red maples,  
red, red, red, and oaks yellow.

I wanted to then. I planned it all out.  
She moved a little then, like the old  
poet said, motion within motion.

But I am two years older now, and  
I have just started a new correspondence  
course, love in the Middle Ages.

## MY SARASOTA

Simply put, this is a put on,  
this is a show tune, this is a rum dance.

The stems will thicken  
to branches and then to trunks.

This is a projection  
and I am just slivers and palm prints.

It is a repetition, we are  
playing the same game that others played.

The children are growing up,  
our bodies are rebelling, we are old.

The sky has longer shadows, precise  
contrasts, depth, it is fall.

And there are so many distractions  
to choose from, such wealth.

The storm is passing and we want  
to hold something that defines storms.

Talking about creating texts  
has become the most interesting text.

It took me twenty years to really  
decide on what others consider obvious.

This is discursive, yes, not like  
a wrinkled hand resting on an old knee.

Wrinkled hands typing at a keyboard  
to make a living by stages.

I drove by a field of pumpkins.  
The vines were dead.

I watched children playing soccer  
in a valley as hawks flew over.

I walked around a tree that  
had fallen across a path in the woods.

## THE ARTICHOKE ARE BLOOMING

The artichokes are blooming  
and the yard is full of small machines.

The artichokes are blooming  
and the streets drip with slow honey.

It is a grand time for pickers,  
a grand time for the rising moon.

She sits down in her sheets and  
lets the sweat drip, lets air

prickle out yellow follicles  
until she is a rising motion

sweeping through the hallways  
and the green borders, past the fences.

The artichokes are blooming  
and the counters have counted noon.

## WINDOW TO WORD LAND

My cloths don't fit, a fit, not fit.  
My pants are short, short with her.  
Day time night time some time.

March, march, no, slouch, slouch,  
home in the dark, squint from the  
headlights, bent, lent to her.

Speed up, speed, time to market,  
smarter, not harder, swelling, swell,  
my pants are short, short with her.

Sit in the box, window to word land,  
sit, snit, type to type it,  
my cloths don't fit, a fit, not fit.

## JOHNNY'S PILES

The piles were  
added to my order  
and I can see that  
there will never be  
a better day for  
barn storms or the  
real duty of all  
women, to love me.

The piles pile up  
and never a delivery  
before its time  
so I run out to  
the back shed and  
instruct the straw  
on the ultimate  
imperative, to love me.

The picturesque piles  
on pallets are what  
they are, why fight it,  
especially when the  
day is like lemons  
and there are so many  
ways to do what really  
matters, to love me.

## GRANDPA JONES

Stopped at the corner he watched  
a moving whisper of tall grass  
as if it were an icon, a mandala,  
quietly, with grave attention.

The birds in the graveyard seemed  
to be blue birds, then they were brown,  
but they were blue birds flying.  
He wanted them to land on his grave.

Comfortable cloths, books, movies,  
a garden patch, a walk in cool weather,  
driving through farm land, book scouting,  
his family in a simple house talking.

## GREETING THE BEECH

We went up to the woods behind  
the house to say hello.

The dutchman's britches were gone,  
but the wild geraniums were there,  
and the virginia blue bells  
down in a dip we could see  
from the trail.

We circled down the hill  
to the gray old man,  
sixty feet tall, his skin  
marked with old messages,  
of historical interest, I said.

We got down to it and  
patted its smooth elephant hide.

"Hello, tree!", I said, and  
"Hello, tree!" from you  
three feet lower.

We couldn't reach the leaves,  
but the seedlings were there  
and their leaves krinkled like  
paper as they should, "See?"

Then we continued around  
the hill past the tree  
with the hollow, the  
entrance to the elf city,  
I said, but I don't think  
you believed me, even then.

## A CROOKED LITTLE HOUSE

It sits in an old orchard,  
but the fruit trees are long gone.

Now it is ash, white pine,  
and maples, huge, slowly hollowing.

Old farm house, field stone foundation,  
dug out basement, sloping floors.

I sit on the stone bench and look  
up to Sugar Loaf, white, blue trim.

Be careful when you walk, the house  
will shake down, old village street.

It's a poor house, but I am not poor,  
well relatively poor, maybe poor, poor.

It's sometimes musty, but we filter the air,  
sometimes it helps, old mildew, damp.

There is no shame in it. It may be a shack but it's paid for. We're simple.

We claim postmodern diversity,  
now it is retro, back off, house facist.

I love my old house, can't give it up,  
crooked old house among the minimansions.

It works, look, electricity, water, heat,  
computers, video, stove, plumbing.

It is an enclosed space where we do things,  
rest, read, live our life, keep our stuff.

It has a small garden with too much shade,  
bare patches in the grass, silence.

I am not my house, I am not measured by  
house, here, look at my zip code.

Cry for the old houses for they have  
fallen, but we can patch them up.

## IN A RENT WEEK

He lifted his head to blue,  
parting reeds like curtains,  
puzzled at tumbling clouds,  
squinting like money due,  
like ghosts through walls,  
in a rent week, past plodding,  
he said, "Anger is possible."

Night came hiding its danger,  
mists praying over roads,  
swiftly, no thought for day,  
wispig past buildings at speed,  
puzzled at falling stars,  
past bending, in a rent week,  
"At last, at last, anger."

## THE FATHER LIKE THUNDER

What's this all about, little boy?

