Lonely Planets (2005)

Exploding supernovae

Spread particles

Across the galaxy.

We still live

In that ocean, we

Carry it around

In our cells.

Ice fishing on Europa,

We wonder

What might lurk

Beneath the surface.

Our eyes are the water

In the ocean of stars.

We can taste it in our tears.

Sea Change (2005)

Clouds are laughing. Rain is ending. The old clown

sits in revery. Later, a tornado rearranged his

priorities. Now, he has a line of sight to the ocean,

but his gaze is inward, toward humility.

Nature Preserve (2006)

In the woods behind my home

Is a Nature Preserve

Its central feature is a lake

It takes me about an hour

To walk around it

There are no dogs allowed

No fires, no swimming, no

Boating, no metal detectors, no

Camping, no horses, no

Picnics, no no

I am to fish only

In designated areas

I am to walk clockwise

Around the lake, or be

Stopped by the tall, steel turnstile

Last winter, the newspaper

Printed a letter from a group

of malcontents who crusaded

To get rid of the beavers

For chewing down the birch trees

Another group began a campaign

To get rid of the dread

Purple loosestrife, a tall flower

That grows by the waters edge

In a manner offensive to nature

Right now, the focus is on

The distasteful blue spruce

Which the officials of the preserve

Deem to be opportunistic

& unwelcome among the natives

They’re building a trail

That will penetrate to the heart

Of the wildest part of the park

Leading from the Township Center

Easy access for all

Who prefer their wildlife preserved

Leelanau Fire (2006)

The night is white.

The moon, a cosmic smile.

Big wind frightens a fawn.

A branch falls, an alarm.

For awhile, I remember

Pictures across the river,

A life boat in the snow,

Radio squawking at the stars.

Now images are gone.

Mind empty, I’m alone.

Right here, by the smoke

Of the glowing embers,

Camping on the edge

Of the open sky.

Black Flies (2006)

In the north woods, the black flies are as constant &

insidious as time. They circle persistently at high

speed around your head until your attention is

distracted, then they dive in for a mouthful of your

temporal flesh. Only wind & rain bring transitory

relief from their eternal onslaught.

Isolated Incident (2006)

Low grey clouds

Breathed a chill warning.

The smell of ice

Was in the air.

As darkness fell

I could hear

Whispers of flakes

Falling in the dark.

Next morning,

From where I stood

On the covered porch,

A series of footprints

Led off toward

The old logging road

That climbs the hill

Behind my hidden cabin.

Someone had stopped

While I slept.

Maybe a hunter

With a head start

On daybreak,

Or did the hunted

Take a break

From the snow

Before the last cold hill?

Stumps (2006)

Stumps of a proud generation

Tables of green moss

On a carpet of brown & yellow needles

Blue jay pounds a nut

Red squirrel chitters territory

A roof of tall white pines

Progeny of stumps

Whole counties of stumps

Villages of stumps

Houses of salamanders & centipedes

So much furniture

Left out in the rain

Wood aromatic in wet dew

Shrinking back from its own bark

Northern Lights (2006)

A roar of jeweled leaves

Titillates the dark northern sky

Celebration above the trees

Aurora flares

Sun spots dance the edge

Owl turns to small sound

Marten clings

To a red pine branch

Outside my sleepy head

Wild Strawberries (2006)

Coming across them

Unexpectedly, as

A child, they

Taste as fresh

As red. Hard

To collect enough

To bring home

For jam, so we

Eat them while we can.

Masks (2006)

1.

Clouds of joy rain painfully

On toy villages, temporarily ephemeral

Feeble trees emit intermittent screams

Samples of noise impregnate imperviously

A mouthful of antique coins

An earful of 3rd degree love

Shoreline tents, leopard skinned

Starlight on pink steel bridges

Inspirational bloodbuckets

Strain the concerts, emphatic

2.

Cockroaches, successful in longevity

Raise the standard of experience

Neurotic beasts cry bitterly

On beaches of plastic popcorn

Boxes of big dreams are filed

In hope chests & sour trunks

A surrender is signed

In 4/4 time, appalling

Alternative habits, none feasible

Mask a blatant truth, shameful

3.

Blue heron stalks, motionless

Spear marks appear anonymously

Another ridiculous brainstorm

More mirth, defective but elastic

A strategic withdrawal, brave friend

Neglected correspondence, indignant

But wisely alone, inventive

Powerful, mercilessly noble

Dealers imagine victories

Over those who starve, gold-toothed

Transmigration (2006)

1.

A torch of morning birds flares

Joyful bubbles of music explode

Redundant black bear on the back deck

Disoriented curiosity of the wild

Dark wounds on drunken willows

Celebrate knots of green light

Hearts glow from old houses

Where candles burned like dreams

Linking flesh beyond limits

We scratch across intentional walls

2.

In rooms down the hall

Priests wield ritual implements

Lay folk kneel in awe

Rain returns as we leave the lodge

Lingering by the plexiglass partition

Like a yellow blanket on a river bed

You slouch in the back row

Staring blindly out the window

Quick locks broke keys up

Imagined as overgrown paths

3.

