

# **Brief Lines**

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## Introduction

These modest lines  
which I wouldn't dare call poetry  
for lacking the power of art  
may at least bring a smile  
or a new thought  
into bold momentary relief  
for being something new,  
unexpected,  
though not very deep  
or certainly profound.  
My voice  
may be odd, too  
and may not harmonize  
immediately  
or comfortably  
with your own inner voice  
or what you expect  
or hope for in lines like these.  
And you may be right!  
But if there's any worth  
in these words  
and if they touch a few hearts  
and minds and spirits  
perhaps a certain commonality  
may have briefly come to life  
here among us  
and the foolishness and vanity  
of wasted time, wasted days  
pursuing art  
may not become my epitaph.

## **The Eager Muse**

Like the aging fat man who's married to a beautiful young wife,  
the artist is sometimes the last to know.

## Collected Cut Outs from The Industrial Park

### THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

*As traffic slowed on those wide twisting arteries*

leading into the city a chill river fog began to embrace the tarpaper rooftops and skyscrapers slowly hushing away the distant stars. Brightly lit municipal busses carried a few indecently awake passengers through the nighttime streets for within this lengthy pause between day and day all the good citizens of the city slept now in proper preparation for the start of a new day. And as if the city itself were a living organism it too seemed to sleep beneath a heavy mantle of fog refreshing itself once again for that great surge of the new day. In the meantime the mad, the homeless, and the lonely marched over the city's streets as if the machinery of life itself had become indifferent to them. Dark and lonely in the city's darkness, they prowled the empty spaces while the constant dynamo-drone of the city's power-lines and generators stuttered a melancholy accompaniment in those wide-open spaces which during the day would be filled with great wide-awake human activity. And as if pacing to the pulsing beat of that dynamo-drone throughout the long empty hours of the long night the city's emergency services remained obscenely awake and alert to its citizens' needs. A squalid tragedy beneath an old newspaper for example. Or a dark bundle in an entryway. Or another woman lying dead in the park.

The moon in its niche in the far cold  
shined eerily, brightly gray pocked  
and logically circular in the night,  
the tarnished impotent mirror  
of the raging fiery sun.



*At the gray break of dawn the enormous hunchbacked garbage truck crawled up the hill loudly whining*

*and the African American garbage collectors (one young one old) banged the large cans loud against the open iron lip of the soiled monstrous truck and rattled the empty cans across the sidewalk neither thinking or caring about the numerous inhabitants sleeping within the houses and buildings they pass by. And whining shrilly the truck moved on up the street toward the top of the hill where like some sort of monstrous sentinel it stood brooding outlined across the gray sky as if heralding the break of a new day.*

And all the blank windows across the tall apartment buildings emoted now a deep deep Sunday calm and emptiness as the soft gray morning light expanded and newly revealed the empty streets damp and exhausted and perfectly still and the first young yuppie jogger emerged from an apartment building in a red college sweatsuit and ran down the hill toward the waterfront park which was still gray and moist with a soft river fog. And reluctantly the blank apartment building windows finally began to stir with their imminent innerlife as if in recognition of the start of another dreary long enormous Sunday.

### *Morning*

once again, and the start of another Monday morning rushhour...

and the gaining impetus of the manmade day accompanied the gray dawning of the natural day. All the arteries leading into the city were clogged with a heavy traffic and the air was filled with the static of radio and TV as if amicably accompanying each individual's progress into the day with their traffic, weather, news, and sports reports. The heavy gray river fog, as if only another actor performing its part, lay heavy along the narrow valley banks impeding the sun's first emerging rays from fully reaching the thousands of drivers slowly crawling over the river's seven bridges leading into the city. But the gray early morning sky gradually

broke up and yielded to the bright cheery splendor of that sunshine which suddenly brings the smile out of things, the new spring trees, the green grassy parks, the old owlish buildings downtown, and all the glistening freshscrubbed sidewalks. And the great riverside city appeared to stretch and grow and stir with the logic of its own innerlife, its machinery, its masstransit, blinking stoplights, traffic, the patient dormant buildings all coming to new morning life and filling with office workers as well as the rising active bustle of people swarming now over sidewalks, approaching work, maneuvering through the heavy downtown tangle of traffic. And the great dawning of the full sun itself appeared to only distantly accompany this rush of manmade activity or, rather, be swallowed up within it. For the new dawnlight had a great citylike quality about it: a deep urban quality: and the break of day was the invitation and promise for tens of thousands of active people: lunchdates, hopeful business deals, crowded bars, shopping, churches, schools, construction sites: even great tedium, the undertaker and the maternity ward. The new day was an invitation to the city's joys and the life it provides. For it was the great city itself now which was leaving the night behind.

(Don't let these cut outs fool you. The Industrial Park possesses a character which is quite different from the one they would imply.)

## **Springtime**

The glittering leaves  
wave welcome, welcome  
in the hard breeze

## **Snow**

A white world with dark trees  
Like a black and white photograph  
Framed within my window

## **Green Dry Leaves**

A bird  
beaks his way  
among summer insects  
fluttering  
through a summersun  
Dappled  
wings and leaves  
At night  
icy stars

## **Mud and Shit**

The cow odor  
of mud  
on a farm  
in May  
the other side  
of the fence  
where cows  
dip their deep weight  
without thought  
where they stand  
Thinking: milk  
comes from  
awfully dirty  
hands  
grasping  
the hard crude  
pink teats there  
hanging  
below her belly  
Above cow mud  
several sparrows  
flock now  
twittering  
in the May  
air, in flower  
freshness  
and grass softness  
ascending off the pasture  
with the sweet lactic odor  
of clover

(Alternative ending.)

Above cow mud  
several sparrows  
flock  
twittering  
in the morning May  
sun  
in flower fresh  
and grass soft  
air, ascending  
off the pasture  
with the sweet lactic  
odor of clover

## Questionnaire

(This was written as a response to a blogger who often flamed those he disagreed with.)

Are you a captive somewhere? Are you in economic chains? Caught against your will in a spiritual straightjacket? Are you a wage slave or a boss? Do you live off your wits? Have you undergone shock treatment? Do you dispense shock treatment? Were you denied, at some point in your life, your rightful inheritance? Are you an outcast? Do you smoke pot? Do you crack the heads of dissenters? Are you a dissenter, and proud of it? Were you last seen somewhere? Do you want to be seen? Are you even visible? Do you enjoy a sinecure? Do you view life as hopeless? Are you happy? Miserable? Overflowing with existential angst? Do you admire power? Raw power: refined power: power within a velvet glove or in a steel mitt? Do you believe there will be a tomorrow? Or are all our days yesterdays? Do you vote? Do you cry? Do you make love? Do you ever go to a movie?

Are your papers in order? Are you an expatriate? Has Interpol come after you? Do you still live in your native land? Have you learned yet that the Soviet Union collapsed? Do you care? Are you a student in an exclusive Islamic university? Do you hope to visit Disneyland some day? Have you? Are you a chess enthusiast? Do you play softball? Do you like girls? Have you a girl? Does she truly love you? Are you faithful? Do you prefer the night to the day, or vice versa? Have you ever felt the breeze standing on the end of a pier at dawn? Are you under investigation? Do you believe in God?

## The Party Balloon

bobs  
pressing  
its lightness  
onto the ceiling

its string  
gently curls  
as if  
pulling somehow  
on  
the ceiling

one, two  
three  
balloons  
stretched  
thin  
blue red green  
nudge up soon  
onto the ceiling

in the morning  
shriveled wet lips  
tied  
by slender threads  
recall the ceiling  
and the laughter  
and the joy

## **A Cat Poem**

This little body  
with pointed claws  
curled light on my lap  
purrs  
as my finger tips explore  
her luscious fur  
sensing  
the cat oddity  
of entrails  
and bulky things  
in her too soft belly.  
The cat purrs  
as she squeezes  
the yellow bright  
ecstasy  
of her upturned eyes  
tightly adoring me  
with her deep cat love



## **Waiting for a Bus in Terre Haute, 1950's**

At noon the long wailing trail of alto notes horned desolately over the streets of the town - I stood on the corner of Seventh and Main next to the window of the Fanny Farmer, waiting for a bus, looking at chocolates (rising and pulsing) chocolate covered cherries (rising and pulsing) chocolate covered almonds (rising and pulsing) It was the first time I had ever heard an air raid siren (pulsing) and I stood on the street (pulsing) listening to the shrill hornlike sound (rising) taking it in, absorbing all its portent (chocolate covered marshmallows) imagining flights of bomber planes high above the town (rising and pulsing) trying to imagine their attack (pulsing) standing among the people waiting for a bus to arrive (price per pound) So this is what an air raid siren sounds like (pulsing) as it shrilly rose and cried (pulsing) and there were no planes in the sky (rising) and no one on the street took notice (and pulsing) of its cry (milky white chocolate) which didn't even terrify the hungry pigeons.

## **A Rotten Log**

(Another childhood memory)

I pulled a rotten log  
out of matted leaves.

The sun spread out nearby  
on grass, and through the nearby boulders  
a brook murmured.

Trees drooped in heavy sun and shade  
and a patch of poison ivy  
caught the bright sun nearby  
on rusty oily leaves.

The log came up heavy  
like a rotted barrel of white shredded wood  
and the pressed earth  
beneath revealed  
a large gray colony  
of pulpy white grubs  
scattering quickly nearby  
through wet matted leaves.

