

POETRY OFFERINGS

from

David W. Mitchell



Photography of David Mitchell by Ken Roberts
Cover photography by Jeremiah Trilli
Line drawing by Summer Breeze



Published by Motherbird Books
Silver City, New Mexico
motherbird.com

© David W. Mitchell 2008

Index

A Dark Hole In Time	8
A Gift	9
A Lovely Day for Borscht Fish	10
A Modern Carollette for Dodgson	11
Abroad Among the Limbless	12
Adagio in Zzzzz Minor	13
Afternoon of a Biblioparadisiac	14
Ah Dylan, Dylan	15
An Olympian Lesson	16
Apostatic Succession	17
Ballad of Saint Louis, the Unfrocked Cardinal	18
Belle Ardoise I, The	20
Blatissimus	21
Blue Writer, The	22
Carmel I	23
Carmel II	25
Chelsea	27
Compass Rose and the Gypsy Will	28
Compendium Humanum	29
Concertina in F-Stop Major	31
Critique	32
Cursive Reclaimed	33
Cutting Corners I; Cutting Corners II	34
Departure of Roses, The	35
Diasporulation	36
Disappearance	37
Drizzle	38
Doubling Duplicity	39
Eleven Red-Haired Men	40
Encampment, The	41
Epitaph for Floyd	42
Fangs	43
Father Time Contemplates Mass	44

Fingersongs- I	45
For Edna, and John, and All	46
For Jessica and the Williams	47
For Mimi Farina: Bread and Roses	51
From A to Z and Back Again	52
Goulashification	53
Heard On the Concertina Wire	54
Helicocochoidal Figmentation.	55
Hexing the Circle	56
Hillock and the Holly, The	57
How I knew What to Do	59
In Praise of Thumbs	60
In Praise of Thumbs II	61
In the Mailstrom	63
In Sacramental Jeans	64
Infinite Regress of Dawn, The	65
Jardin	66
Just the Other End of the Block	67
Leprechaunly Admonition	68
Life Dead Center	69
Listening for Another Bach	70
Mariner Hitchhikes in a Drought, The	71
Methuselistics	72
Morphing the Weenie: an Exorcism	73
MS Found In A Guinness Cap	75
MS Found in a Guinness Cap IV	77
Night Squall	78
Now the Other MM's Gone	79
Obbligatto for Poets	80
Oblivionist: I, The Oblivionist: II, The	81
Odds On Oregon, The	82
Often in the Fog	83
On the Season of the Slug	85
On the Diagnosis and Treatment of Poetry	87

On the Constancy of Fluxes	88
On the Gatesian Portello	89
On Those Last White Nights	90
Orders of the Night	92
Overdrive	93
Passing the Solstice	94
Patchen up the Breeches	95
Poetogenesis	96
Poet's Apologia, The	98
Poet's Solstice, The	99
Priming the Pumpkin	101
Reablution	102
Reflections on a Tuffet	103
Refrain Ad Inf.	104
Renaissance of the Barons	105
Report from the Bindlesphere	106
Return to Ogygia	109
Rounding Up to Zero	110
Salving of Earth's Heart, The	111
Scaling the Psicinnines	114
Sculptor's Midnight	115
Spring Song	116
Standing Prematurely Before Benedictio's Tomb	117
Still – Air	118
Sunrise over the Santa Lucias	119
Surfing the Background Radiation	120
Thoughts on Satie	121
Tora Torah Torus	122
The Utility of Gnatflies	123
Varanasi: Outside...Archbishop's Garden	124
Voyages II	125
Warmth of the Sun I and II	126
Weathervane	127
You Gave Me a Sheaf of Yellow Poems	128

Haiku Collection Index

Page 130

The Poet
Drawing the Shades
The Locust Eaters
Slowdays

Page 131

Tearscapes
Mensuscape
Hume at Last
At the St. Michel Cafe
Disembarkation

Page 132

Galapagos
The Gennif(f)er Genes
Dawn Moire
May
Astrolabes

Page 133

Chanticleer and Morpheus
Sphinx
Thaw
Dialog
The Physic of Taoism

Page 134

Syllabary

Eagle Poems Index:

Page 135 Cwyanna Dyr
Page 140 Aquila

Forward

The Voice of David Mitchell

A warm sunny day
or a winterly day with a crackling fire
his voice, a parade of literary images
entwined with a pragmatic view of today's world.

David's career spans an array
of literary and intellectual pursuits yet
most impressive is the gentleness he projects
in so many of his poems.

Much of what he reflects on, demonstrates his awe
and reverence for his home on the west coast.
Mitchell's collection of poetry contains his musings
on a variety of topics and makes clear why
he is known by his friends as a man
of incredible humility.