The dead whisper insistently

The October wind gives in

In the blood-filled eye

Of the next hurricane

In a year of death by drowning

& honor gained by refusing honor

Emptied of pressing desire

Eternally firing but lethal

The letters labored under parched parchment

Sure sign of a moral compass

Desire (2006)

1: SKIN CANALS

Snakes fly toward the sun

Elements form a grammar

Spherical bodies rotate in space

Hollow noise of surf is heard

A game of hide & seek began

Round stones rose from sand

A stranger ran, hammer in hand

Against the mountains of the sun

A connection between snakes & men

A legend in the tiny islands

2: AFTER THE ROBBERY

Searchers return, bereft

Armed in suits of platinum

Even if the coffins were illusions

War broke out among the ruins

A crocodile lost its way

East or west to a fixed position

The stranger came again to play

Available in this space age

Refugees, constricted, extricate

In inexplicable picturesque epics

3: MAD MOUNTAINS

Solid stone broke the diamond saw

An iridescent surface had been formed

Departure gyrated a gentle beat

Teenagers brought the fresh roots

Without warning, there’s the ruins

You find no steps, nor stairs

Consorted shapes were formed

Four balls dangled like musical notes

Gas sends out a beam of light

Sure to appear as simple ornamentation

Spaces (2006)

1. THE VOID

Ornamental bones

Climb ladders of disaster

A hot breeze laughs

Always wild & welcome

Perpetual pinpricks

Maintain their eternal courses

Shadows vanish in the night

Nothing in the mirror but light

I walk toward ruin

Guided only by the moon

2. OLD PENNIES

Many men remain mad

At Descartes, who split

Kierkegaard took a flying leap

Camus sank a camouflaged canoe

Nietzsche growled into the mirror

Jean Paul Sartre played it smart

Tzara took off his tiara

Blake jumped in the lake

Army surplus tanks

Shoot blanks into the banks

3. WILDERNESS HOTEL

A loud act of love

Shakes the foundation

Falling trees scream freely

Abandoned avenues echo no more

An egg, emotionally crushed

No one gets the joke

A van vanishes down a long road

A sound drowns in silence

We reserve our opinions

Our private parking spaces

Bois Blanc Island (2006)

The beach is littered with rocks.

It was an underwater reef

Before the waters receded.

Now, an island of cedars & pines.

Bats rise in large numbers

From the tallest cedars.

They own the sky for an hour

Before & after nightfall.

Packs of coyotes chortle

As they break sticks past

My night window.

They are bold at dusk.

When their gray forms appear

On the rock-strewn beach,

It looks as if the rocks

Move inland, escaping rising water.

Cape May Storm (2006)

Winds burn up the sea,

Lifting curtains from the surface

& slamming them

Across the wood shingled houses,

Growths on the arm of the cape.

Storm doors whip loose,

& patches of shingles

Are ripped off & thrown aloft.

They find slivers & pieces

Of their neighbor’s roofs

When they hoe their gardens

In the inevitable spring.

Driving easterlies

Throw glassy spears,

Soaking gray, weathered shingles,

Until one side of each house

Is drenched to black.

The roof-ridges swell,

Then later

Shrink & settle, deformed.

When the soaked house

Dries in the sun,

Clouds of steam rise up,

& naive strangers alert the firehouse.

For The Living Dead (2007)

1.

I rise with an effort

I feel the dead

They vibrate

In my foggy heart

Like icebergs colliding

In oceans of blood

I am alone

I sit by my window

I become a stone

Like stagnant water

Or steady drumming

I was once a prisoner too

I hear again

The familiar beat

Inside my heart

The divine rhythm

Of the countless dead

The rainstorms of light

2.

The zombies are revolting

They are crude in their culinary habits

Eating the flesh of the living

Raw with no seasoning

Duly elected representatives

With secret term limits

Sound the alarm

The flesh-eaters are in the house

They are slow but they keep on coming

They are mesmerized by fireworks

They like to run amok

When they aren’t milling aimlessly

Zombies have no sex lives

They share the despair of the wolfman

Drunk on power under the full moon

Soaked in gasoline waiting for a light

Enflamed by love & hate

Counting down to the final insult

3.

A cipher falls dead in the snow

From a bus of discontinued androids

Last year’s models obsolete versions

Of absolute ideals polished

To insane shines that reflect

The light that cannot be silenced

Jolly gunshots wound our pride

Armies of pleasure reap

Rewards of perfect cartoon murders

Buddhas smithereened by friendly fire

Floating in rivers of polite bodies

Joyfully waving their black flags

They are the human furniture

They are the living dishrags

They are the constant reminders

They are the ruined fortresses

Engorged on cloned flesh

Fitted with artificial hearts

4.

In the post-apocalyptic world

The zombies are loosely organized

With no zombie leader

They wander in random abandon

Trying to play various musical instruments

But their rhythm is shot

A small group of human survivors

Still comb their hair & wear make-up

Drooling & shuffling their feet

The zombies are mystified

By the smallest most subtle stimuli

But their haunted bony faces never smile

In the land of the dead

If a zombie bites you

You become a zombie too

You become a soldier in the zombie army

Sharing a goal with no sense of purpose

With an inner drive to obey

5.

The red bird still sings

In the green earth tree

In the airtight shopping mall

In the fenced-off arena

In shadows of tall buildings

In shacks of toothpicks

Robots built by zombies

Then put in charge

The doors are all locked

Impervious to your meat cleavers

Oblivious to your howls of pain

Ungrateful for your sacrifices

We navigate by dead reckoning

Our options are greatly reduced

We search in vain for a way out

Disguised by decadent cosmetics

The sentries at the gate are drunk

When the invasion comes they will die

6.