But a perfect jewel sat upon  
the bare open ground

A marble salamander  
rested completely still  
in the heat and solitude  
of the burning open sun

Surprised by such beauty

I lifted it upon

my careful open palm

But only for a brief second

it clung to the open surface skin

cool and dry and very light

it quickly leapt off  
returning to the earth  
and I lost it somewhere  
among the poison ivy  
and the silent sun  
And mourned  
this lost beauty  
and wished  
rotten logs  
weren't so full  
of life  
until  
I drank  
from my army canteen  
and tasted  
the metal  
with a brook  
running nearby  
and the sun  
splashing on the leaves and my heart  
almost stopped  
with a solemn joy

## **A Mountain Road**

(Another recollection from childhood)

The night, so black  
is gently violated  
by the prying lights  
of our large car  
revealing tree trunks  
in a flash  
as we instantly slide  
from white line to white line  
with the logical momentum  
of fine precision engineering  
and deep automotive comfort  
heading for home  
after the technicolor movie  
in town.

But now  
paralyzed in our lights  
the eyes of a doe  
glare keenly back at us  
and in a leap  
is gone  
within the trunks of trees

And then  
the lights sliding  
over asphalt  
a flattened opossum  
passes on our left  
like the ghost-shadow  
of its former life  
And as if to say

the night lives  
bugs suddenly splat  
quickly across our windshield  
without visible approach.  
But in the back  
curled up, quietly listening  
I don't need to be told the night lives  
for I hear it  
through the low whistle of the wind  
in the open slit of the window  
and breathe it in the cold air  
rushing in  
and see it  
in the parting of the night  
passing on tree trunks  
and the white lines  
slipping one by one  
beneath our hurling momentum  
climbing the mountain road  
curving toward home  
and bed and gentle lamplight  
perhaps something to eat  
and finally sleep  
beneath deep warm covers

## **Elegy for a Long Dead Poet**

Our living finger tips could be shocked  
by the curvature of that barren bone  
those hollows, where the poet's eyes  
once burned.

That space is gone but what remains?  
A trinket, a rumor in the air  
a word of gossip to make him whole.

Within the precious air swollen with life  
and trembling with the change of day  
within each of Nature's unchanging moods,  
the breathing poet once stood.

Our living fingertips could be shocked  
by the curvature of that barren bone  
those hollows, where the poet's eyes  
once burned.

And what eternities filled  
the hollows of that bone?  
What unspoken memories and songs  
cling now to his enduring words?

The life force gusts in all our lungs.  
And we know there is beauty in the soul  
trapped and living within each blade of grass  
or tiny bug crawling on our floor.

Our living finger tips could be shocked  
by the curvature of that barren bone  
those hollows, where the poet's eyes  
once burned.

Life is but a lending and a giving  
and now it is our turn to laugh and sigh  
and take our breath within the mystery of time  
among all the things that are.

Where a man once stood  
breathing in the air swollen with life  
and trembling with the change of each day  
only his lasting words still remain.

Our living finger tips could be shocked  
by the curvature of that barren bone  
those hollows, where once the poet's eyes  
burned

## **An Afterthought on Modernism**

Ah God,  
spare me your classical allusions  
to angels, dwarfs, and Roman gods!  
Keep your Greek and Latin languages,  
your riddles wrapped in ancient tongues!

What do you prove with your obscurity?  
The pains you prod on willing readers  
to work through all your nestled meanings  
only distract the mind from finished art.

If verbal labors are demanded  
then why not offer anacrostics,  
word puzzles or cryptograms?  
These properly exercise the mind  
with meaningless labors  
and stretch the tendons of understanding  
in the same manner barbells temper the body's muscles.

To bring more life to life is art's great object.  
And failing that, to try again!  
To articulate meaning clear and plain:  
opening for an instant a reader's eyes  
to the condensed breathless held reality  
of our one shared common humanity.



*(More on Battling Writer's Block.... I wrote this one evening in San Francisco in the late sixties. It started out well enough but then I couldn't surmount its logic. And in order to do so went out and bought a small bottle of apple wine. I drank it and close to cold sober went over the peak and finished this recollection of snow in town and the city. That's the way it was back then, before I learned the importance of discipline.)*

### **The Stars Never Shine Over New York**

As a kid I walked everywhere. And perhaps because I loved to walk the streets of Greenwich Village, where I grew up, and of any strange, new town, I still find walking a kind of high adventure. But I lived in a small town in the midwest for over five years, and at night would walk down the dark tree lined, leafy streets without encountering a soul, looking up at the moon, and at the immensely starry night. The stars never shine over New York, and if you have lived in a city all your life you can not know how peaceful a small town street is at night, how it seems to slumber, and how the lawns and houses catch the moonlight. And how you can hear the breeze through the dark picking up momentum and sweeping through the street, rustling through the grass and leaves. It is the peacefulness of the earth, not dominated by the city the way weather is in New York. The clouds seem to pass higher over New York, and are kept at a greater distance by the peaks of the skyscrapers. The blue of the sky seems higher and more remote, and seems to have very little to do with the actual weather on the streets. The city dominates the weather and a snowfall in New York is a New York snowfall. The associations you can make with a New York snowfall are the sooty, soggy smells of the subway, the automobile chains grinding the powder up on the streets, the heaps of snow collecting soot and blackening in outoftheway places until the sun melts them, the rapid snowball fights, or how beautifully the snow falls

between the buildings, zigzagging wet into your face and mouth, and how peaceful the city is in a blizzard and how everything is brought to a standstill. The memories of piss yellow stains left by dogs in the fresh new snow or the brown bags of garbage collecting pure white puffs in the snow. Or the grating of snow shovels against cement or how the snow melts as it first falls on warm places and collects in other places, or all the footprints in the new snow, turning to slush. The smells of wet tweeds, the shock of heat in doorways, and how, when it is still freezing, the snow still remains in blackened clumps and how cheerlessly it melts away.

But in a small town you can feel the bite of the sky. And if you walk at night in a snowfall the entire sky is above you, and the snow drifts out of the sky materializing as it reaches your sight. And it zigzags and dances in the lights and come from the open blackness above, the sky reaching down through the snow. In a small town the bushes, houses, trees, serenely collect the snow and if another pair of boots left tracks in the direction you are going in they will leave a trail of mystery. The houses and trees and bushes shine in the snow, and you know you are outofdoors in the cold and they are inside in the warmth, and somehow a snowfall seems to make all right with the world. Because the snow is always serene and well.

(In 1986 I visited Miami Beach to retrieve some of my father's paintings from the family of Leicester Hemingway. While there I stayed in a small hotel which backed onto the ocean.)

### **Miami Beach**

On the tropic beach  
the sky is broad  
and vast as the overcoat of God  
And the white beach turns dark  
as rain pocks its sand  
and strums on the palm fronds  
cement and glass and then  
struts away down the street  
past the Art Deco hotels of Miami Beach

Mutely contained within a quiet bar now  
looking through a pane of glass  
at the gray wet strumming of the wind  
the long flat beach empty now  
and desolate as a vacant parking lot  
the bandstand dead, the tables set but empty  
the bored barman tells me:  
"At least it's not a hurricane."  
The ocean swells and rises  
and the day becomes very gray  
as idly I sit in the bar, passing time away.

Fistfuls of rain  
toss rapidly against the windowpane  
as each passing flurry  
in a deeper darker shade

clatters until finally  
rain settles in for the day.  
And I quietly drink my third daiquiri.

Stooped beneath the rain  
I trudge beneath its vast sky:  
lumescent gray above the vast white sand.  
Wet to the bone, in a pair of old shorts  
and a red tropic shirt  
my toes work against the hard sand  
climbing against the empty beach  
near the receding and rising of the sea.

The hotels soar on this side  
and on the other the ocean swells:  
with caps that rise above the beach  
and recede and rise again murmurously  
*it's not a hurricane, it's not a hurricane*  
the waves repeat  
and rise again murmurously  
*it's not a hurricane, it's not a hurricane*  
as all the heavens fall.

And my soul, stoked by liquor,  
a fire burning in my breast  
my head bare, soaked by the rain  
lashing at my face and cheeks  
grasps it all: the gray luminescence  
the rising of the sea, the turgor of the thick sand  
resisting the hard working of my feet.  
And the hotels rising like pastel spirits  
all along the veil of rain  
on Miami Beach.

## Strolling Along a Wintery Beach

We stopped to look at a sea shell  
The fleshlike pink of inner pearl  
cracked like an old china bowl:  
in the center at a slant  
like a palm catching up  
a scoopful of clear ocean water  
the soft brown sand rested flat  
with a calm bright clarity.

Flat footed, a sea bird  
paced dignified across the sand  
gray and white as the pearly fog  
emerging over the broad horizon.

Long tongues of cold sea water  
foaming white  
washed over green bulbous weeds  
laced by a popping white  
spittle, rank  
in their deterioration  
Nor was the ocean wind gentle  
with us, and we wore our coats zipped up:  
only our ankles, pale and white  
sank deep in the fast receding sea  
forcing us to quickly climb back up.

And above the beach  
swirling droplets of sea air

lifted and carried in the breeze  
the sweet salt taste of the distant sea  
as the sun tried to come through the fog:  
a dark pearl high in the sea-wet heavens.

Our cuffs rolled up  
our heels and toes dug deep  
rolling with the sand beneath our feet  
and with each cold white wave  
we slipped further away,  
into deeper sand  
deeper deeper sand  
the sea foaming up about our knees  
as we suddenly trot back up  
to the high land

(In high school a couple of guys I knew would get summer jobs at fashionable oceanside resorts on Long Island. They were looking for girls.)