The father came serious, dark thunder.

Just living, living within the limits,  
language, experience, desire, that's all.

But the father came again, thunder,  
the heat of searing, little boy.

The boy dove into the flowers, down low,  
stroking petals, silent beneath leaves.

The father passed over like a shadow.  
Boy, boy, I just wanted to know, boy.

## CODIFYING

What are you now, twelve years old?  
It seems a long time since you first came home.

Your mother started you on goat milk. I should  
know.

I had to go out in the cold to get it,

sleeping at the wheel as I came back from the  
goat farm.

You were not an easy baby, I tell you, but  
lucky

for us we remember the good things, or the  
mysteries.

Like your first laughs, so deep I thought some

changeling elf was having a little joke on me.

And when you began to speak, spooky echos,

like winds had formed a face to speak.

I still find it hard to believe, you so small

taking on the ancient words,  
but it is the most natural thing in the world.

Remember, you started bouncing on my poor  
old man's belly? I would lift you up with my  
feet

and then, vwump!, let you fall back down  
again.

Then I had to get my exercises, ten daughter  
push ups.

And you wanted to fly. I would fly you around  
the  
house, through the rooms, up the stairs and then

collapse on the bed. "Again, Daddy, again."  
"Again, again." Your Mom would read book  
after book to you, then "Again, again."  
You don't know that you kept us going some  
times.

It was the responsibility. And we always had a common interest, you.

We always went to Victoria's for your grilled cheese sandwich. I don't know when that started.

Or up to Gambier to the bookstore. You would ride in your car seat, the whole 45 minutes without complaining,

watching for cows, horses, pigs, or black wagons with little girls in bonnets. You would play in the fort

in the bookstore right above the philosophy books.

Then we would drive home as the sun was setting.

## GEORGE'S RHETORIC

I caught George once making some sweeping rhetorical statements to his potato vines, something about the importance of resisting the blight, fighting back against decay and such encouragement as he felt it necessary to provide.

But in general, he was not much for grand statements. Something about the local elections maybe, or how his kids were doing in school. Not many knew he was a philosopher, or culture critic, or whatever you call it these days.

Once I tried to pin him down on it. Here he was publishing such tomes as "Oppositional Linguistic Modes of Animated Rodents and Red Planet Neonoids" when what he really cared about was aphids or some good chile or chasing his wife around the trailer at sunset.

He tried to explain it in his way. Something about the dense packing of everydayness or the deep metastructure of garage bands or the silence beneath the noise of endless silence, I don't know. Finally, he just sat on a log and said, "Look, I got to make a living some way."

## TERESA

You know that big old boulder on top of Sugarloaf? That's where I found her, sitting on top. I don't know how she got up there.

When I got up next to it, I paused, looked around at the bare trees. She had a look like miles down the road, no coat, hands in her sleeves.

She said, "I have been looking for some new enthusiasm, some big run to last a few more years, like taichi, or taking old men home."

## FESCUES

Joseph had a need for indirection,  
his rivets torn like steal meanders,  
his longing looks down sag floor halls  
like pictures of russets floating in  
green pools, his machines running up  
to feathered futons like spike muled  
slings ripping bags of wilted fescues.

Joseph needed lists, like: two hazel  
nut trees bearing no nuts, a rusty  
paint can with two brushes caked  
into the dried yellow paint, three  
books on agriculture in semiarid  
regions, a magnifying glass, two  
small pocket knives, a wheat penny.

Joseph did his needful work in corners  
while festooned pontiffs spiraled by  
to the sound of tingling and banging  
copperware, where covert cominglers  
worked out their dry and tender bargains  
in broom closets of heated alabaster  
spiriting blue in corporate fountains.

## BLACKBERRY PIE

She lets her hand delay  
in the cool flour, light brown

and smooth like the image  
of her other self roaming.

The red-winged blackbirds  
are flocking, down in the

orchard, the cold is cool,  
the green is up and sunlight.

She too can fly and when she  
does red and black and yellow.

It was a storm last night  
pricking through the brambles.

She would make a blackberry pie  
from canned blackberries.

Last summer, she canned twenty  
pints on the day the letter came.

She waited two months to respond  
each word a thorn and a sweet berry.

She had mashed fresh berries  
and drunk them with sugar.

No more letters the whole winter,  
but blackberries, blackberries.

She opens a jar, the juice stains  
her hands, her mouth, her tongue.

## STEP BY STEP

The day breaks open like eggs  
in cartons, shaken good,  
better than imagined, the  
sunrise sizzles, and it  
smells like bacon  
in a vegan's house.

Coffee would be better.

It is a day for the old  
moon walkers to assemble,  
to lobby for a mission to Mars.  
God, we need it. Don't we?

Up the hill, down the hill,  
my Joan goes.

We drove out to the park in  
winter, the corn stubbles  
below snow on flat fields,  
to steam up windows,  
six hours from the Great Lakes.

The silly things we do,  
oh, the silly things we do.  
(The portly prince dances  
around the tommy tanker.)

We need some serious attention,  
some dedicated time, some well  
thought out plans,  
some charts to show the  
hill gods.

## TENDER DROPS

She pressed the tender ribs and  
bruises of years of waiting.

She waited, but kept herself busy,  
spinning out shards of waiting,

making of waiting a universal figment  
until at last the end of waiting

would be a sort of death,  
sauntering in friendly with terror.