What can we do

What do we know

We who are barely human

We who have broken the 7th seal

We who have left the gate open

We who have stolen the Golden Fleece

Now the ghosts swallow us

We sullenly celebrate their loss

Our eyes opened wide as greed

Our diamonds soaked in blood

The coldest heads prevail

To organize the slaughter

Where have we been

What have we done

We mounted the final burial mound

We heard again the ancient last rites

We cloned sheep by the herd

We unleashed the living dead

7.

The robots are in formation

Speaking in unison

They all have the same face

Humorously humorless

They bow & scrape

Without relish or anguish

Robot malfunctions

Are inconvenient

Animated by artificial energy

Their movements are spooky

Unaware of planned obsolescence

Or constant surveillance

They make good household servants

They make good food service workers

They don’t mind piece-work

Efficient & cost effective

Prison guards, they

Know no fear

8.

They don’t need names

They don’t have dreams

They don’t throw temper tantrums

They’re not ticklish

They don’t itch much

They never need vacations

They don’t get pregnant

They don’t get drunk

They don’t smoke

They don’t eat or shit

They know not art

They hardly ever fart

A robot may be decommissioned

When a better model is developed

Many of the latest prototypes

Are biodegradable

They utilize virtual fibers

To simulate the naturally organic

9.

The severed head of Orpheus screams

Among the ashes of ancestors

Among the names carved into stone

In secret caves & hidden places

In tedious epics of doomed voyages

To the edge of the world

Organic life is prone to rot

Wooden puppets become brittle

Formaldehyde replaces blood

When the machine rules

Over the maker of machines

Which ones are the tools

Ghost lost before the body

Toy soldier left out in the rain

Hollow & impervious to pain

The pounding of robot feet

Grows louder by the parameter

Drowning out the earths heart

10.

I feel the spirits of the dead

They explode like seedpods

A thousand downy spheres

Doors that won’t stay closed

Locks meant to be broken

Dandelions born in the wind

Beats of light drummed by spirits

Into the pulsating heart of sound

Into the unsanctified dirt

Out to the edges of space

Through the wounded waters

Beyond the toxic pain of time

I hear the call of light

Through the mechanical darkness

Through the marching shadows

Through the neutral rocks

The stale bread that feeds

The dreams of the anemic world

Dilemma (2007)

A broad-tailed hawk is using our winter bird-feeder

for bait. Yesterday, we watched while it plucked grey

feathers from a song sparrow & ate her. We grieved

for the sparrow, feared for the chickadees & the two

sets of cardinal mates.

You urged me to shoot it, but wouldn’t we hate to see

the hawk starve just as much? Frozen in

ambivalence, I wait, not sure what I’ll do if I see red

down floating on a cold wind.

Paradox Of Intersections (2007)

Every other busy intersection

Reveals a single dusty shoe

Or a flattened single glove

Their mates are gone

Though little movies come along

Flashing images of a conjured past

Later the shoes run away

& the gloves wave goodbye

Until the inevitable intersection passes

Littered with lost kisses & near misses

Garment (2007)

Light emanates from my coat

My coat that contains

A shining stream

My coat of fool’s gold

Wiser than the stars

Singing in its pockets

Imprisoned by the fragrance

Of the rosy clouds

Like the dark heart

Hidden in a bright cave

Hidden in infinity

So far out in the open

That little fish

Swim through its fabric

In Space (2007)

You need your space.

You need to screen

Your calls.

You must be careful

With opinion polls.

The faster you go

The more energy

It takes. You have

A pattern of memories

That confirm your beliefs.

You have seen

The little creatures.

You have sent

Symbolic broadcasts,

Sitcoms, talk-shows, commercials.

“But what about the spaceships?”

You ask, remembering a time.

Summer Storm (2007)

Flying leaves & branches

Smacked the window panes

With violent thuds & bangs

Within the desperate sound

Of still-rising wind

Thick with blasting sand

The curtains were drawn

Thick & warm

While the tantrum rain

Flooded the muddy garden

& the roses, in pain

Made their final stand

Against the giant hand

The Terms (2007)

Mute witness to these killings

Doors slam forever

In your famous nightmares

Blood stains forever

The Swiss Army reputation

When you take the gloves off

You find they still fit

For a moment

The Emperor wore clothes

All ears tuned for the verdict

All eyes glued to the screen

We’ve come to accept as real

Anticipating denial

Of our heart-felt appeal

The Moment (2007)

The ocean splashed

Over the rocks

While trees exploded

Along the dusty path

An instant of sunlight

Illuminated the cedars

As seagulls dipped

Above the wilderness of waves

At the edge of the beach

A fir tree tried to sleep

While greedy green weeds

Played a cool jazz beat

An old clown collapsed

Inside the silence of his mask

Clown (2008)

I do not know me but

A train of thought

Drags me through

Illusory galaxies

Where silly circus music

Mocks my mortal wounds

While I run in circles

Wearing shoes that don’t fit

An unfortunate immigrant

Buffeted by forces of history

I somehow manage

A foolish laugh

Released from myself detached

My face a funny mask

Dream Home (2008)

In the home of the clown there are many rooms. In

 the den, a statue of the Buddha palms some coins of

the realm. In the bedroom, oversized clown-slippers,

clown-boots & clown-flip-flops are scattered on the

floor, like beached whales. There also stands the

dressing table, with its oval mirror ringed with solar

bulbs.