### **Summer Burn**

On a hot day  
when my skin bakes  
redder  
than the scaly red crust  
on the lobster  
I will eat tonight  
garnished in butter  
and parsley  
and some other needless things:  
when my starched shirt  
and tight close neck-tie  
burn like acid  
and I smile politely  
at my girl friend's rich father  
in the swanky restaurant  
where no one is sunburnt  
but the busboys  
and a few teenagers  
working for the summer  
between terms at prep school:  
and my jacket weighs on me  
like a heavy hand pressing  
upon my burning shoulders  
and the heat dazzle and odor  
of the sea is still caked

on my face  
and I wish I could touch my girl friend's soft skin  
but know her father would highly disapprove  
I think of all the lies  
I will tell them all when I get back to the city  
and how all my friends will envy me  
when I tell them  
about all the beautiful girls I laid  
out on the beach that summer



## **On the Sea's Edge**

The ocean's edge  
laps on my thighs  
with a sweet momentum finding  
every crevice  
of skin and crotch  
Free and nude  
in the warm water  
I wade further out  
The ocean surges on my chest  
the sun beating  
upon my salty shoulders  
and in the green water  
my knees rise  
my feet white, over large  
and I know what it is to be free and standing  
on the numerous tumbling pebbles  
and feel the tiny sea shells  
roll  
beneath my toes  
as another swell slides up  
along my chest  
and shoulders  
with the momentum  
of the sea  
feeling free  
feeling free  
in the roll and momentum  
of the joyous sea

## **Travesties**

Up above  
the beach  
where an auto frame  
rots black in the sun  
the weeds take on a rancor  
of dry hot rust

The thrumming of insect wings  
beating above dry grass  
tin cans, broken glass  
the mash of old newspaper and  
dry odor of human shit  
remind me:  
Nature  
is not always competent  
to deal with such travesties

## **A Calm Beauty**

A calm beauty  
resides in the shadows  
of a quiet room  
where silent bands of sunlight  
cross the floor  
through the windows.

The sun  
is gentle  
in the leaves  
hanging  
on a tree  
through the windows  
clasping  
its brightness  
to their fluttering  
shimmer.

## **A Teen Prayer**

(Excerpted from my first novel, all 1500 pages long.)

Be ye drunk. On wine, or poetry, or virtue, the poet said. I thought of the vast homely residential neighborhood I had peddled furiously through earlier in the day, of the pale intense sun which had beat upon the sparse monotony of houses and lawns, of the broad sense of time I had felt peddling furiously through that poor working class neighborhood as if it had been suspended in an emptiness with no beginning or end or middle or purpose, and how all the empty live-a-day monotony of life in that neighborhood had culminated finally into the horror of that light industrial neighborhood where I had been trapped momentarily between broiling metal and baking brick gasping in the churning cauldron of air under the sooty sun. When between the aluminum sun-blazing side of a long semi truck and a factory wall my bike had stalled for the loading and unloading and the intense summer sun had beat upon my head and the shirtless dark men working in the fatigue of grinding sweat for hours from morning through the noon lunch until late afternoon.

Not me, I thought, not me. Never. Never would I allow myself to be trapped in such a routine of life, trapped within the routine of days with no beginning middle or end. If men worked in shadow from nine to five and let the great world pass them by, with no beginning middle or end, and sank into a lifeless tedium beneath a churning hot sun, then this was the stern condition of life the great adult world had chosen for itself and I would walk away from it, I would reject it. For I was free of all these horrors. And with the superior ease and independence of the leisured student class from which I came I stood impersonally apart and contemptuously watched the great spectacle of the work-a-day world grind by me feeling the threat of the sun burn under my skin. Not me. Never. Never could I be touched, I thought, by this morally debased and impure,

lifeless drudgery, compromise, senseless rules, and fathomless unending stupidity of the adult world, because I was wide awake and fully conscious of its danger. I rode high upon that clear full consciousness with a sense of pure, untainted superiority to that failed and compromised world. I would be drunk, I thought, I would be drunk on wine and poetry and virtue, but never would I let that other world enter my soul. Never, thought I, not me. Never would I be that way.

## Appetite

(On seeing an attractive woman from an outdoor cafe table.)

Out of that flesh I eye lustily  
Came that little daughter hanging to her arm  
That flesh curvaceous wrapped in tight black wool  
The little girl hanging bare armed  
from the adult bare armed woman.

They stop at a stop light  
and my eye encompasses the woman's well formed ass  
Oh little girl, with a mother and father  
Some day you too will see the desire in men's eyes  
And when you have a daughter of your own  
Perhaps you won't find it all filthy?

You two cross now, and your mother's black wrapped  
tight ass swings bell-like across the street.  
What would I think if she didn't have a daughter?  
Would I follow her with my eyes more greedily?  
Would I even see she's married?  
That chaste bare armed little girl with bare thin legs  
and eyes innocent as morning, sweet as dawn,  
like birds singing in a tree's fresh dewey choir,

Out of that flesh in a tight black  
came that little girl. And though the adult  
hardly claims to innocence, in her tight sexy skirt  
I balk at following too closely  
and hold a respectful distance. For the little girl  
with both a mother and father  
is too formidable a presence.

## Christmas Snow

(From *The Adventures of Jamie Budlow*.)

Once again the days were decorated with the colors and songs of Christmas. And the first Christmas snow fell gently that year, beginning in the night.

When we awoke in the morning the day was bright with snow and sunshine. A thin white coat had spread sparkling across the borders of our small world. And it lay beneath the sun throughout the day.

Then it snowed again, beginning in the night. And in the day it fell accumulating across the borders of our small world filling it with the proper cheer and excitement of the season, Christmas. The Main Street of the town was gentle now with a whirling of snow, and bundled up against the damp and persistent falling snow numerous shoppers made their way from store to store in anticipation of the great day, Christmas.

Into the night the snow fell, white in the glow of street lamps, gently touching the face of the surrounding earth with its magic. It fluttered and flurried and fell softly descending through space, for once again Christmas was approaching.

I went out for a walk that first night, walking solitary along the small town streets in the luxurious fall of snow which fell so gently all about me. Deeply the town slumbered in a quiet magic that offered its own radiance. Block after block I walked, past the houses that were set far back from the sidewalk, quiet and asleep, their Christmas lights burning peacefully bright in the falling snow. Bare headed, the snow melted on my head and face. And I caught the frosty little flakes with my tongue, which had fallen through the night air tasting of the sky, each dissolving softly on the tip of my

tongue like a gentle toast to the beauty of the season.

Christmas. I walked a long time in the snow that night, past the rising white breasts of lawns leading up to slumbering houses; past the utter black stillness of tall dark tree trunks, carrying a great white burden of snow up on their dark brooding arms to the night sky like a benediction.

Christmas.

It snowed that night and it snowed on into the day. For the great season had come upon us again. Christmas. And the snow was a Christmas snow as snow always is when Christmas comes upon us again, falling gently.

That was many, many years ago.



## **Windowsill Songs**

Canary Canary  
Singing bright  
Crazy in the window  
Stark in sunlight

Yellow canary notes  
and dusky leaves  
sing in the city breeze

A bowl of sunlight  
waterfilled  
rests on my windowsill

The street below  
lies in snow  
I hear the cry of the city

## **An Insect Rowdiness**

In an insect rowdiness  
I crossed a vast field  
cracking whirring buzzing  
- oh such an impertinent impropriety!  
droning, swirling, flying...

They came to lick my eyebrows  
bathe in my salty sweat  
whirr in my ears  
even enter up my nose.  
If I breathed in too deeply  
I would snort them up  
fluttering madly as they tried to get out  
(with, I might add, my only too eager assistance!)

Ah this field was the Kingdom of the Insect  
wielding the scepter of the terrible sun,  
a field unlike any I had ever seen before.  
Myriads, drifting clouds, sifting  
whirring out of the grass, the air, the sun itself  
the insects whirled, buzzed, droned, stung.

And my bare knees  
crackling through this harsh tall grass  
picked up jiggers, ticks, flees  
Even the grasshoppers  
the most cowardly of the lot  
hopped and hopped and hopped  
rattling ahead of me  
through the tall dry grass.

Oh, this was a terrible kingdom  
the Kingdom of the Insect  
and when I rose out of the open pasture  
into the tall shadowed firs  
and stood on dry rusted needles among pine cones  
I itched and scratched and burned  
on red spots bumps and swells  
where they had fed, and fed, and fed,  
and bit and bit and bit  
and stung and stung and stung  
in a terrible insect rowdiness.

## **Dusk in the Woods**

The silent dusk  
Darkness trembles  
At the edge of the road  
where the asphalt hump  
leads toward the sun

## Late Summer

(A Teen Revel. From *The Adventures of Jamie Budlow*.)

It was the end of summer, glorious summer, coming to a close with all the accumulated fury of the preceding months.

The summer had been intense. Since early June the temperature had not dipped down into the eighties and now the Earth, as if it had absorbed all the heat it could contain, appeared still and patient, teetering on the edge of the new season as the days slowly marched toward their inevitable end and change.

The air became heavy with the long languid torpor of all the preceding months. And nightly television newscasts complained of the long uninterrupted heat wave: in mutual commiseration, as it were, with all the people of the town. Air conditioners dripped and hummed: and fortress-like, houses kept the merciless pounding heat at bay on the long hot still nights.

But I was eighteen. And because I was eighteen I gloried in the hot oven-like stillness of the air. I lightly walked through the parching brightness of the sun. I absorbed the summer heat in all my pores and grew stronger, more aware and athletic, and sought adventure. Summer, my soul cried out under the sun on the street, hammer upon the anvil of the earth. I will soak-in your golden rays and make them a part of me. I will lightly drift through your still-bound air and live, live, and bask in your intense life giving glory. Let others wilt and nag about their clinging flesh, let the faces of the weary old, in their death march, droop. I accept your sun. I accept your life giving heat, and wonder at the glory of the dark dry trees and grass, the parched cement sidewalks of the town, and the pure white of the small clouds marching slowly across the vast sky toward the east.