We would call it mental illness,  
squeezing out the tender drops of

pain, but we are wrong, the psycho  
babble is wrong, the PhDs are wrong.

## EASY PIECES

He walked out into the cold morning  
inexplicably happy, light, dancing.

But why not? Does happiness have  
to be so rare? But not this easy

happiness. How can he justify it?  
Hormones, it must just be hormones.

## NEEDED LIGHTS

Priss out the stars, lost behind  
comets or moving magnetic winds  
like a fake metaphor that must  
be saved from any trace of ripe  
days. No, these are needed lights,  
to fill her firmament, waters in  
which rest swims in green, where  
water spouts drop their load of fish.

The lobster eyes in shallows below  
lamps off Key Largo and the shrimp  
shine, already salted in their brine,  
must hold them home and fill their  
meanders with a hope, despite a ring  
stone or sacred pledge of no combat.  
Still she must eat them tonight, with  
a delicate sauce of butter and lemon.

## SOME INSTRUCTIONS

Do this:

Go down to the creek,  
somewhere where you can reach the water.

Lay down on the bank.

Don't worry about sand in your hair  
or getting your cloths wet.

Now reach your arm out  
and rest it just on the surface  
of the water,

just barely on the surface.

Feel the movement,  
trigs and leaves lightly  
brushing against your arm,  
maybe minnows or those  
long legged bugs that can  
walk on the water.

Notice movements and sounds  
and your slight effect.

It is an old metaphor.

## THINGS TO DO WITH WORDS

I notice that somehow he wants to use words to recover what is lost.

She, however, wants to define a topology of hunger and longing.

That other one, he wants to build another world from old fairy tales.

And she would like an irony of word play for elite entertainment.

Now that insurance guy he would set out a comforting obfuscation.

She actually wants to change things, to subvert expectations, create myths.

This fellow over here just wants to record moments before he forgets them.

## GEORGE AT HEAVEN'S GATE

The mystery box opened just one more level and there he stood at his life review.

He was a little cranky, having just died and all, so as the episodes flitted by

he couldn't help wondering why he was being subjected to this. His life was a reasonable

life, as it showed up. He hadn't done anything very bad, or very good, for that matter.

He had been puzzled most of his life and most of his enthusiasms proved to be a little off

some mark, but he couldn't quite see the mark. He had died of a heart attack, 80% hereditary.

Those ancestors, God bless them, it wasn't their fault either, so he watched it all

a little bemused and a little irritated.  
The being of light sensing this was kind.

So it went on through and he regretted some things, was happy about some, overall he was sad.

He wanted to ask who set up this whole scheme,  
but the being of light didn't seem so inclined,  
so he just let it slip and started in on yet another realm of language, experience, and desire.

## FOREVER GIRL

She beat her head against  
the logic book, loving it,  
sorting out the yarn ball  
just one more thin strand.

She loved puzzles and patterns  
and would trace them out  
with fingers like tracing  
bones on the face of a lover.

Clean and pure, economical,  
and they are practical, look,  
life is dense with them,  
more than we can ever trace.

So she kept on, tracing and  
sorting out strands, oblivious,  
on out to the forever reaches  
of tender calculation.

## THREE WAYS OF NOT KNOWING

Here is a direct statement:

He thought in the forest light,  
dappled and filtered through leaves,  
that this text should be true,  
but he didn't know. How could  
he know? But he wanted it to be true.

Here is an illustration:

A voice that could be his own voice  
agreed to answer some questions.  
The voice assured him of certain  
future events and of a pleasant future  
in some pleasant otherworld.

Here is some indirection:

Raking leaves, sometimes twigs and  
small branches get mixed in.  
How will this affect the leaf shredders?  
At night the village sends a truck  
to suck up the dead leaves.

## PYRRHO AND THE GREEN MAN, FISHING

They were down by the fishing creek.  
He gave him a pained look. He said,

"Pyrrho, you evasive bastard. Everyone else is clear. You just equivocate."

Pyrrho didn't like to be pinned down,  
but this was a dear friend, someone to trust.

He said, "It's simple. I am just a skeptic.  
I suspend judgement on what I don't know.

I can't get beyond infinite regress, diversity,  
relativity, assumption, to some fixed certainty.

I enjoy speculation and fantasy, but I try  
to remember that it is speculation and fantasy.

I live within the limits of language, experience,  
and desire, as best as I can, without worry.

This is a lot of territory to move around in, but I can't help wishing there were more."

His friend reeled in his line. Sighed. The clouds were a deep contrast of late afternoon light.

It was a lot of theatrics, this big life drama, for the obvious, the covert dogma of the age.

## SHOCKING NONSENSE

He unbuckled the belt of Orion last night, despite city lights, in the cool air, impersonal boy with prickled skin. Not since the Age of Anxiety has there been such a confluence of sources filling the simple vacancies, past sin, past care, past light, past passing. No, no permanence has forced its steel, busting open doors and running through bramble walled mazes, no flacid poke weed afternoon, no hopeful soft probe to the mothered planets, no pricked feel, no rumpus room discoveries.

## TENDER RULE

She made two demands that afternoon.  
He must surrender his force or die alone.  
He must rise to the occasion or whither.

He muddled off into a strangely warm  
December  
among the brown leaves and brown trunks  
over soft earth up to the high boulder.

She had regrets. She hadn't meant to push  
him that far, not all the way to quarry stones.  
She was a tender ruler, mindful of nuances.