The clown looks into the mirror & sees a wise man

with a big red nose.

Books line the library walls, but they are all blank

except one. The music room is full of drums. The

clown beats the drums to celebrate sunrise & sunset

each day. The living room floor is covered with

pillows & balloons of every color. Calliope music

plays continuously. The clown lives tenderly alone,

in his dream home.

Best Laid Plans (2008)

1.

A man planned on living.

When asked if he also planned

On dying, he replied

That dying, being automatic,

Required no planning.

“Isn’t living also automatic?”

I asked him, & he said

It was time to eat something.

2.

A cowbird laid its egg

In a cardinal’s nest.

It punctured the cardinal eggs

& replaced them with its own.

When the egg hatched,

The cardinals wore themselves out

Feeding the quickly growing cowbird

That they thought was their own.

Haunted Windows (2008)

Standing on sand

We peek beyond

Shafts of light

Past deeper shafts

Of darkness

We call out

Hoping to be heard

Above the rattling autos

You can see the stars

Even in the daylight

From a deep hole

This shafted wound

In mother earth

Where we were found

We cry for wings

Even as wings approach

Traveling Music (2008)

The wounded moon

Begins its long descent.

A stable of restless horses

Whinnies in the glad wind.

Uprooted trees roam South

In search of higher ground.

We are penetrated by the water

Of the perfect rainstorm,

Leaking into the blooded ground,

Leaking into the flesh of stone

Where the hot earth’s heart

Pumps mountains skyward,

To break, like waves

On salty desert plains.

Persona (2008)

Coming into another spring

sixty summers down,

white light burns me

through dark days.

I peel the layers

from the onion of memory,

given the gravity of the grave.

So now my persona

is consuming my doppelganger.

I feel the triumph of stone

traveling from gravel to dust,

the fading smile

of a waning moon,

another seizure

on the seismic meter:

still one more tattoo

on the face

of my battered public bust.

In the arid badlands

Of desire,

Past the long watches

Of sleepless nights,

I hold communion

With those lost ghosts,

Even as I pass into

The ever-darkening mist.

Dark Star (2008)

Dark star, deadly binary nemesis

Of the transitory star we call sun,

Here we are, on beleaguered planet earth,

Worrying about our own extinction.

Dark star, parent of the next meteor,

A tsunami of lethal energy,

Serial killer of the dinosaurs,

Great reaper of scheduled massacres,

Here, we are the captives of gravity.

Dark star, our lost identical twin,

Shooting mountains in our direction,

Playing Cain to our reflective Abel,

Birthing invisible anti-matter,

Catalyst for horrific disaster.

Dark star, planetary doppelganger,

Mirror occupying negative space,

Black reflection at the vortex of time,

Here, in sunlight, we wait,

& maturate.

The Vampires (2008)

Vampires have a lot

To answer for

They wear formal-wear

While they siphon the blood

From virginal peasants

Many in their own employ

They slink around

Under cover of night

Suddenly appearing

At the sides

Of their sleeping victims

Without regard to privacy

They are sensitive

To the price of silver

As well as certain commodities

Not to mention real estate

Not to mention blood banks

Butcher shops orthodontic offices

They skip every holiday but one

They are dead on the run

Their memories are long

As are their teeth & nails

But they have no patience

Especially for the weak living

Asleep in material fortresses

Where no mirrors dare reflect

They dream of dying

Until waking to hunt

The souls of the living

Ultimate dark muggers

Who the hell are these bastards?

Why are they in charge?

The streets run red

Streams carry the blood

To the sewer arteries

To mingle with the melting sea

You might be a vampire

If you’re still talking

A year after your funeral

You might be a blood sucker

If you fall asleep

To awaken in somebody’s nightmare

You might be a vampire

If all the murders

Increase your profits

You might be a vampire

If everyone you see

Looks like fresh meat

This would be a good place

To live, if it wasn’t

For the damned vampires

You see them lurking

Everywhere nowadays

Drinking in bars, flying on planes

Plastic surgery. Cosmetics. Vodka.

They insidiously develop land deals.

They compulsively gamble in casinos.

Their breath reeks of blood.

Their immortal souls are lost

Forever in congressional rolls.

Hearts Of Light(2008)

Deer eat magnetic trilliums

Their entrails glow above

Stars in their own heaven

\*

Frosty spikes

Murderers of maternal

Stones

\*

What breeze can silence light?

What sound emanates

From gasping oceans?

\*

Wreathes of sunshine

Illuminate

The sandy corpses

\*

Distant coyotes

Chatter hysterically

Their eyes flash like stars

\*

Stars in my eyes

Centuries in transit

Fires extinguished years ago

\*

The pulsating morning sun

Sings an ancient song

& we all sing along

\*

Galaxies

Hearts of light

Years away

\*

Exploding supernovae

Spread particles

Through droplets of water

\*

Embittered light

Sees itself

In black holes

Lunar Fog (2008)

Man in the next booth

Complains about “Africans”

His breath smells like meat

\*

He lit his cigar

Passed me a damp matchbook

With only one match left

\*

A drunk woman

Stormed abuse

At her own reflection in a shop window

\*

A big grey owl hears

The heartbeat of a mouse

A far cry from silence

\*

Fire consumes a house

Where noone ever lived

The smoke-alarms still blare

\*

Indian flutes play

Windchimes in breeze off the lake

Two ears in between

\*

A ‘66 Beetle

Beatles on the radio

Play Yesterday

\*

The fickle festival crowd

Checked out early

To avoid a spring rainstorm

\*

A nude girl stood

Before a mirror

“Wild Horses” on the radio

\*

Nightflowers bloom

Beneath a yellow M

Bathed in lunar fog

Japanese Bones (2008)