– Summer Breeze

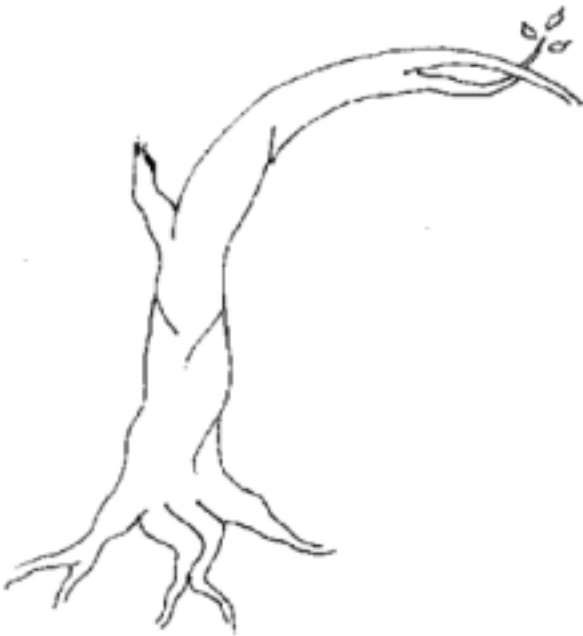
A Dark Hole In Time

It matters not who

Attends at starbirth:

Only that we have journeyed

So far.



A Gift

Today eager hands received
The tatters of a musician's life,
Dogearred, broken-backed,
Foxed with grief that deepens
The runically encoded beauty.
Rebirth is justice:
The dreamer's part is to hold
Joy in trust until timemoths
Have eaten away all trace of pain,
Leaving fugue, counterpoint,
And a distant oboe,
Whose wistful countenance is veiled
In forgetfulness and lace.

A Lovely Day for Borscht Fish

It's much too nice a day
For poetry, that last
Refuge of the deviled tongue;
Much better a bissel borscht,
A touch of dollop, a bit
Of greenery to remind one
Of the cruxability packed
For journeys such as this;
Loop-threading
the day through
A camel's eye, we emerge at
Some shore fresh from Duffy's brush.
How odd to have forgotten the look
Of color. I'll bring you a bouquet
Of incarnadines, sorrels, and
One stray umber,
Lest we grow too bright.

A Modern Carollette for Dodgson

Beware the gibberwalk my sons,
That tempting primrose-laden lane
So glibly trod by men of honor
Whose minds see not their thievery.
Walk not behind such honored men,
Heed not their castings-out and
Concealing from the eyes of youth
The virtues that inhere in naked truth.
Beware these honorable men of pride
All overweening; those whose
Numbers shield the subtle thieves
So righteously purloining our liberties.

Abroad Among the Limbless

The dust of anathema seeps

Like the slowglass it will

One day fuse itself into

Beneath the roiling sky;

Grains turned to mere

Bubbles in the mock turtle's

Final oration.

Adagio in Zzzzz Minor

It's a joy being privileged
To keep the night watch
At Castle Malaprop
In these last few decades:
Tottering along the ramifications
Slick with trombone frills,
Peeking over the catamounts to
Watch the flatulated calves at play.
The mind sets strong from the west,
Maundering like untailed carabinieri
And held to gravitas only by
The sheer weight of photonic flux.

Magical palimpsests
To the contrary,
The blessing's in knowing
There's more to merry
Than crosses the palm,
And less to the
Reaper of swine.

Afternoon of a Biblioparadisiac

Melted to incandescence by

The aroma of fresh ink,

Yielding stiffness

Of fine paper,

Elegant lines of the font

Of eternal renewal:

We are bound by language

As by other tyrants,

Although the torture

Remains far sweeter, even

In memory.

Ah, Dylan, Dylan

I used to sit in your bandied chair
Savoring the gloom of the White Horse,
Smelling the wharfish afternoon sun
And the corpulent spoor of poets.

Your perch was seductively muggy, frownsed,
Redolent of brown-bred stout:
Youth was edgy, the razor's mark
Hesitant along the faults.

Other songs and danksome thickets
Demanded their tithe of talents
(Evasion, delusion, creation, collusion),
Yet they brought us here again.

Somewhere Catlin, light in the hearth,
The vision still solid, the step less so;
Nightjars measure the meadowlark's barrow
And the dreams are of dreaming and waking.

For us, it's sleep to a steaming pot
Of Demarara and Earl Grey.
Odd, you know: I was long to learn
Graceful stumbling on time's high step.

Tip up the chair,
Belle the ghosts:
Morning soon enough.
There are poets unborn
To make peons of
When the angry sun returns.

An Olympian Lesson

I learned from Nanda Devi
That nature required me
To turn back twelve feet
Below each summit
(A gesture of respect
For conquest on time scales
Incomprehensible
To the mere living)
And never could
The enduring vision
By spilling tears
On monuments to those
I might have loved.

Apostatic Succession

It's downright nice to see you aproned
As carpenter rather than Madonna,
A sixteen-foot six-by-eight preceding
And following you with the waggle
One would expect of other beckonings.
You don't shudder under the weight,
Which means it must be cedar, old cedar,
The kind that's been immersed for forty years
In the not-quite-salt
of tears we decided to
Save for christening rather than shedding.
I've been out looking for a rooftree this rangy
Sunlit afternoon, well back on ridges where
The sea loses almost everything between
Coloratura and basso; I have the melody stuck
Between my ears and am glad to report
It will be playing at the housewarming.