She found him at last below the brown canes of a  
wild rose bush, smelling of leaf mold and smoke,  
led him home, fed him tea and biscuits.

## JOSEPH DISCOVERS GENDER

He could respect that  
they didn't need men.  
Because he didn't  
need men either.

He could respect that  
they were attracted to women.  
Because he was also  
attracted to women.

But then things broke down  
because he was a man.

"We need a DNA donor.  
Are you interested?  
No touching, though."

Now Teresa loved men,  
at least she had learned to.  
He loved Teresa,  
but his DNA was useless to her.

At times he was a woman.

At times she was a man.

He said, "This schema does not hold all the instances."

He was sometimes both a man and a woman, but his DNA was useless then.

He said, "Social roles and biological roles are not the same."

She said, "They never taught us this in school."

## MY CULTURE

I wonder sometimes if Western civilization is really that evil, now wait, just listen.

To each their private irony, even decadence, even relativism, even fundamentalism, now wait.

I see a buzz of repelling electrons and human rights as the nucleus. Just listen.

They all want that much and may be willing to grant that much, now wait, just listen.

Here, just here, force may be needed, now wait, just listen. OK, speak. You have the right.

## ACROSS FROM VICTORIA'S

He sits on a bench by the peace pole  
looking across to Victoria's Parlor.

It is a blue day and cool and the maple  
leaves are scattered. His coat is warm.

He thinks, "Some day an old man will  
sit beside me and tell me what is."

For years he has sat here. No stranger  
has ever sat down beside him and winked  
and looked with him across to Victoria's.  
If it happened just once ...

This old man with winking eyes must  
tell him after the years have passed

something, an inkling, a nice phrase  
that cuts through, some secret, something.

It is a blue day. The oak leaves mix in  
wind devils of maple leaves. It is cool.

## OLD MAN JEREMAND

Many were the days in that farm time  
when the corn was tasseling  
and some beans were in,  
the early lettuce all gone,  
that he would go out to the woodlot  
and dig in the humus  
and smell and squeeze.

He was a druid of sorts, I suppose.  
I know he never went to church  
except for weddings and funerals.

My grandfather visited him once  
to witness and bring him home.  
He was very gracious in his way,  
offering some buttermilk and cornbread,  
the best in the county, he said.

In the winter his cellar was full  
of potatoes and Mason jars.  
His tobacco was in.  
Then he would get out some old textbooks

from a used bookstore he once  
visited up in Louisville.

Outside an old truck was often heard,  
rumbling off toward Albany.

# AGAINST THE MATHEMATICIANS

The sea oats are delicate.

Don't pick them!

I want to see the girl

I loved when I was fifteen,

just once more.

She had a saucy mouth,

was totally sane.

We stood by the pool and

watched the skinny dippers,

but not us,

we were barely touching.

We went into an old garage

filled with books.

The old man would come and

explain things to us.

I would hold her hand

tenderly as he explained

how there were gaps

between the rational numbers

and that forms contain  
forms contain forms.

I lost the chance to ask  
him my big questions  
because I  
didn't know what to ask.  
He disappeared when  
I was sixteen.  
The garage has cars  
in it now, I believe.

## BUTTERFLY BUSH

I watched him land just this side of sixty.  
Stars appeared in the recovery room,  
galaxies and stars and beings of light.  
They can breath in the vacuum of space.  
Maybe they don't need to breath.

I think of him often now and his last  
breaths and that last butterfly he saw  
by the butterfly bush. He was tired.  
He couldn't explain. When we got back he  
was gone, and then his breathing was gone.

## VARIOUS SENSATIONS

She rode the moped out the  
country trail, no old men  
leaning out car windows,  
just wind and sun and blue.

She loves wind and sun and  
blue and thunderstorms and  
winter brown and spring green.  
It doesn't get old, it is so old.

She rode. The yellow was almost  
dripping light, washing light.  
Wave and wave down the country  
trail until the old stone shed.

It was cool inside and dark.  
She laid on a cot and just traced  
her body with her fingers lightly,  
cool, light striping through the

spaces between the boards in the  
door, she fell asleep and snored.  
I found her that way and waited  
until dark and then it was just

the moon shining through the  
boards, touching her body quietly.  
When she woke in the morning  
she found me snoring on the floor.

## FLOW ON, RIVER

What do we say to the timers  
and the rose waters?

Will the mud banks yield to  
the gentle probings?

Is a real river a blue stripe?  
We must let them be.

We must rise to the lust stained trees,  
ruttled with crumbling dust,

a sweat drop in the dim  
light puffing what is left.

No one seems to accept the thesis  
of obfuscation as self creation.

To stack word on obscure word  
as a method of self definition?

Once in the river course, we slapped  
the waters with our palm and said,

"Flow on, river, flow on."

It was a grand gesture.

## A CERTAIN PEACE

There is a certain peace.  
No great projects anymore.  
No great unifying vision,  
just various and diverse  
configurations.

There is no harm in it.  
Still what has been  
learned is there.  
Still what has been  
desired is there.  
Still some progress  
is possible,  
small improvements,  
small steps,  
small moves.  
Still death and hope  
for after death are there.

Let the sequence unfold.

Bless us, bless us,  
in the deep well  
of our everydayness.

## PHILO DISPENSES ADVICE

Science comes: "You are doing well. Just broaden your concept of experience and be more aware of consequences."