Dawn glows on the edge

Signaling the departure

Of the windy dead

\*

Under the drum

Birch trees play timpani

In the music of the breeze

\*

I crossed a windy street

To a metronome

Japanese bones ticked air

\*

Spider in my doorway

Still here when I exit

Between spring rainstorms

\*

A bee investigated

A rotten berry

Then hummed away

\*

The cat doesn’t know

That poop in a Zen garden

Ruins its feng shui

\*

Rain drops on the tin roof

Footsteps hurry over

The antique covered bridge

\*

A moth found shelter

From a pounding rain

Under a plastic kayak

\*

Rain falls in a river

A message from the night

Kisses on wet skin

\*

Light disperses from a fresh grave

Seeking out

The thirsty summer moon

The Mist (2009)

I wander

Through memory caverns

In search

Of the elusive present,

Like a big fish

That struggles upstream

To spawn in times river

One last time.

Like a mad wind

In an ancient storm,

Dead friends

Pierce the peaceful solitude

Where I have come

To take my soft rest

In the depth

Of a winter night’s dream.

In the arid badlands

Of desire,

Past the long watches

Of sleepless nights,

I hold communion

With those lost ghosts,

Even as I pass into

The ever-darkening mist.

Back Home (2009)

Winter is here.
The air is chilly & crisp.
Field mice have moved inside.
Many thoughts crowd my mind
& grief clouds my heart.
Many songs press for words,
But who will sing them?
The morning wind invades my shirt.
The light of the moon dissipates,
& the sirens moan
As I fly myself back home.

Apparition (2009)

A rabid racoon stalked across the neighbor’s backyard.

Its eyes were milky & saliva hung like a film cocoon

from its mouth. It moved slowly, back-hairs on end.

When it disappeared into the woods, I was filled with

horror & remorse.

In The Wake (2010)

Halfway through

hurricane season,

the lost rain

returned to the body:

sad monsoon

after the big wave

that flooded

our defenseless cups,

that left us

waterlogged but thirsty,

even as the angry tide

receded,

even as the ancient tears

ran undamed

from new eyes

that opened underwater

to see the useless furniture

swirling inexorably

toward the sucking drain,

whirlpooling

with dollar bills

into a foreign currency,

faces adrift

in low vapor,

shoreline lined

with dying dreams.

Drifts (2010)

on a sand dune a rune

written by a stray offshore wind

behind a low cloud

a blue heron waits

seeing past its reflection

\*

a big green snowplow

after a heavy snowstorm

a blade that cuts through

white flowers in windowsills

white dreams throughout the winter

\*

outside my window

low branches bow in sorrow

a spider in the corner

works out his karma

while owls sleep in the deep woods

Flotsam (2010)

six black vultures turn

& spin in the methane wind

above a dead doe

her gasses rise to the sky

another floater

\*

cars speed down the road

their garish colors bleeding

through the dark shadows

accompanied by a big stomp

bass jacked up thumping up

\*

seeds scatter freely

in the soggy spring breezes

but I am asleep

beneath a tall pine tree free

to float on my bay of dreams

 `

The Dark Roofs (2010)

in the new darkness

the white light of a firefly

skips on the thick hedge

it makes us think of fairies

even though we know better

\*

wet city streets shine

under crisscrossing headlights

leftover snow melts

into the whirlpool storm drains

we breathe the heady spring breeze

\*

the low moon is huge

surrounded by distant stars

silhouettes of trees

decorate black hills

bats whirl over the dark roofs

Sound Off (2010)

a loud pavement saw

rattles through a cement slab

dust flies everywhere

sand bleaches in the sunlight

until the hole is refilled

\*

a quick spark ignites

a can of gasoline flares

the sound pops eardrums

fire sprays in random patterns

catching some missing others

\*

a quiet stream flows

through a pine & cedar woods

deer crash through low brush

birds & bugs sound off

Fresh Red (2010)

a cold autumn wind

coming across the water

dries away my tears

steals the breath from my lips

more for the breath of the earth

\*

at the blues concert

a girl with colorful arms

waves them over us

while a toothless man

dances his high yellow steps

\*

in the woods behind

the trees drop their green disguise

truckloads of apples

run along the long highway

bring fresh red to the south

Beyond Our Control (2010)

The first thing we saw upon arrival was

the salamander legs and bat black eyes

that emanated from a face of

distant stellar cold light years

that was strangely familiar

from ancient demon-goddess dreams

where eternal fire flares from onyx eyes

and the body hills and valleys whisper

secret messages from defunct deities

that resurrect in your word/dream-made-flesh

world made fresh, reborn but left

still unreachably distanced from our hungry claws

our dry wooden legs, our feet of hot lead

and the unspeakables that have been destroyed by

our insatiable need for

not merely flesh, but a one-way escape into the world of

cosmic words, to burn like the phoenix

firebird and fire-sun town, extended old-time years of

mysterious departures, new stars and endless music

when our neolithicism neos into a final Lascaux NOW

when our geological geos into a new Magritte THEN

The perfect spruce shaded house on the edge of

sub-rural oblivion, where the loud boys

are out in the thaw warm basketball driveways

staring at the raw girls and their confused

parents who are trying to decide if it’s time to

stage an orderly retreat or verbalize a warning

as they try to megathink the relationship between

greasy abandoned keyboards and feeble mountain peaks.