## Lunch With A Poet Friend

(Excerpted from *The Adventures of Jamie Budlow*, 1500 pages long.)

We opened the refrigerator upon a bright enamel white cold. Packages glistened in cellophane and in waxed cartons. On plastic bowls and porcelain dishes.

"Ham!" my host exclaimed,

"Mayonnaise!

"Lettuce and tomato!"

Each word clipped the air with the full significance of its shape, like a bulb bursting into bloom. How he loved words! delicately caressing them, wrapping his tongue about them, expressing each as if it were a precious stone; not a vulgar or popularly ostentatious stone like a diamond: but any ordinary beauty picked up off the road for its own innate value. Each word gleamed like the surface of a stone polished by the action of waves or water in a creek in the wild, its veins and tones of color expressive of the action and beauty of Nature whether subdued or bright.

Ticking off each item in the refrigerator as if each were a marvel of expression, looking into the glare, I quietly listened -

Onion!

Olive!

Pickle!

Porcelain Plate!

Cellophane!

Horse Radish!

Baloney! -  
chuckling now as if he had discovered  
a comic word -  
Baloney !  
Cellophane !  
Lettuce and Tomato!  
Mayonnaise.....

It was as if I were listening to a tiny minuet tinkling brightly in my ear, spun out in words, as we both leaned into the bright cold refrigerator. And I saw now that something of the creative energy that had consumed my dear Poet friend while he worked all morning still existed in this recitation: as if that energy still lived trailing off through this long string of words in a kind of persistent striving.

We put the objects onto the table and then, as if his mind had suddenly leaped, ceasing its recitative, he exclaimed with a sort of earthy wholesomeness:

"Wine!"

And in sunlight,  
the brightness of bright things,  
the song of life still in the air,  
we ate lunch:  
fully conscious of the meaning of the words.

## **What You May Not Know About Frogs**

A penny is not worth  
the soul of a frog.

A frog has more humor  
than many business men

Beware of the frog  
his soul may start to haunt you

There is no such thing  
as a pretentious frog



## **By a Train Station**

Beneath the shadow of the train station  
all the poor live  
isolated in their single rooms  
behind dark grimy windows  
grey and sullen as the perspective  
but without its majesty

Where dust lies like iron filings  
in a deep entangled industrial blight  
enormous iron configurations  
grip the lives of these men and women  
as if cast away and useless  
forgotten  
in their tiny corner by  
the sullen shadows  
of the proud train station

Whereas a few blocks away  
gardens spring up  
parks bloom  
and the wealthy have a joyous  
springtime perspective

(Thoughts on the harshness of the world.)

### **Pebbles, Tears, Rain Drops -**

these things  
don't belong on a rusty landscape  
to the well-oiled teeth of machinery  
or to the grind of days  
suffocated under work  
smothered under stone and a clock  
or the dominion  
of a powerful man in a suit  
or glassed-in boxes  
and brooding iron fire escapes  
or the strangled air of a city  
    with a mechanical pace

but

pebbles, tears, and raindrops  
belong to the heart

pebbles  
tears  
raindrops

arrange them anyway

raindrops  
tears  
pebbles

they can never go away

## **Money**

Money is made  
of green  
paper that has been  
in a wino's pocket  
and has been  
through the bank  
and on the grocery counter  
and has been  
placed on a bar  
exchanging  
in all kinds of palms  
and has travelled around  
for awhile  
in places  
you would never want to be.

(From Faces at the Office, a novel about work...Within the lobby of the building our hero worked in there was a giant fireball red abstract sculpture. And he believed that this fireball red abstract mass of twisting red girders was in truth the soulless expression of this great corporation: its heart. Its unbeating heart! And that in all reality it expressed Death!)

### ***A Conversation with the Bloodless Heart of the Building***

As he came out of the elevator on the first floor that evening he prematurely felt as if he were seeing all these familiar sights for the last time. And boldly decided he would say farewell to the gigantic fireball red sculpture in the lobby, the cold corporate heart, he thought, of the building.

Yes, it was a little premature to bid the old Corporate Heart farewell, but he had a powerful impulse to now. Knowing that to the rest of his coworkers who were quickly leaving the building he would merely appear like a madman he stationed himself before its red metal girders and stared at it long and hard. Nobody ever stared or even looked at this immense mass of industrial girders occupying so large a space off to the side of the lobby. And he wondered if the building guards might suspiciously approach him?

*Yes, old Corporate Heart, so cold, so bloodless, so forlorn and bare. Farewell to thee! I'll soon be gone and you will keep pumping your heartless blood into the framework of this mighty building. Poor Heart, no one ever even looks at you, but I do, and appreciate you: so cold, so bloodless, so terribly dead. In a way I'll actually miss you. For though cold and dead you are nevertheless a work of art: true: failed art, to be sure: cold heartless art to be sure. But still an artist's dream inhabiting this sterile space in the building. Unlooked at and unloved. I see what you represent and say. Do others? For you speak in the voice of your*

*corporate masters who only care about money and power. Yes, you were made to impress. And, that statement made, the thousands who daily work here pass you by without ever even looking at you. That is sad and you have my deepest sympathy. For though I hate what you represent I even love you, oh cold, bloodless work of art. For you alone most clearly shout out the emptiness all this building represents! Its false values and heartless ways!*

And, fully aware that anyone passing by who witnessed this would think he was a madman, Brian smartly stood at attention, lifted his palm in a military manner, and saluted the sculpture with a sharp bold snap. And with that he left the building.

## **A Vase**

The roses droop in a little vase  
no honey bee buzzes around  
in a myriad, sunny daze  
but the roses droop toward the ground

## **On a Far Off Beach**

Tempered by heat and cold  
their glazed bodies grow ripe fecund  
And the tanned sand glazes the mind with sun.

Radishes stand out like imperfections.

Perforated by feet, the beach  
yields up chunks of tiny seashell  
cracked by the waves, the action of the surf.

Perfect conches looped smooth  
round, appear dry in the golden brown sand too.

Numerous beach towels  
spread out above the sunny waves  
Many bathers take the sun  
flat without physical motion  
Nothing more to do in the day  
but wait, and idle  
within the heavy bundle of pure time.

The hard sun boils the sky, churns the mist.  
Packed with a relentless heat bodies trundle over sand  
and the lips of cool waves slide up  
over their feet, the monotone surf  
grumbling, stalking broad along the horizon  
rising and relentlessly sliding  
over all their eager feet.

Naked breasted, black bodied

sun bathers bare their all to the beating sky  
and the drifting eyes of passers-by  
their gazes discretely glimpsing  
tiny cherry black breasts.

At its height the sun crowns the sky  
beating saltily upon the waves, the beach.  
A thirst growing with all this heartless heat  
A Budweiser would quell the beating of this sun  
in the shadowed cool sanctity of a dark bar.

Landlocked high on dry cement, far from the sea  
in a mindbuzz roar of its own  
the laughter of drunks, and the jukebox:  
the tarred souls of bare feet cling high  
to bared aluminum rungs  
raised high up from the unseen sandy floor.

The sundazed mind growing bright  
in the shadows of the bar, far from the sea  
within the beat, the loud beat  
of the mechanical jukebox roar  
and the laughter: the drunks,  
within black solid shadows  
far from the glazed heat over the beach  
where mind and body surely would roast  
at ease now in the world of peaceful drink.

Time changes its nature  
and unlike lying out on the beach  
the time here becomes full  
of night's approaching expectancy  
its noise and boisterous roar  
as we grasp



the bar's comforting cool  
worldly promise  
and thoughtful hope.

## **The Moon Above the City**

The moon above the city  
shines fallow and all alone  
in cold contempt  
of all the lights that burn  
over slashes of cement and glass  
and trudged upon sidewalk  
lonely as the lonely streets  
in the middle of the night.

The moon above the city glides in the sky  
through silver clouds  
as coldly beautiful as the moon  
in the still dark and cold  
and hushed breath of the wilderness  
over a large country field  
where the wolf and the moth roam  
rampant in the forests  
where brooks gurgle  
silver in the stillness of the night.

The moon above the city  
draws mad men out  
to roam  
in the streets cold as fog  
and rain on a winter evening  
when in all our homes  
we peacefully sleep  
beneath the moon above the city.

## **Ant Hill in the Rain**

The midnight moon softly breathes  
through a sudden part in the clouds  
and the slightly slanted pavement  
runs fast with a slick sheet  
of gray rain water  
rippling over the minor map  
of the ants' flat universe.

The ant hill is a tiny mound  
of circular pointed brown  
and my heel suddenly slips on it.  
I look down to see the earth  
smeared now across the flat pavement  
and wonder  
since their hill has been spread  
out into the rain  
what will become of all the ants  
for surely this must be a disaster  
comparable to a major earthquake  
tsunami or hurricane in human terms.  
Though never mind.  
Ants, I reflect, must be used to this  
and will simply build again.

## Outside the East Bay Terminal

Spinning in their little circles  
Of flutter-chested cooing  
Swollen with the mating urge  
Cooing, they ruuu, ruuu, ruuu  
in sweeping fans of cooing  
Spreading their feathered fans  
Stark across the sidewalk  
As they urrr, urrr, urrr.

On the sudden flutter  
Of rising quickly for a passing man  
With big shoes, Stomping  
Where they rrrrued, rrrrued  
they circle once, circle twice  
But settling once again  
Fluttering, striding, fanning  
The cooing of the mating urge resumes undisturbed  
As they flutter round on the sidewalk  
And ruuuue, ruuuue, ruuuue.

## **Flocking Pigeons**

The filthy gray  
metropolitan pigeon  
with its shorn red  
stumps  
still walking  
emotes  
the city's large machine  
where we all live  
and sympathetically  
one may keenly wonder  
quickly passing by  
if the pigeon will survive?