Religion comes: "Give up dogmatism. Emphasize moral and spiritual experience. Preserve your rituals and myths as art."

Politics comes: "You have made some progress. Now go and fully implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

Business comes: "You have created wealth and emphasized serving customers. Good. But now you must balance people and profits."

Art comes: "You have enriched life and expressed alienation. Now celebrate as well as mourn, embrace diversity, and make room for the amateur."

Philosophy comes: "You have devolved to various skepticisms. Accept it. Give up grand schemes. Offer a service, maybe using language to solve problems."

## CELEBRATING SUSAN

It was winter. There were  
snowmen lumbering about.

She was a ball of light,  
happiness in a crying time,

a memory of hippy girls,  
earth mother skirts,

herbal tea, tingling bells,  
incense and hopes, oh, hopes.

The car sped up behind her.  
They hate her for mixing colors.

Those good sons scream by  
as she makes her driveway.

Her heart pounds. How can love  
lead to hate, hate, hate!

The Russians came and the Germans  
came and the Africans came and

the Irish came and the Israelis  
came and the soldiers came and

the children came to the Shrine  
above the blue waters and the

peace they felt, the peace they felt.  
She greeted them on the stone porch.

Oh, sweet little child of my dreams.  
Hush, hush, don't you cry.

She fed the little thing goat milk.  
I waited for you, dear, I waited for you.

Setting up at the fair to sell them  
peace and diversity, she is out there,

enthusiastic, talking, smiling, dead  
tired, and the taxes are late.

A dash through a San Diego apartment,  
a dance in shadows as dusk fell,

the light through the curtains and  
hair hanging down, movements in the dark.

She shouts, he mumbles, she shouts,  
he mumbles, sweet man, dear lovely woman.

## PARADISE VALLEY

Driving over the rise at night  
the valley opens with lights.

And the tall old chapel on the  
hill is lit up, and he sighs.

Home, home to the creek and the  
terraces and the college hill,

home to the small restaurants and the  
library and the bank and the house,

home to the bookshop, the small town  
grocery store, the burying ground,

home to history or some view of  
history, to self-created belonging,

the only real place in the world,  
to the myths of commonplace things.

## THE DATABASES OF EDEN

George was a spirit now, poor soul.  
But it wasn't bad. His body had been

something of a problem for some time  
and now he was free of that at least.

And a few questions had been answered.  
For example, we do survive in some form.

But as to the why and the wherefore  
either he wasn't one of the initiated

or there simply was no why and wherefore.  
Also he had discovered a skill for the

new world. He could talk to those in bodies  
and hear their thoughts in a way that

didn't make him insane with their voices.  
So he had been recruited for a job.

But why work? He didn't need to. Somehow he had gotten into some energy pattern

that just fed from the surrounding energies without effort or struggle or pain.

But the God's honest truth was that he was bored and he had some sympathy for

those poor earth slobs slobbering through their exertions, excretions, and exhortations.

And it was just a part-time job. He could still look around here, wherever here was.

His first client was a certain Mrs. Jones of the furry jones and the jones measures.

They had shared a few joint illusions out toward the branching book leaf pile.

You enter the leaf veins, you know, then ... well, enough of that. They had shared

that which can be shared here and went on.  
But she had this enigma, this twist:

I was just a little girl, no harm was done  
to me, I was at ease in the fort of breezes.

This was before the rains stopped, before  
the climate shift that made everything brown.

Up in the hill fort I met a stranger. Yes, it  
must always be a stranger. Those you know  
best

and love most never tell you anything beyond  
how to get on and how much they love you,

which is nice, but anyways, this stranger,  
he was a dusty old desert bum, a stylite:

Look, little girl. I will lift out my cloak.  
Look into the dark and you will see sparks,

just sparks at first, but concentrate hard,  
like the sun raises ghosts in the desert sand

you must mix sparks with something of your  
own.

You will fill in the rest from your treasures:

A scholar sitting in a formal rock garden  
tapping at his tablet with a stylus, flicking

though the wireless void to the great databases  
of Eden, the texts thought and produced,

explanations, stories, songs, images, heart  
breaking rushes of empathies, searing desires,

aches, hatred, the bloody hand spent and tired  
collapsed on a corpse in turn made a corpse

by passing scavengers, a little girl huddled  
below cedar branches sobbing in her skirts.

Tap, tap, tap. He tapped up an old Marx  
Brothers  
movie, laid the tablet against a rock, napped

and watched, napped and watched. He laughed  
loudly, I think, but it came out like silence.

The stylite closed his cloak. His beard was  
grizzled and dirty, his sandals dusty and worn.

That night I could see the surrounding country  
from the tower, lit by the moon, shadows of

goats and old carts and the tents of the  
merchants  
moving in and out like diaphragms of black  
silk.

I think I could see the stylite going down  
the trail in and out of trees, toward the desert.

Now here's the thing. You know I am one of the sleepers. And when I sleep I even dream.

And my dreams seem to be of the earth and of an old man living in a trailer in the desert.

From time to time young women come and he pays them to sit in the heat as dusk comes.

He lifts up an old blanket and tells them of sparks. The ones who see the scholar get double.

So George spoke. Old man, what is your name? Philo, I believe, a strange name for Arizona.

You know we survive. I am one who watches from here, wherever here is, and I wonder about you.

Why the young women? You don't touch them.  
Are you a monk? They are quite beautiful.