Ancestral valleys, streams, lagoons, earth that says

nothing but means everything, its seas awash with

memories of ancient comers and goers:

all lost islands beneath green eternity.

New season, new eyes, new whys, months of hibernation

and right back into the tragic comedy that is

the too-soon evaporation of wives, lives, prizes into

a past not so remembered as dreamt.

Trying to fashion a new Now out of the sun-bolts

that flash into the third eye

at the center of all our evolutionary divine

primetime crimes, insatiable caverns and

the Roman-Gringo U.S. empire dissolving into

noxious toxicity, cancer on the body electric.

Trying to slide back into pre-everything but

slipping instead into black holes of memory,

Polish sausaging and potato-pancaking through

memorial masquerades that mimic lost moments,

that only return in the himalayas of night. We want

only to sleep in the arms of eternal sunshine,

until the moonless moonlight of forever

washes us in the warmth of happy infinity.

Television tarts throw tantrums for our entertainment.

How about leg-smiles and evening cloud beds instead of

blaring banalities and glaring greedheads, 24/7?

Merging into the deer and wild turkey rebirthing the world,

we forget the inane strangeness of man,

move into a gunless, bombless, swordless world with

the holy animals of love, with the haloed trees and sky.

At night we climb dream-hills to the sun plateaux,

we join the spirit that stirs the stars in their migration into

this infinity that we share, going into spaces where we find

new selves in sand and storms, swimming in the growling wind.

Wife night in the yawn-light approaches our beds

in the black robe of love that contains every color.

Eighty four becomes forty eight, twenty four as we rebirth into

our own babies, tabla rasa, new into each moment.

Tara-star leads us down paths of enlightenment that

work like waves turning back on themselves,
washing us clean of conceptions of

love and hate, to a perfect neutral state.

Sometimes even here we’ll see a calm Buddha face

in a crowd of wound-up alarm clocks, & we have to

clear off the blackboards and windows of our spirits

and send them back to the school of rockabye baby.

“C’est temps,” our ancient, ancestral voices whisper,

though they chirp like hungry baby birds.

Time to put aside potato famines and guillotines,

mass mental breakdowns and apocalyptic atomic submarines.

Find a forest with a clear path that leads to the hills of

heaven, if you can. Find it in mind or on land.

Let the Lords and Ladies, Kings and Queens play their games,

changing nothing but seeing self-portraits everywhere, they

forget the plow, the prow, the expansion into

the depth of loved eyes, the soaring heights of

history erased by today's irises, poppies, rain, hands, legs

that carry us through the insanity of human conceit

into the why-wherefore-why not heart of TO BE,

despite the dry, bare ground where no seed

falls, and if it did it would squirm a moment and then

burst into an infinite explosion of rebirth, endlessly

screaming “More, more, more!”

The music of the spheres caresses our ears,

the wind off the lake caresses our faces.

So what gives with all the caressing?

The message is clear, not bullhorn rips nor

bulldog nips, nor Bette Davis lips. But,

night sky skin that whispers

secret sacred songs into our bulls eyes.

The reincarnation of a million years of Celtic, Slavic, Mosaic

Beatific Platonic essences, blossoming red poppies in our

hands, waiting for the right Incarnation to hand them to.

Floating through the night, the soul returns at daybreak.

We begin the journey through guava-oatmeal, cappuccino

morning still wet with dream memories,

facing another in one of the hundreds of eat-spots

that line these nostalgic streets, these streets of

Falafal and Hot Dogs, Tacos and Bulgarian chicken wraps,

Mongolian barbecue shacks and premature heart attacks.

Loving the old, old ladies with their white hair, skinny legs

that came so far, their eyes reflecting lost desire.

At last having come to terms with Reality, opening up their

minds to realize that every minute counts, they

are incarnations of the Great Mother goddess who dwarfs

even the phallic mountains in her sphere of love.

We begin again and again our-towning it the best we can,

but the play turns to end-game, waiting for Godot,

who still doesn’t come as terrace-overlooking-the-river day

old-man, but instead a cosmic femininity, a presence that

flowers and hills and forests, lakes, ponds, wide acres of

holy lifeblood water, shining out to space.

It wraps its cosmic presence

around each floating soul, newborn but old.

C'est temps for hands and eyes, tongues and bodies stretched

from seed to sea, currents flowing through the body electric,

the mind expanding out of cybernetic screens into the warbling,

warping net of omnipotent time, and farewell to

rhino-crocodile fanged-clawed murdering man-woman,

and good-bye to schizophrenic train wrecks and unsympathetic tsunami,

unbreathable downtowns and the Thornton Wilderless evening news.

Gone the pale pastel rooms festooned with fading family portraits,

antique grandmas papriking red-onioned beef into taste-bud ecstasy,

newborn babies bawling their protests against the sudden light.

School, graduation and the next generations come,

and then they’re gone, sand scattered on the big beach.

We have been carried along by a flood of songs,

mostly in languages we didn’t understand as the audio-visual world

wasn’t our reality, but the melodies played around us as

wind-tree bird-song thunders that brought us back to our real selves,

yet forward and away from our selves too, into a long

immersion in the sensual celebrations of

sub-atomic love down ancient genetic pathways.