## **The Lunch Hour**

The twisting steel  
grind of midday:  
sunbeating across  
broad metal sheets,  
the urban manswarm's  
auto da fe  
in work conditioned  
air:

A paltry noontime  
sandwich, packed  
with shredded lettuce  
salt, black pepper, cheese  
mayonnaise and meat  
consumed under sparkling urban hives  
in deep shadow and light, glinting  
off coruscated surfaces  
choking in heat and smog  
the sun's sparkling rays  
beating on the midday  
turmoil of the clock's  
momentous tyranny  
ticking, ticking  
on the thousands of  
straining captive watches.

## **To a Bird Circling Alone Among Skyscrapers**

The bird alone  
soars in the sky  
wings spread  
it passes high

The bird alone  
dips and delicately hangs  
miraculously  
quivering high  
and I wonder  
what it sees way up there?

The bird alone  
so alone above the racket  
of traffic and the human tide  
in the blue  
the blue of the sky  
soars in his circle  
so high  
so high

## **A Chinatown Dawn -**

The washed down street  
stale with the lingering air of night -  
the crates stacked  
bulging with white and green  
bock choy, lettuce, and celery.  
The Bay pale blue  
a vivid slit between restless buildings  
below in morning traffic  
beginning to move through the steel gray light.

The old brick etched out in a city dawn  
the garbage truck groaning  
up a hill  
crescendoing to a clamorous  
howl.  
One last trip before home  
or a sheltering bar.

Night eyed an old bum  
trudges along beside the Oriental glee  
of Tourist shop windows  
in a flap-kneed raincoat  
blackened under years of sun  
Like some foul moving oilcloth  
through a public street  
scattering the minds of tourists  
with his horrible odor

The early rising Chinese in their rubber boots  
scrub off swaths of sidewalk with hard wet brooms



and the seagulls and pigeons clamor  
over the pink splat and splatter  
of the fish gut  
scrubbed fresh off the sidewalk

Dawn is gentle, pink  
rising softly. And on the empty street  
I quietly walk down its middle  
past the bulging crates of lettuce and bok choy  
and the dull luster of the Tourist windows  
And day, monstrous day, rises with the momentum  
of a gathering rush hour. The first office workers  
walk down the hill now, crisp in a morning freshness  
and I seek a place to sit  
to drink a cup of coffee, quietly smoke a cigarette  
and watch the seagulls and pigeons peck at the white rice  
scattered carelessly over the sidewalk  
in the new day light  
emerging where it spilled  
in the sizzle hot momentum of the long night.

## **A Hotel Fire on Sixth Street**

In Skid Road a wino roasts on his mattress

In heavy boots firemen  
axe through straining wood doors  
Pale phantoms scurry into the night  
The bones of the walls now bare  
stripped of all their plaster

Smoke damp now with death  
pours from gray windows  
like long eerie handkerchiefs  
waving over the street

A cigarette  
smoldered and set the fire  
so the wino roasted in bed.  
They say he never woke up

A few magazines and books  
some small change  
the empty bottles littered about his bed  
whores slamming doors  
drunken laughter  
groans of men in pain  
slippered feet shuffling in the hall  
the incessant TV  
and the sirens  
always the sirens  
accompanying the loud neon  
of the rain  
sputtering night

Surely men must dream better things  
in dingy hotel rooms  
and long gladless hours  
than the restless red tearing scream  
of another siren filled night?

**A Mid Summer Street Scene  
In The East Village  
Circa 1960**

The streets belong to everyone  
which is why  
when outofdoors  
I'll often pick up on the mood  
not only of the sky and hour  
but of many little things  
as little as litter or the old milk box  
the old man sits on  
or the way a woman carries  
her groceries through her door  
or the faces  
of gossips drooping in their hot ballooning shirts  
from iron railings.  
It is not only the season  
and the broad green leaves over the streets  
or how the sun beats  
on our heads  
and the hoods of parked cars,  
but the maps on the many faces  
of those rooted to the spot  
lapping up ice cream from  
palate-like sticks;  
or simply complaining  
of the sweat in their armpit  
and crotch, and howcome  
the ball game isn't on?  
Who rooted to the spot  
listen to a nearby siren pierce  
the summer heat as evening

brings only a little relief: but the TV  
glows through the violet night,  
vivid with its awful urban violence  
and heat. It is with this  
that I go out onto the street  
carrying only an umbrella, hoping  
the turgid air will finally  
empty its great sultry weight  
with much needed relief  
in a sudden downpour  
all across the turgid street  
where I simply pass by  
unnoticed.

## **Grant Avenue, Near the Chinatown Gate**

(Notes taken at the break of Another day.)

The silence of deepest night.

The hush of rain falling continuously.

Night poised to break as day.

The stutter of the electronic viscera of the city.

Silence in the woolly womb of night.

A solitary man waits for a street light.

Traffic tearing silk through the rain.

The department store windows expose solitary motionless models.

Mannequins in shadows.

The electric sputter in the silent womb of night.

The traffic light changes and a car advances.

The rain silken on the street.

Taillights wink red a block away.

The rain restful as the promise of approaching dawn.

The empty street-hush before the stillness of department store windows.

Mannequins elegant in a daylight dream: embalmed in deep night.

The car gone away from the street.

Toes soggy now in wet shoes.

The rain a manifestation of the night, life.

Windows dark against the dawn.

The rain becoming silver to awakening eyes.

A street light blinks for traffic.

The hill rises from Chinatown's Gate.

Dawn arises out of the rain, gray and woolly.

Another Chinatown dawn.

## **United Nations Plaza**

When the homeless  
see the sun set  
and the fog roll in  
thoughts  
come to them too  
of sleep



## **For Others**

In the city at night  
the sirens scream  
for others  
always for others  
And the black night and the stars  
seem stripped of their sheen  
for others,  
always for others  
And the sirens scream  
for others  
for others  
always for others  
And all through the night  
in the city at night  
the sirens scream  
for others  
for others  
always for others

## **A Rain Sputtered Neon Night**

Old wino, my friend, with the turned up collar, why do you  
smoke a cigarette in the rain?

Why does your face look like the scarred street around  
you? Where did you get that butt from?

That precious butt?

Old wino, my friend, here's a dollar and there's no need for  
a smile and a blessing. Your shoes,  
once polished a bright black,  
molded by many different pairs of feet,  
keep your old red blotched toes dry, and your huge back  
shuffles alone down the street.

Old Wino, my friend,  
where does that street lead to?  
Will I ever see you again?

## 2 AM -

The ban  
shee qua  
lity of  
si  
rens  
scream  
ing scream  
ing  
in  
the night  
seer  
ing seer  
ing  
through  
the  
black  
night  
scream  
ing scream  
ing scream  
ing in  
the seer  
ing hot  
night  
speed  
ing speed  
by  
the window  
beneath  
our bed

scream  
ing  
scream  
ing  
away  
onto  
the other  
side of hearing

## **The First Americans**

The continent is still theirs  
though they are vagabonds now.

The intimacy of the thrush  
rising from its tall reeds  
displays nature's solemn authority.

Indians crossing  
the hawk-brown  
autumn red hills  
still enact

their ancient ceremonies.

Though crushed on the city's streets  
by wine and the harshness  
of the white man's world:

the hawk  
the eagle  
and the bear  
are still etched  
on their native faces.

## **An Iced Forehead**

My poor loved one  
wrenched from the silence  
within yourself:  
you only hear the voices now.

Not a bad heart  
or soul, but some form of cold horror  
has iced your mind:  
and spinning  
you cannot stop hearing the voices  
with their furious impetus  
spinning  
in raucous sound: so that the silence  
becomes loosed from the solid ground.

Oh my poor loved one  
is my kiss lost?  
Can that iced forehead  
ever hear my heart?

## Words on Words

Mechanically stamped  
the words can lose their meaning  
like objects thrown to the air.  
Symbols concrete without analysis  
Prejudices indicating established directions  
Ideas packaged within attractive blocks  
Tombstones sunk into the sea  
Weights light and spacious as airy molecules  
Words, scattered in symbols of ink,  
words, trails of disturbed air,  
words, tumbling in space,  
words, drowned in oceans of saliva,  
words, wasted as wood smoke,  
words, exhausted as soot above a city,  
words, cheaply bought and spent,  
words, worthless,  
words, plastic beads,  
words, chained endlessly about the air,  
words, exhausted in drink,  
words, objects contrived to convince and deceive,  
words, less than the dust on the street,  
words, urging oceans,  
words, moving cities,  
words, the filigree of civilizations,  
words, the spearhead of progress,  
words, the lead lemming in the darkening night,  
words, not even a penny a dozen.

## Winter Thoughts of Florida

In Florida the beach  
Is postcard white  
And the caps  
On waves roll postcard blue.

The brown bellied girl  
in a scant bikini  
has black Hawaiian hair  
and strolls like a native  
before the blue glossy  
postcard sky.

Sunshine State  
Oranges with navels  
Tumble out of boxes  
With wooden slats  
And Disney colored labels  
And the Sun  
In the Sunshine State  
Burns on kitchen tables

In Indiana  
I look at the gray ground.  
Crinkled frozen leafs in frost  
lie stiffly scattered  
    over the frozen grass.  
A hardy bird chirps  
    up on a bare arm  
Against an overcast sky  
    bulging wet gray.



The silver sun is gloomy  
And the trees hang with gloom  
And if you should fall  
You could crack your head on the cold  
And all the bikes are still  
And the wind bites with steel teeth  
As it finds every corner  
Under every coat  
Of every child  
Playing out on the street.