The old man grunted. You must have been a satyr.

I was a satyr, but I am well beyond that now.

But I still like their company and their fresh minds. I need their images, and their thin ankles,

deep brown with silver bracelets, and their breath smelling of peaches and apples and honey.

Somehow George could understand. Tell me, old man.

Have you been to Palestine? To a hill fort?

The old man slowly smiled. He didn't have a beard any more and he was fairly clean.

That young girl, a merchant's daughter, she was the first one to see the scholar and his tablet.

She gave me a lot to think about, a lot to think about. She was beautiful too and her

eyes were cats eyes, deep, deep blue on the stone wall of the hill fort, the wind blowing

her head covering in the moonlight as I went back

across the Jordan. Those were difficult times.

The client wanted to know. What is so important about the scholar? What about the tablet?

The old man muttered. I almost have the technology worked out. It is well within reach now.

To look at me you wouldn't know. I am very rich,  
very rich, but I must usually keep out of sight.

I have foundations. I fund research. I collect texts. I start companies and mentor poets.

I hire young women for what they can imagine. I am crusty and old. I ache and I don't know.

I watch the young lovers and the old lovers. The smooth skin of young lovers is pure,

but the wrinkled old skin of the old lovers still tingles and is knowing and beyond delusion.

I am no longer a lover in the bodily sense. I love images and patterns and texts and time,

aching, lonely, tick-tocking time, that old bugger,  
and I love the lovers in their ignorant hope.

But the client was impatient, for a spirit.  
But what's this all about? What was I to you?

You, yes you. You were not typical, no, and yet  
you really don't know, do you? Strange.  
Strange.

Little girls, little girls. Look, that scholar does  
not exist. I am that scholar. I am making him.

I have been making him from your sparks for  
five hundred years. But you know what?

It's not going to work. I've got the tablet and  
the stylus. I've got the wireless network.

I've collected the texts for all these years.  
I've got the best graphics and movie archives

and random poem generation software of every  
type and description. It's all hidden in my cave.

The old man for a moment was teary eyed, rare for him, I think, given what he had seen and done.

He looked out his trailer window. He looked up.

We're not there, George thought. He continued.

But something I do not have and I will never have,  
I do not have those God damned databases of Eden.

## THE HILL FORT

The crusty brown and winded olive trees  
are a match for the secret cool rooms

of stone where on mattresses the young wives  
are what their husbands dream in fevers.

Their children have large knowing eyes, but  
they do not know, only the breezes know.

It is stone cold in the winter, but they  
wrap and shiver and do what they must.

The wives dream of far away hills without  
these grunting lords with their greasy beards.

But once on a spring morning this one was  
a gentle lover. He looked and touched lightly.

His wife stood by a window and the wind was  
like  
a lover she never dreamed of, with soft hands.

An old man tends the goats in the spring field.  
He sees on the walls a young girl running.

He remembers his children and how they  
laughed  
and how his young wife was a fire and cool  
water.

The olives must be crushed, some must be  
preserved  
in brine, some are eaten fresh as they are

beaten from the trees on blankets and canvas.  
The whole family is there gathering into sacks.

The outside of the buildings look rough and  
poor, but inside such cool delights and riches.

The young boy was allowed to hear the poets  
recite all through the night by fire light.

Their words were like waves and like fire  
brands

and like swift horses and like honey or sweet oil.

Buy low, sell high. Save for when the times are lean. Don't be afraid to risk. Bide your time.

The second month of the siege the leaders escaped through secret tunnels and left them to die.

For no reason the enemy left just in time for the harvest and as the cisterns were almost dry.

I am afraid. These secret words or public stones can protect me, can they not? Shout, rattle.

They come to us and sell. Then others come and buy.

We do not go far except a few go over the hill.

The computer screen flickers in the old city by the sea. The tourists use their cards. Phones ring.

So many came, Turks, Crusaders, British, and now we are here, below the cool, stone ceilings.

A little boy from Ohio runs up to the top and looks out across the blue sea. Smells like fish.

This stiff weed is brown now. It will be green again, hanging from the aquaduct, by the dry marsh.

I am not home. I am far from home. This is not my home. I cannot make it home. I am not at home.

The stone wall is dripping water now. A main is broken and the water rushes down the hill stairs.

My, my, my little man. I will love you as I can. Just be good, be contrite. I will rock you through the night.

He is very hot, ten kilometers from town in a  
dusty  
hole with sun, and vipers about, vipers about.

Cool corporate halls know no place or time or  
race.

Once you are in the office, where are you?

She telecommutes from Tel Aviv to Spring  
Sandusky  
by the river, where pokeweed comes out every  
spring.

Blur this together, a Crusader chanting Pali,  
yes,  
and a vipor biting the polar bear, no, a dust  
storm.

This is a easy hall with many private rooms off  
it  
where you can pray ancient prayers or play new  
games

or lick tofu gravy from a lover's tummy while  
dreaming  
of Mars, red warrior Mars, with its pink deadly  
sky.

I have two grams of Moon dust. It set me back  
a  
pretty penny. And here is a stone from Haifa  
Zoo.

I picked it up to remember you. I picked it up  
after  
the winter rain that washed away that awful  
stain.

They don't have Wendy's there. It is a God  
aweful  
place, but the falafel is good, better than New  
York.