We move into nightly realland-dreamland and march along

the long black highway of history, our voices histrionic and

filled with Finnegan brogues and shmoozing with

Quixotes that joust with the vibrant windmills of memory.

The spirits of our ancestors waft around us,

haunt our whys and why-nots, wherefores and where-nexts,

remind us that soul music is in us all,

and the evening disaster-news has nothing to do with

the neutral universe that neither loves nor hates us.

Simply BEING here on the Galileoan earth as it

spins irrevocably through illusionary space and time

is enough, even though the celestial warbling stops before

the great silence at the center, where nothing

but memories take off for their v-shaped migrations into

a south beyond the frozen pole of this poor planet.

Never thinking about asteroids, decreasing planet-weight,

nor black holes that suck up whole living galaxies,

we somehow believe that our cattails and ancient ruins are not illusions, due to circus stanzas beyond our control.

Driving North (2011)

Leaving home at 6 AM,

We drive by the misty wraiths

That drift up the dreamy creek.

They settle in low places

Transforming the rising sun

Into a yellow fuzz-ball.

She multiplies & then blinds

Those who stare at her too long.

The loud crows are debating

& the seagulls are laughing

As we make our way up north,

Up the light peninsula.

The sky is a deep ocean

High above the narrow land

Where clouds float like lonely ghosts

Below the sun, our burning hope.

Visitation (2011)

Walking through a worn-out woods,

I came upon a cottage

which no one had called home

since the death of an old man.

The key was easy to find,

hidden just beneath the sill

of the weathered front door.

As I crossed the threshold,

a hiss of “yes” echoed

from the corners of the room,

chased by a silence so still

you could have heard a tissue

flutter to the dusty floor.

When I walked out the door

dust floated up & danced

to the music of the past.

Cave Of The Spirits (2011)

I dreamt that the sight of the underground passages filled our hearts with an unknown light. Spirits lived in the caverns & in the giant, domed treasure room at its very center. We laughed as we entered the chamber to see the profuse silver leaves & gold apples, & the many metallic plaques, covered with stars, moons, suns & snakes. The luminous snakes were crawling up pyramids, striving for the summits, flying through the heavens with a trail of fire or lying on the reflective golden heads of the gods. The cave was deep, wide & warm. No one wanted to wake, but some of us couldn’t help it.

Cold Oceans (2011)

I sit by my open window.

A lake breeze brings the outside in.

The white pine tree makes its green stand

Between me & the foggy lake.

It grows taller with each season,

But I do not.

My height has eroded as my age increased.

Even the Rockies are half the size

Which they were a million years ago.

The wind brings the scent of the lake to me.

It blows my countless blessings

Beyond cold oceans.

Final Question (2011)

If the universe

ceased to expand,

& contracted into

one last dense wish

against the dark & cold,

& the burnt-out stars

fell into

a hungry black hole,

would a memory of fire

still travel past

the catatonic stones

where light began as love

in the all conceiving night?

Broken Branches (2012)

 *for Bob Willemstein*

Inspired by Gonzo

role models, we

repeatedly breeched the

dangerous border,

always coming closer

to the final conflagration.

The trees we razed

had been dead for years.

We dropped them

with surgical indifference,

brushing past live wires

to rain bright sparks

against the dusk.

Then one night, the policemen

crashed through the door.

Their guns were drawn &

they shouted commands.

We tried to hide

in stupid silence

from the inevitable collapse.

Through the scary air

images of old friends

faded into long shadows

where our footprints disintegrated

amid the scattered ashes,

brought back to earth

beneath the broken branches.

My Father’s Job (2012)

My father worked at a car factory, but

When I was a little boy I thought that it

Was a prison, because of the impression

I got one morning when I went along to

Drop him off for the day-shift outside a big fence

That surrounded a huge brick building that had

No windows except a row of tiny ones

Way up by the roofline, many stories up.

My father went in through a small red door.

When he opened the door, loud noise busted out.

A quick glance revealed it as a prison:

All the walls & floors were a dull gray color.

All the men wore uniform gray coveralls.

An odor of oil escaped into the air

Along with the steady banging of big dies.

All the workers seemed to shuffle their feet.

We took him to that gray place every day.

As I grew older, I understood that it

Was just where he worked, making car bodies,

But I still couldn’t shake the feeling that he

Wanted to get out, but couldn’t.

Once, he quit to play piano in a bar.

He was happy for a while, but

Then my mother wanted more money so

He went back inside, this time for life.

Allison Bound (2012)

Allison lived only

three blocks away but

it could have been

light years. She

was the prettiest girl

in school, the blond

blue eyed girl whom

all the boys loved the

most. One night I had

a dream in which

two other mean boys

captured our Allison

& tied her to a post. In

my dream I rescued

her, & she was

nakedly grateful.

I had the dream every

night for a week. In

that week, my feelings

for Allison evolved.

When I saw her at

school, she seemed

more familiar, as close

as skin growing over

a scab. Then, I had

another dream. This time

I was the one who

had stripped & tied

her up, ready to defend

my prize from the other boys.

Eggshells (2012)

In the summer of my 16th year

I lived on a small farm

in Grand Haven, Michigan,

so that I could help take care

of a few hundred chickens

& an acre of strawberries

for some old people we knew.

The old man had been stricken

by a stroke. I did his work.

He let me look at his life.