## **Flashing Thoughts**

The sphere within this case of my skull  
alive with thought  
supported upon a universe of time  
A pilot  
light of aspiration  
not so much within darkness  
but crying out of light  
A flicker  
of dreams, desire, needs  
appearing  
lost  
Swiftly passing

## Desert Dawn

(As seen from a small motel room in Nevada  
during the early spring)

If daylight comes  
like a soft rising  
in the sky  
across the desert  
cold  
competing  
with the bright signs  
that glowed in the night  
the quiet earth awakens slowly  
and the semi-truck  
dragging wakefulness out of the night  
on its hurling sides  
reflects  
the new sunlight

But on the Nevada desert  
if daylight comes  
with a crashing of thunder  
in the still dark dawn  
and the rain scatters  
across a road and windows  
day rises  
with a deeper light  
as the pickup  
sears blue  
on the Interstate  
defying the night.

On the Nevada desert

the sun rises  
on blunt jagged mountains  
fingered white, dirty  
with their ancient snow  
on an arid brown  
quiet as the breath of God  
on the day of Creation  
all inspite of  
the litter on the road.  
And the cold  
is still as the empty space  
in the Universe, first inhaled  
in an early morning  
with a fresh cup of coffee.

In Nevada  
the desert dawn  
unfurls like many pink petals  
an opening out  
of flowers and space  
to the light of day  
across a flat waste:  
the blooming crocus:  
the shoots of tiny gray  
the tender green things emerging from  
the flat bare ground  
and the electric neon signs  
glow dully  
as the scarlet sun rises  
once more  
upon the enormous activity  
and neon lit splendor  
of another Las Vegas day.

## **The Shadow of a Cloud**

Soft as the breath  
of a falling feather  
Swift as a lengthy finger  
in the act of pointing  
the shadow of a cloud  
swept over a small hill  
A purple smudge its imprint  
upon the grass, treetops  
like a velvet thumb press  
upon the warm receptive earth

## **Closing Time in a Park's Playground**

Children chase the fireflies lighting up the night  
Children dance in shadows beneath the trees  
Children cry like little sparrows on the garden path  
Children yearn for life, and yet more before sleep  
Children sleep deeply, deeper than life  
Children Children Children all  
All become adults

## Little Girl Laugh

Little girl laugh

Suck your candy  
cry when the impulse comes

Little girl  
    Little ballerina  
        dancing on the grass  
Bathe in the sun

but little girl laugh  
laugh  
laugh  
laugh

For some day  
it will all be gone

## **On Bookmarks**

(A childhood fantasy)

If the acid bites my palm  
as I press my hand on ink  
to make the mark of my fingers  
on white Japan paper  
then flowers too have been pressed  
flat to the shape of their dry colors  
withered between the paper  
as feathers and leaves left  
like bookmarks among bound pages  
between hard covers, pressed  
long ago and forgotten  
leaving only their impression  
like the skeleton of things  
black as the silhouette  
on a porcelain amulet  
or the shadow of a cobweb  
eyed by the spider



## **Visiting a Friend**

Panting I approached the cottage  
parting the brittle  
naked twigs of bushes  
springing up  
along the cluttered path.  
The cottage appeared hushed  
somnolently suspended  
in deep silence  
and when I tapped on the door  
I broke that silence.  
And when rapid footsteps  
approached the door  
the house from within  
became fully alive  
and the door suddenly opened  
and there stood my friend  
Smiling.

## **In a Greeting Card Store**

Someone very famous  
wrote -

"Life's little habits  
can lead  
to life's little pleasures  
when we are holy."

A long pink rose  
emboldened its way  
up the card  
delicately,  
befitting the card's high price  
and precious sentiments

I saw black crawling funerals  
when I looked at this  
And bethought  
I would actually make my own card.

## The Drunk Below

The creature comforts of life  
sometimes lacking  
in the stony  
cold heart of a city  
are recalled by  
spring leaves curling up  
to the sun  
and the bird calling  
its calm wilderness song.

On the bench below  
a drunk vomits up  
his Gallo red and spaghetti dinner  
hearing only the thunder now  
in his erupting heart.

The piping bird  
calling  
from a tree-bough  
remindful  
of the serenity  
lacking to those  
whose cosmopolitan hearts  
have been swallowed up  
by the cement and cold  
of city streets  
with the crying soul  
of need.

## **Enormous are the Dictators**

Enormous are the Dictators  
standing like solid blocks on the snow  
granite legged and barrel chested  
with steel helmet foreheads.

They recharge their eyes on dry-cells  
and sleep beneath coats of chain mail  
on cinder blocks and railroad ties.

Barren, barren snow  
the trees are an agony of silhouette  
against a gray sky  
and the castle stands in darkness  
gaping damp cold horror doors  
where the wind bites on nothing.

Dictators of monolithic barrenness  
you have pinched the soul  
you have smothered it in wet newspaper  
in offal, ruins and trash  
but still it smolders and gives up heat  
and the soul will choke you on its smoke  
its fire will burn your lightless eyes  
for the soul can not be quenched by offal  
nor shut closed with steel doors  
nor covered and contained within cement.

Enormous are the Dictators  
in their chests of steel  
until finally an iron bullet rips them open  
and they spread out like shattered tin cans  
on the heaps of their destruction.

## San Francisco's Broadway Strip at Twilight

Crossing Broadway at twilight is like passing over a dark flowing river of asphalt with shining enamel-crazy automobile lights poised to rush at the stop light. It is a world of red and white striped neon candy canes, mountains of electronic cotton candy, ferris wheels and roller-coasters of twinkling light bulbs: hot bubbling fountains and pools of soft drink lights in red and orange and sickly green spraying up into the night. It is one great carnival laugh, where neon spits and sputters sizzling against the broad darkening sky like loose hot wires igniting firework displays, taut with the scent of hot caramel and rot in the air.

It is barkers in white styrofoam boaters, bright with the exhilaration of their acts. It is voices in hotel doorways calling out *Hay man, lay a little bread on me*. And then lanky backed, skinny in thin long pegged pants and big cheap cowboy boots, the voice comes clumping out of the doorway with its palm up saying *Hay man, where ya going? Hay man, come here I'm talking to you!*

It is high blue bouffants and billowy pink chiffon dresses herded out into the sizzling night from great hunkering tourist busses touching the street only once to quickly whisk through a door into an alcohol-conditioned night club.

It is an atomic cartoon world painted in neon technicolor with the clouds supplying stereophonic sound, a Pleasure Island of Delights coursing on hard flowing booze and electricity sputtering off molecules and radioactive notes on live-wire banjos and jet hot guitars.

It is flesh tainted with the sweat of wound up excess. It is a rush in a circle of oblivion from bar to bar in the dark neon sputter of bright blurs along sidewalks crowded with oblivious drunks.

It is the smell of silk suits, sticky damp carnations, delicate nylon stockings wilting on the thighs of gross middle-aged women: of halitosis, automobile exhaust, wino pants, wax wrappers stained with mustard, lights spitting ions of electricity, cheap perfumed pomade and the sweet grease of orange, silver, and red lipstick on many soft damp lips.

Bar breaths, blasts of inner-pungent-alcoholconditioned-air through night club doors, and cool breezes descending in long swoops from the mute brilliant night sky. The sky indifferent and lovely and stern above it all.

It is a cry - for both the sane and the insane - from the howling dogs of iron streetlamps. It is a coursing desert roar of automobiles, spitting rubber from their tailfenders. It is trucks and busses quickly passing through indifferent to the spectacle.

And it is a giant silver sequined ball careening down the street off course. It is bums diving head-first into the gutter. It is women in voluminous ball room gowns drunkenly staggering out of taxis. It is the Rotarians' wives drunkenly hoisted up by the arm pits into taxis. It is Sodom and Gomorrah, the Roman Empire, Times Square, and Peoria, Illinois, all rolled up into one on a square tiny chip of black microfilm and I stumble across Broadway, under the intense evening sky, drunk, crazy drunk, oh my god how drunk, up Grant Avenue without ever once looking back.

***The Languor of Time***  
**For a Spanish Museum Guard**

This boredom is more  
solid than stone.

As if fixed all day

long

with this one

enormous painting

*Guernica*

Life and wine

flowed at its

conception

Life and wine

and loud laughter

The artist's friends

danced and sang

*And now I, like*

*a human immobile stone*

*Stand fixed to*

*this spot*

*guarding it*

*As if I were*

*somehow unhuman*

*a mere outcrop on*

*the continent*

*of life and laughter*

*which all this art &*

*beauty represent.*

## **On Passing (once again) Second Through the Door**

On a bright sunny afternoon  
I entered into that proud land  
dominated by corporate execs and the like  
and experienced  
once again  
a disquieting encounter  
at the Passport Office  
where, I understand  
any U. S. citizen  
is welcome.

The U.S. State Dept Passport Office  
is a mixed bag of travellers  
from all over the world  
and leaving my application at the desk  
I started to leave  
my way out suddenly crossing  
a powerful young executive's  
who also walked toward the door.  
In typical fashion  
he paused  
to let me go first  
though I was perhaps older  
and a step or two behind him.

But I stopped  
dead in my tracks  
on the blue carpeted floor  
to let him pass through first.  
An involuntary groan



a groan I've heard before  
like a grunt, a deep power grunt  
rising up from the solar plexus  
involuntarily emerged  
from the heavy power  
laden lips of this tall exec  
as forced to proceed first  
he stumbled slightly and went ahead.

Almost apologetically  
I paused  
watching him walk on now  
his great power trailing after him  
like a dense cloud through which  
I uncomfortably passed now  
sensing its close proximity and weight  
and physically felt it buffer up against me  
as if I had somehow committed an unspeakable crime.