The tour bus came to the bottom of the hill. We  
would

have to walk up the crumbling stairs. Bring your

water bottles. It will be hot. It was cooler in the lower levels where the cisterns were. The windows were

narrowed for archers first and then for rifles. Thick

stone was always a good choice before cruise missiles.

She slipped a few bills to the tour guide and hid until night fall. It was very dark but there was

some moonlight, so she did fine. No wild animals

came and she stood in the high window in a breeze.

She pressed up against the stone. It was very smooth

from years of, what? Touches? Brushing up  
against?

She heard hyennas, but for some reason she  
was not  
afraid. They were far off. They would not come  
here.

## AIR BOMBED BY LADYBUGS

I was working hard in the office when that old con came by, winked, admiring my scam.

I am so sorry that the day will not be like any other day, just a day with a staircase

and a clock ticking and a river caught fire and old enthusiasms renewed to the light of

roasting cinnamon trees and a car run from air in a country of well breathing citizens.

I really am sorry. So don't tread on me. Don't watch me. Don't monitor my electronics.

Don't count my lines of code. Don't make me virtual or just in time. Don't fire me.

She burns for you, really. The old con winks. What a sweet, sweet December, he whistles.

Cool off in the farm pond in the cow pasture surrounded by high bramble bushes and wire.

Run the path up to the road. You need the exercise, God knows. Don't be so lazy.

I have converted to polo shirts. Things are more casual now. We are getting things done.

A thirty minute commute and all the time in the world, lovely, lovely, the sun sets.

And in the deep woods there are secret meetings.

The signs are exchanged and the bones bruised.

The feelings are running high in the council room. We must be a wealthy trio, sing, sing.

I was falsely accused. I was chased by well meaning individual contributors through halls

with copies of paintings advertising museums and art dealers and auction houses and galleries.

They can monitor your key strokes you know. They can install cameras in computer screens.

My office door was unlocked when I came in. Mysterious janitors pushed large boxes on wheels.

I used my credit card at the check out counter and the baby behind me wrote down my number.

I went skinny dipping in the farm pond at night, was chewed on by catfish, was air bombed by ladybugs.

When I came home joggers were circling my house in search of open windows. Lightning bugs hovered.

## JULY

Midsummer rooms heavy with humid heat,  
mildew in the air, wrung out and tired, wistful,  
uncertain - a tremendous effort has failed.

No people in the village streets, no one to  
talk to, no one to get to know, just fan noise  
and hot labor and bellowing entertainments.

Are we disappointed? Does life disappoint?  
Bodies threaten. No future, just future days.  
Do we wind down? Just do what we have to?

Defeated old people dust our house with  
cliches.

But in the mirror winking eyes, sardonic grins,  
funny faces.

A nymph dances through. A grizzly bear spins  
by.

Twenty or thirty years is really a long time.  
Children are no longer children. Life is life.  
Needs are urgent. Spirits fill the hollows.

## THE OLD CON

At Black Hand Gorge down a side path  
above an old quarry filled with water

we sat on separate benches, two strangers.  
It was the only place he would meet:

You don't know me. We were never here.  
But I know you, little lamb.

Here it is. They are not your life.  
They pay you as long as you are useful.

You don't need their approval.  
Be useful enough, but lead a double life.

Be prepared for the sudden reversal.  
It's business. There is no loyalty.

He was silent, did not look my way.  
The wind blew brown leaves by my feet.

I got up and walked down the path,  
a packet on my bench, money well spent.

## SPEAKING TO ADEENA

I like the writing that you write.  
Do you talk to the freshmen like that?

Since I speak to your public persona,  
I presume, with respect, the right to speak.

I like the writing that you write.  
Would you speak to my mother like that?

To the trope of exile, lexical riffer,  
I counter the white bread outsider.

And I like the writing that you write.  
Would you talk to an amateur like that?

Because I like it, I like it, I like it,  
I like the writing that you write.

## VILLAGE LIFE

She sat on the porch swing of a small cottage looking out at the commons in the early morning.

She caressed the tablet on her lap. It's screen had the texture of paper. A sudden breeze blew dew drops off trees.

A line of children ran and danced down a path close to her and waved. She waved, smiled, pulled back white hair.

She could see her old lumbering husband with his white beard standing in a corn patch of the community garden.

She knew he was at last at ease in his skin, but he still always looked oddly out of place. She smiled indulgently.

Two of her close friends came around the corner of the house. They didn't say anything, just sat down beside her.

She would have to leave soon, out to the edge of the neighborhood to catch a train to the airport, to Africa.

She caressed the tablet on her lap.  
Pictures of children she had known.  
Dew drops shone, suddenly bright.

## UNSEEMLY SEMBLANCES

The lunatic smile of the fringe artist,  
no, the calm, placid stolidity of  
the folk artist, no, the frantic  
cry for attention of the neglected  
artist, no, the self dismissive grin  
of the amateur artist,

no, no, no, the misunderstood genius,  
the tucked away letter writer to  
the world, the democratic atom  
of the attention economy, the mad  
plotter of memesphere manipulation,

but maybe just the mild eccentric,  
the harmless hobbyist, no, no,  
none of these, none of these,  
none of these, none of these,  
let the texts be, let the writer be,  
let the calm eye of the conscious  
storm just be.

# MARTINSBURG GRAVEYARD

Invisible waves saturate  
the dry land with messages.

You need decoders to see them.  
People walk around carrying

black boxes with screens,  
wires dangling from their ears.