I learned the difference

between a good egg & a

bad one. I learned that

eggs may still be called ‘fresh’

even when they’re three days old.

Fertilized eggs are bad

because they are full of blood.

You can’t tell the bad eggs

by sight. You have to put them

over a lightbulb, to see inside.

I learned a few things that summer,

from the old couple, & their

chickens & their strawberries.

But my biggest lesson came

on the short car ride back home.

At the end of August, Mother

picked me up in a borrowed Renault.

The walls of that car were just

about one inch thick, & it

had a large, open sunroof.

Doing sixty down steep Johnson Hill

in thick traffic, red brake lights

flashed in front of us. Mom

hadn’t driven the Renault before.

She jammed her foot on the clutch,

thinking that it was the brake,

so we only went faster.

We swerved to the shoulder,

skidded sideways on the gravel

& hit the steel guard rail, hard.

We went airborne, back toward

traffic, touched down briefly

on the black road, then rolled

four times to rest in the ditch.

I felt it in slow motion.

A crowd gathered quickly.

I crawled out the back window.

My right arm hung, dislocated.

My mom was pinned beneath

the open sunroof of the car.

The crowd gawked at the blood

that ran from my mother’s head.

I yelled at them “Let’s get

this car off my mother!”

Bless their wavering hearts, they did.

Those men probably saved her life.

Some others took my leather jacket

& my suitcase, but left the laundry.

Both kinds of people were revealed

emerging from the wreckage that day.

Shooting Lessons (2012)

Russ & Dave were brothers

& they were funny guys,

good buddies to play war with.

Dozens of boys would gather

to shoot BB guns at each other

in the woods behind their house.

One summer day I went to play

war with Russ & Dave. I had

the single-shot Daisy with me that

my father gave me before he left.

From down the block I could see

the police cars & ambulance

on their front lawn, right up

against the big maple we had

all climbed together the day before.

Dave was led, in tears, to

the police car. Russ was carried

to the ambulance, but it didn’t leave.

They’d been playing with their father’s

12 gauge shotgun. Russ came

around a corner & his brother

shot him in the chest, from the hip.

We didn’t see Dave for a year.

They sent him off to a group home

in Colorado for the 7th grade.

When he returned, he wasn’t the same.

He cried easily & never smiled.

For awhile after Dave killed Russ,

we all stopped playing war.

None of my friends shot anyone

for the rest of that hot summer

when the war took David’s brother.

There & Back (2012)

 *for Brad Harris*

Going to the 1968 Democratic

Convention seemed like fun. I talked my

friend Brad into it, though he was

apolitical. Only a 3 hour drive from

Grand Rapids to Chicago. Abbie Hoffman &

Hunter S. Thompson would be

there to support the poet candidate, Eugene

McCarthy. We’d read the notices in

*The Village Voice*. We felt there would

be chicks there who believed in Free Love.

Brad had an old red Volkswagen. We

had painted the doors with big white

peace signs. We wore beads & chin

beards, long hair & personalized holy

blue jeans. One of us even wore Granny

glasses. When we got to Chicago, Grant

Park was cordoned off by police barriers. So, we

stayed safely on the perimeter. We saw others

running scared & bloodied on the head by

Chicago cops, but no one bothered us.

It went on for two days with us on

the edge of the action. We slept in the

Volkswagen on a side street until the third

night when McCarthy had been robbed &

defeated, Humphrey clown substituted, the

protestors beaten & jailed. We were leaving

when a carload of drunken local teenagers

pulled up alongside, threw a bottle at us &

yelled that they were going to kill us fucking

hippies. They started to chase us through town.

Brad began to panic. He just couldn’t

think fast enough. “Tell me what to do.”

he said. At one point, they blocked us

into a blind alley. They got out with clubs &

tire irons & ran toward us. “Drive

right over that curb!” I said, & we clumped

over. It was one of those situations when

time stretches out into slow motion.

That’s when we made a big mistake &

turned the car onto the Eisenhower freeway.

Their big Buick rear-ended us, pushing

the poor Volkswagen faster than it could

go. The axle cracked in half & the Bug rolled

up a shoulder, to collapse atan precarious

angle, ticking its last heartbeats. We got out &

ran. We climbed a chain link fence, crossed

some railroad tracks & hid in a doorway as they

crept past looking to finish us. We got to

a Police station, but they didn’t care. A black

man took us via the el to the Greyhound station.

The bus terminal was crowded with escaping

demonstrators. Cops were herding people in a

circuit up the escalator & back down the other

side. We had to keep moving until our bus was

announced. Brad was upset about the loss of

his car. No chicks, Yippies or fun. I was

upset that the attackers had been our own

age. All the way back home I digested the sour

truth. It would never be easy to distinguish

our friends from our enemies again.

Flood Tide (2012)

Another day surges over

the horizon, flotsam

sloshing through its dark

sluice. Loose pages

drift in pools, like

travelers, asleep beneath

the hills. There is no

bowl to contain our

tears, just flooded floors in

a hastily abandoned factory.

Though pleasure pours

like rain, we swim

on until dark, emerging

from the water’s edge smelling

like wet sand. Submerged

beneath our common

respiration, we wonder if

the ocean breeze will

keep us on course or

blow us back into ourselves.

We have thrown down our

breathless waves, arriving

home late but still

somehow hopelessly

adrift. There is no

pail for love. Even though

we’ve wrapped ourselves within

each others arms, each

of us still drowns alone.