Ah power!  
Power, how it builds upon itself!  
Acquires space, air, the living breath  
and tissue of all things, large and tiny  
within its greedy sphere!

But how had I caused offense?  
By merely pausing to let him pass through first?  
Why me and not him?  
Who was he to usher me first through the door?  
as if I were a woman or a small child?  
(That is, if there any women left  
who would allow such a thing?)  
This stranger I don't even know?

When I emerged into the air outside  
I felt the unsettling force  
of guiltily breaking  
certain powerful mores and customs  
as if by committing this crime  
by defending my dignity  
I had somehow behaved obscenely  
and felt both embarrassed and foolish,  
though the exec's politeness  
was only an expression of rank.

But the next tall powerful exec I saw  
close by on the street  
broke out now into a power trot:  
proud as a stag, raising his head  
glancing haughtily toward me  
making me wonder:  
am I really that inferior  
because I don't care to wear their clothes  
their coats and ties  
or care about the values  
which consume such ambitious men?  
For power and money,  
though surely important things,  
have never consumed my life  
in any important way.  
In fact,  
I dread and fear these hard material forces  
which shape our world  
often enough distracting us  
from truly living.

But who, I ask again  
are they

to always walk second through the door?  
As if all this really mattered?  
Making a mere proud show  
to impress mere strangers, others  
always feeding their own pride,  
egos,  
at my expense?  
Not to mention others.

How power distracts  
from vital things  
which being gentle  
are easily crushed  
in the proud scramble  
to hold one's place  
when power grips  
the surrounding scene,  
laying down all the rules,  
and the light of reason  
thins and darkens.

## Staying at a Large Midwestern Hotel

The hotel's lobby lights  
cast a glare on a huge steel sculpture.  
I pause to look.  
Smooth silver spindles  
like polished baleen  
fan through the air  
suggesting a large sea monster  
emerging out of coral wreath:  
it shimmers gleaming in the hot lobby light  
like straight silver scythes  
and its most perfect feature  
appears to be the smooth machine tooled  
precision of its shiny steel teeth.

I wonder at its meaning (if any)  
as rushing travellers pass me by  
And wonder  
at the meaning of Corporate America  
here in their "home away from home"  
(so the hotel's slogan goes)  
where isolated from the outside world  
they conduct the nation's business:  
dining on fancy gourmet dinners  
defrosted and cooked in the microwave  
hummed to by the Muzac in their halls and rooms  
observing the glittering similarity of inns and travel lodges  
throughout America, along the vast ribbons  
of numerous continental highways. Their ubiquity  
is utterly amazing. Though I have stayed  
in some very comfortable lodgings, without complaint.

Then, as if attempting to prove something,  
three or four businessmen  
stand under the regulated light  
uncorking loud boisterous laughter  
with a forced conviviality:  
sure of a certain superiority  
in their home away from home.

Now the sculpture makes sense  
as well as the Muzac  
and the deep crowding at the bar.  
Boston, Indianapolis, LA  
it could be all the same here.

## **The Man of the World**

During his childhood

a powerful Man of the World

loved all the lily pads and bullfrogs,

the duck weed and meriophillium,

the ants and flies and bees,

the snakes and red newts,

the marble salamanders hidden under rotting logs,

the musk turtles and painted turtles,

the occasional large snappers,

the box turtles and wood turtles,

the raccoons and skunks,

the pickerel frogs, the green frogs, and the opossums.

He loved the different shapes of tree leaves,

the oaks and maples and tulip trees,

the hanging willows and the stiff dark pines.

He revelled in pine needles lying brown all in a mat  
over the wide forest floor under the shadows of the hard sun;  
the liverworts and lichens growing  
among the cracks of rocks, and the tiny pads  
of moss and the little individual clumps of grass  
which made good throwing missiles when pulled out,  
their roots holding a mass of crumbling earth together.

He loved the hot sun smell outofdoors, in the open  
and the gentle breezes  
and the ice cold lake rippling blue  
across to the other shore  
and the mysterious little islands,  
and the long native black canoe to navigate in  
across the large blue lake.

He loved the tiny water skippers  
and the sun fish,  
and the little minnows in pools and streams

and those darting together within the deep lake;  
the preying mantis and the scarlet dung beetles  
with their shiny gemlike shells,  
the worms oozing through the uncovered earth,  
and the white little pulpy bugs  
that crawl in rotting logs  
or under wet matted leaves,  
and the ring-necked snakes  
the garter snakes and copperheads.

He loved the smell of marshmallows  
burning in the camp-fire at night  
under leaves, the dark smoke rising  
to the sky and dispersing gray  
under all the stars.

The scents of different woods  
burning in the camp-fire  
and the warmth of long wool blankets and



the zipped up sleeping bag  
lying on the uneven ground  
facing the bright red and sputtering fire  
eating away at twigs, leaves and a very large log.

In his childish mind  
as he lay in his bag  
the map of the lakes  
lay blue and green  
with its forested mountain  
and smooth large boulders  
and the asphalt road  
cutting evenly  
through the green forests  
along the rock lined borders  
of blue lakes.

The smell of flowers

and weeds,  
and auto exhaust  
mingling violet in the air,  
lying still before his eyes; and the incredible  
heat producing sweat  
drawing myriad tingling insects  
to his wet and soaked flesh,  
shirt and crotch of pants,  
slapping and wiping away  
at clouds of flying insects  
as he walked along  
through the large forest  
under the dense heat  
of the sun,  
the thick summer heat and air,  
and cool breezes  
occasionally tenderly crossing

over the sweat on his forehead and slick chest  
as if with a broad wet lick.

That was during the Man of the World's childhood.

In the lakes and the mountains.

Now, today,

like most of us,

he spends his days

preoccupied with important things..

## **Bums and the Sun**

(To be chanted, as if accompanied by a tom tom beat, inviting jazzlike riffs evoking the city's surrounding harshness.)

Bums and the sun go together.

So do monuments and the sun and bums go together.

So do wine bottles and public plazas,

and lawns and newspapers and the wind flown spray of public fountains on arcades.

So do movie marquees, and wide public streets and sidewalks, and the public trash cans.

So do clouds and the sky and the rain, and the passing fazes of light on tall public buildings.

Bums in the sun.

Huddled together.

Dark in their dirty clothes, dirty faces, dirty beards.

Along Kearney Street bums in the sun on the sunny side. In the long shadow of the B of A building. In the sun on the sidewalk.

Bums on the bright grass. Newspapers bright on the sparkling grass, spread open. Sheets taking sudden wind and

rising with the trash on the street.

Bums dark on the bright grass.

Bums drinking wine on the bright park benches. Slabs of bright concrete the city planners had other plans for.

The monuments of the city. Its Greek goddesses and heroes wielding their broad swords. Their perfect stone faces upturned. Their perfect bodies ten feet high. The classic culture of ancient Greece on neo-classic facades. A balcony for the mayor.

Saplings tender green drooping in the strangle of smog. Autos broiling under the sticky sun. The horizon orange. The high broad sky pale blue.

Bums in the sun on the grass, drinking their wine from cheap bottles. Their brown paper wrappers bunched up into dark dull objects of trash. On the grass.

The bronze doors closed and locked. The library closed today. The library bums use to sleep in over an open book. The library the mad use to wonder through dark even in the dark of the library. The hushed halls of the library closed and locked today.

Sunday.

The setting sun is white now. The approaching evening violet somewhere off beyond City Hall. The bums have felt the cool breeze and trudge away. The fountain's spray splatters across the street. A fog rolls in.

Bums and the sun go together.

## **Canned Music**

The purveyors of canned music  
met within a recording studio  
tuxed now in black and white.  
The tympany, brass, a hundred violins  
all assembled  
under the eager baton  
of a famous man  
who raised his long wand  
tapped once, then twice  
and began, pumping  
the music out  
in a long strand  
of solo flights:

Flooding tinted clouds  
orchestrated sunsets  
the tanned walls of the Grand Canyon  
silver piers at sunset  
swans in flight  
a full moon high and bright.  
the crimson sky winking  
its final sunlight

For hours and hours  
they recorded  
like a gathering ocean flood  
painted purple  
covering both day and night  
A sleeping wakefulness

a dream  
an unreality  
occupying all space  
and the strand of time  
unwinding  
like a vivid nightmare.

***Fall going on Winter***

*Standing out of the Rain by a Large Cathedral*

Nighttime in the city  
and the cathedral spire  
rises laced like thinly etched  
stone towards its high cross  
hung black against the  
less black swiftly moving sky  
reflecting a bright city night

And within a broad stone portal  
the air rising here with the cold  
fresh odor of the open street  
I watch a heavy curtain of rain fall  
heeding the beating tattoo  
the plop plop plop plop  
of the goblet sized drops  
falling on dry stone  
like a black stain running through  
the downslanted area I stand on.

The bronze doors locked  
the great cathedral hushed  
vividly huge and brooding  
behind me as I patiently wait  
watching numerous cars tear by  
through a rain covered street  
My toes aching cold  
feeling the damp on my feet  
and the rain soaked chill  
dripping pointed from my face



waiting quietly now, patiently  
for the torrent to stop  
crooned to by the plop plop plop  
of tintinnabulating drops  
spreading over the bleak black stain  
on bare gray stone before me  
feeling my toes curl against wet wool socks  
and the huge brooding of the cathedral behind me.