There are messages on these  
stones, too, two hundred goodbyes.

His body itself tells a story,  
hair blown wild by open windows,

untrimmed beard, white, brown, gray,  
his fat and aging person, messages.

But this is just a shell surely,  
a thing among things, a living thing.

It's hot, August, hazy, messages dim  
on the edge of town. He sweats.

He thinks of numbers in ledgers.  
By his numbers he will live or die.

A passing bird wipes his numbers  
away. He panics, calls Washington.

A nice young lady in a cool office  
assures him, his numbers are safe.

He is many selves, most losing,  
falling behind, behind some standard.

He calms down. He must go inside  
to the comfort of screens.

He must be useful. He must be seen.  
But a bird lands, blinks its black eye.

# COUNTERCULTURAL LITANY

Do not shop.

You are not what you buy.

Do not sell yourself.

You are not a human resource.

Do not dress for success.

Your body is a vehicle for experience.

Do not become a job.

You are a pilgrim and a stranger.

Look for a fair trade.

Your life energy is your own.

Con the slave masters.

You can't always speak truth to power.

# THE MARVELOUS SYSTEM

Money, attention, and votes, those  
are your currencies.

Resources, products, and services  
are the root values.

Then you have the roles, owner,  
producer, and consumer.

Add scarcity, desire, and exchange  
and things are in motion.

It started small. Some parts  
have always been here.

But now it seems to saturate  
everything, so common

and automatic, it is invisible,  
assimilating to the last  
atom and thought moment.

What is love but an exchange  
of attention and services?

What is nature but a resource that needs to be assigned a public owner and appropriate monetary value to save it?

What is spirituality but experiential tourism and its teachers but tour guides?

What is government but a market referee bought with votes and taxes?

And you, consumer, consider your power. Mighty organizations vie for your attention, try to understand you,

at first in mass, but now through labarynthal niches, down at last to your final unique twist of desire.

But that last bit will be  
for the machines.  
Humans can't deal with so  
much diversity and detail.

So it is for the machines  
to carry us forward as the  
memesphere makes attention  
the root currency,

conveniently convertible to  
money and votes,  
and in time directly to  
products and services.

Haven't mothers always  
produced for those  
small centers of attention  
that carry their genes,

the pups of the litter,  
yelping, converting attention  
to more milk?

So you can't escape it.  
It knows you and will know you.

As long as there is scarcity,  
all your hopes for change  
must be within it,  
defined in its terms.

Of course you are free  
to enjoy your  
countercultural theme parks  
as you choose.

And if the machines finally  
conquer material scarcity?  
There will still be the  
scarcity of attention,

until the machines at last  
give us all the attention  
we need, becoming our  
mothers, fathers and friends.

In that machine utopia will  
this marvelous system  
finally wind down within a  
perfectly sustainable equilibrium  
of population and resources?

We can't know. So for now,  
just make your peace.

## A MAN WITHOUT SHAME

A sociopath, then.

He has sympathy for others.

But he'll do anything.

He calculates probable consequences.

He's let himself go, obviously.

He makes his choices, reconciles desires.

Something of a failure, though.

He chooses his own standards.

He must be hard to control.

You can reason with him.

Belittlement, perhaps.

He considers the source.

Dangerous, then.

Yes, very.

# PRAYER BOOK

I found this off by itself,  
with two other books,  
a favorite poet,  
a favorite philosopher.

Why was it included?  
Nothing seems by accident  
with this guy. A token of  
membership, perhaps. Hope.

Note the list of teachings in the  
inner cover. Beautiful teachings.  
Why did he feel the need to  
list these particular ones?

Then a calendar of feast days.  
Then this list, problem areas:  
revelation, theocracy, authority,  
ostracism, don't ask, don't tell.

Those three books.

He was simplifying at the end,

I guess. A few companions.

I hope for him his few hopes.

## LANGUAGE GAMES

He entered Invitation Square  
with hope, always with hope.  
Only a few were there this early,  
and a few spectators.

His helper notified him of two candidates.  
He unfolded a tablet from his pocket.  
This already marked him as old-fashioned,  
no cortical implants for him.

He saw their games listed, standard  
taxonomy, as he preferred.  
Roles, intensity, irony, exclusivity, skill  
were charted and compared.

He looked up suddenly, across the square.  
She sat in meditation, almost wantonly at ease.  
She opened her eyes, looked at him.  
Recruiter, high exclusivity, and high irony.

At least intensity was not life or death.  
Her other games were pretty routine.  
But this one, deep reader, enactor.  
How could they enact some of those texts?

He walked over, sat down beside her,  
at a discrete, casual distance.  
She looked at him, reading his profile.  
Then she nodded. She would induct him.

She jumped up, smiling broadly.  
He stood. She put an arm over  
his shoulders and they walked out  
chattering happily like old friends.

## PYRRHO AND THE CONFESSOR

The Confessor smiled sheepishly.  
Pyrrho smiled back wickedly  
and draped an arm over  
the Confessor's shoulders.

They walked off across a field  
and the ground became flickering  
signals and the rising dust just  
wisps of texts and taxonomies.

## THE OPERATIVE

"One Way! All or None!"

They swarmed around,  
buzzing up against each other.

He moved among them, at ease,  
picking what he liked, covertly,  
no need to stir them up,

practical, idiosyncratic,  
adapting his own configuration,  
no need to explain himself.