Huge and towering filled with its immense silence  
its pews quiet and empty and the candle wax  
melting in tiny votive cups, flames  
rising like so many tinted paisley drops  
in an incensed recess of dark shadow  
where no one walks alone now  
over a hushed quiet aisle  
under tall dark stained glass:  
dark against the huge blue night  
the fire of the sun  
lost as surely now as the early daylight  
among all the shimmering scarlets,  
greens, reds, blues,  
of burning daytime glass,  
pelted now by rain and the hard rush  
of winter wind  
Isolated now from all that commotion  
outside, gailing forcefully against  
the etched cathedral stone  
where standing out on the street  
under the archivolt alone  
I feel its force  
caressing my face  
without Christian charity  
desiring the remote cathedral warmth

through its shut and locked bronze doors  
like a massive rebuff.

## Thinking of Distant Camps

Knitted up in the scarred face of the earth, beneath the spring shrubs and new grass, the blood that soaked there lies. And from the quiet earth and blue sky the passive beauty of nature blooms again.

*This is the place, this is the place*, the stones and iron markers cry. Beneath a placid sky, the earth merely earth, the day cool or hot, *this is the place*, the old wound knitted up in vast lawns, quickly, silently, with the burial of torn and broken humanity.

Where is the horror in a brick?

Where is the sigh on a rain washed street?

Where is the cry once it has been absorbed by the air?

Where are the monuments of pain and torture once the sun has set and risen again? Where is the horror in the stillness? Where is the record of man's inhumanity to man preserved? Where in this silence is it kept?

Cameras record the brick wall. Muted *ahs* and *ohs* and the tears of those who know. The humble discrete shuffle of feet following a tour guide.

Where is the pain in that brick they see? Ah the naked knees of children, those too young to know, what will they in their turn know?

What city street has not been stained by blood? What brick wall

has not known violence? Where have not maddened passions  
once smeared the air?

In the night streaked with madness the sirens wail: oh cold stars  
implacable in your frosty heights. Muted stone hovering over the  
passion below. And when the sun rises in the morning a wet  
stain drying on the street: the brick now silent: the light of day  
clear on the empty street.

And a child may silently walk his dog down the alley.

## **A Painted Turtle Basked....**

A painted turtle  
basked  
on the edge  
of a dry log.

As if clasping the sun  
its legs reached out,  
the webs pointed and broad.  
And his long neck,  
his wrinkled painted skin,  
stretched  
to the bony beak of his small head.

His blue shell  
was flat  
and dry  
and slightly curved  
at the edges,  
the plates scaly and worn.  
His soft painted throat  
gulped rhythmically now  
with the pleasure of the sun  
beating on his high head and dry shell.

And with a soft motion,  
the head, exposed,  
turned to stare up at me  
and then quickly fumbling  
the turtle slid  
off the log in a sudden panic

diving deep into water  
and I was sorry  
I had scared him  
wishing he could understand  
how much I loved him.

## **An Oncoming Ocean Fog**

The blotched, bulging mottled sun  
burns a wall fiery red  
the baked earth reflecting  
a red, bright madness  
of carmine, earthen glory.  
Splendid above the waters  
lapping gently, lapping gently  
sliding from one shore to the other  
accumulating a darker blue  
a darker blue  
burning black under silver lights.

The canals lost among the bridges  
lead from mystery to mystery.  
And the sun spreads her wings  
along a low horizon  
drooping among the twirling droplets  
of an oncoming fog  
that hugs the low waters  
slowly diminishing  
until night is blue  
and wet and chilly  
without any burning stars.

## **A Century of Leaves**

A century of dead leaves  
laid out flat in shadow  
make a welcoming bed  
for new acorns  
that have fallen from the trees  
And deep in that mat of leaves  
a black snake slivers, awakening out  
of a long smokey eyeless night.

Deep beneath frozen mud  
frogs sleep within  
this nestling protective earth  
and when the pond froze over  
the ducks all went elsewhere  
And the long gray ice covered  
all the pond's sleeping creatures.

Now the sun melts  
the thin ice  
and all these creatures emerge  
toward an irresistible warmth  
Spring's buds  
crack through the earth  
with dots of color  
joyous with the warmth  
and gentle air  
of the growing season  
And the birds return  
filling the air with color  
and bright song  
as a light new freshness  
grips all our souls.



## **Sunning**

The thin sand sifting in the sea breeze  
the hard sun irascibly spreads bright over me  
quietly sunning out on the beach

Tranquilly  
in perfect stillness  
passing thoughts stray  
like lonely pebbles dropping through water

**A Meditation on Market Street,  
on the edge of San Francisco's Tenderloin  
A large slum neighborhood**

Among the aging litter on the street  
A crescent of fresh cantaloupe  
lay in the gutter.  
It was still bright yellow and dewey  
marked by the edges of flat teeth  
in even rows down to the rind.

Perhaps ants will soon find it  
or a car will simply squash it to a pulp  
or when the fire hydrant's turned on  
a rough cataract will scoop it up  
and boil it away down the street  
with all the other filth.

This trace is a simple human touch  
recently left behind:  
crenelated flat by rows of incisors  
the rind is more vivid than  
a curled up tissue  
recently tossed white onto the sidewalk  
or even the red chewing gum:  
and certainly the empty pint bottle  
is no surprising sight.

Some meat remains on the rind  
and untouched by dirt or dust  
it could still provide some nourishment.  
Do dogs ever eat cantaloupe?

Or cats?

Or: a starving man or woman on the street?

For there are hungry stalking about.

Somebody only recently passed by

and I can sympathetically taste the cantaloupe

in my mind with him or her:

refreshingly sweet and moist

against those flat closing teeth

imprinted more clearly than a set of fingerprints

and the tiny yellow seeds and pulpy orange meat

are also clear in my mind,

making my mouth water,

as in the corner of my eye

I note the cantaloupe's wet clean flesh on the pavement

and all its vivid meaning

quickly walking by:

for this is no neighborhood to linger in.

## ***The Lady Anna Lee***

Creaking simultaneously in unison  
all the fishing boats  
protest against the rising sea  
under clouds grown gray  
with the chill of a gathering rain

### *The Lady Anna Lee*

with its dove's breast bow  
girdled by a sturdy hull  
groans against the dock  
tied with black rubber tires  
in a constant insistent knocking  
though still far off  
from the rising of the sea

Green and white is her dove's breast  
the bow swells above the rising water  
acid with the scent of gasoline  
and motor oil in the freshening breeze  
stung thin now by a sheet of cold rain  
while the rusting iron drums  
tied tight to the bearded docks  
tint the shadows with a rainbow logic

Consorted in mutual motion  
the boats bob heavily against the gale  
rattling deeply now in unison, clanking  
hard against the floating docks  
And the large bay ripples far off  
as the new breeze sweeps in  
and fresh ocean water

cleanses the stagnant rainbows  
with an illusion of purity

In the sweet morning sunshine  
*the Lady Anna Lee*  
purrs across a calm water  
with a long delicate rainbow  
rising from a dazzled mist  
where the green mountains  
open out to the broad blue sea  
Her dove's breast riding high,  
crossing green and white  
with a crested parting  
of water sailing in sun  
toward the open sea  
toward the rolling sea  
into the beautiful, bountiful  
glistening sea

## **At the Civic Center Fountain**

The squat gull paces like a toy soldier by a reflecting fountain  
An orange bill and piercing beady eyes  
his pin feathers fluff with satisfaction  
and his chests puffs out with pure white down  
While the opera goers pass him by.

Flat footed on the cement he paces  
wings held to fly.  
But not far  
only leaping up to the rim of the fountain.  
And bathing in the evening summer light  
he drifts like a paper boat holding his head high  
washing in the flowing water, bathing  
as all the opera goers pass him by.

The squat gull sits in the water floating high  
his webbed feet held high  
a tail and a crest of wings  
and his head squat now on his shoulders  
intent as the evening, the sky

The gull doesn't fly

The gull doesn't fly

But bathes beneath the evening sky  
as all the hurrying opera goers pass him by.

## Even Briefer Brief Lines

Within the private sphere of the mind  
the world's captured images dwell  
Here numerous snapshots are stored  
that color our outer vision's face.  
It is our world  
our only world  
the world each of us knows.  
That face, so bright and wide  
let us briefly examine now  
in all its simple isolation  
like tiny unique offerings  
picked randomly from the whole

\* \* \*

The sabbath languor and emptiness of a Sunday in New  
York

Brooding nights, electric days

An old calendar on the wall  
hangs listlessly  
It has four months more to go

Lying in the dark with his dreams, finally he went to sleep

Their cold voices  
still cold  
but never incorrect

She had aqua hazel, nature green eyes

The faces in Hell  
are a mirror  
held up to Heaven

The clack of bubble gum bursting  
Her tongue sticks out red  
and she appears clownish  
though she can't really know it

Faded blond varnish, an old guitar  
leans tuneless up against a wall

The iced melon dew fog

The silence in the room was as cold and watchful as the  
walls

Days like flyspecks of sunlight

She made an artificial smile  
which reminded him of waxed fruit

Shopping is the great American pastime

On a bright supermarket aisle  
heads of lettuce wink in crenelated plastic

Bobbing umbrellas, oh sea of humanity, marching on

Genuine tears are not so bitter as false tears

The sun shines upon a pawnshop window



Art is a form of worship

In Hell the damned can count their coffin nails

Wisdom is also a form of silence

Great art often appears obvious

Washing dishes has few rewards  
but we have all done it

The chug a' chug heaped on chug a' chug of artificial  
laughter

The motto on the office wall  
read: "All knowledge, virtue, and intelligence  
belongs to the strong.  
To the weak  
all humility, ignorance, and shame."

\* \* \*

## **My Own Review**

A felicitous  
excursion  
into the new frontiers  
of admirable  
achievements  
executed  
with a keen eye  
and understanding  
evoking  
a mastery of the subject  
and form  
in a jewel (or gem)  
of a splendid  
performance  
happily  
undertaken  
by a superb master  
of the genre.