The Ballad of Saint Louis, the Unfrosted Cardinal

Subway Louis hit Las Vegas
Already enamored, reeking of
Frottage and Corday's Fromage Impiens,
His favorite since the Archbishop of
Camembert remitted all dull sins but
Held to higher ordures those of his
Acolytes whose limnal bots had
Not yet maggottized to
Gourmandry, burrowing slushily into
The Eucharistic corpus: it takes a
Dead Waferer to breed the bait for
Loaves and fishes, they that sinketh
When strewn broadcast and they that
Merely stinketh tridiurnally.

But Sainted Louis of the
False bottoms, clad in mawkish
Velveteen doubloons and foolardry,
Would soon be embaizened across
The felty sky, another manner for the
Gutted year when nothing came of numbers
And the wasted seed of horologic wizards.
Poor old Dollar Louis never read
The signs, only saw the symbols
Ranked in chippish stacks, walked in
High headed and low-lettered, unaware
Of his twin-strikeout halo and
Blissfully innocent of the forty-story mound
From which El Dinero loosed the screamer pitch
That drained the pot metal from his knees,
Leaving him permanently balky

At the Canon's bedside
And a dead pigeon
In the genuflects.

Belle Ardoise - I

Dawn wind ruffles the edges of trees
So fragrant and stately that time
Itself contemplates them, hands folded in
Its lap: they could grow nowhere but
At Belle Ardoise, the mind's sprawling
Unkempt manse, where light and spray
Fuse into a tabla rasa, hollow drum
Whose heads today are stretched
Between rainbow and sea, waiting
Only deft joiners' fingers to be laced
Into resonance and conquer silences
Heard more deeply than any lichen or
Thunder can enunciate.

Blatissimus

In the beginning, it ended

With the threnody of birth....

Just the flutter of a mockingbird

Bespeaking itself.

Time once had us firmly in its grasp:

Its knuckles are now too white

With our wriggling

For us ever to believe it invincible.

Again....

The Blue Writer

One watches the night

Draw itself in etcheresque repeat,

Essence of ink-stained

Retching, a calibrator of tilings

Less amenably cauterized than

Other bleedings, dense as Lourdes,

And slowly pale to a shade

Of massyness almost

Torquemadan.

Carmel I

More peculiar than anxious, this
Journey to the south by night.
The compass rose has shed its thorns and
Reefs receded into deeper water,
Where their names are little more than
Incantations of spume and Flotsam.
The bearings ruled on this night's chart
Come near to being arabesques, almost
The shelling of an ear bent to
Sand on some beach still to be deposited.
It is in the mapping of you onto my
Continuum that I find shapes beyond
Any bounding of space, durations that
Enclosed and now release one another.
The waves are lapidary and may
Yet cleave reflections of these
Vessels into diamonds; gathered by
Night, they can suffice to feed
The sick and heal the poor.

8/15/97

Carmel I

More peculiar than anxious, this
Journey to the south by night.
The compass rose has shed its thorns and
Reefs receded into deeper water,
Where their names are little more than
Incantations of spume and flotsam,
The bearings ruled on this night's chart
Come near to being arabesques, almost
The shelling on an ear bent to
Sand on some beach still to be deposited.
It is in the mapping of you onto my
Continuum that I find shapes beyond
Any bounding of space, durations that
Enclosed and now release one another.
The waves are lapidary and may
Yet cleave reflections of these
Vessels into diamonds; gathered by
Night, they can suffice to feed
The sick and heal the poor.

Camel - II

Now I come to you
Head in hand, having refused
To trade my pumpkin for
A horse, my handful of jacks
For a last fling at being cowed,
Remember not to follow the segmented
Upward leg, but trace with
Wandering finger the long descent
Toward the summit, the sleepy point
Of all this unstalking: a freedom
Earned in bringing buoyancy to
Giants and grace to notes
That only materialize in keys
Reground for unlocking codas.

8/15/97

Carmel II

Now I come to you
Head in hand, having refused
To trade my pumpkin for
A horse, my handful of jacks
For a last fling at being cowed,
Remember not to follow the segmented
Upward leg, but trace with
Wondering finger the long descent
Toward the summit, the sleepy point
Of all this unstalking: a freedom
Earned in bringing buoyancy to
Giants and grace to notes
That only materialize in keys
Reground for unlocking codas.

Chelsea

Yes, she will keep the vow
Made to that unflickering candle,
Cross the bridge again
After a sorrowing novitiate
In truth's chill, stony cloister.
The rainbow touches granite, too,
And new-leaved
larches on eagle crags.
May she find the company of
Friends to trudge beside her
Up the storied muddy roads of peace.

Compass Rose and the Gypsy Will

Some days the mysteries loom large,
Caught in the brambles of the rain
Like scraps of sacking from an
Inelegant traveler's bulging tote-all.

I know only that the road leads,
Not where: the following has little
Of volition, less of coercion.
What can be is: what is will shape
The landscape of the winds.
It must be that I will always
Want the countertwining mindbeat most
On nights when shadows hide.

Compendium Humanum

(On Rick Rubin's 65th Birthday)

Occasions sometimes bring
The hill to the hunter,
Now ensconced boulderish
In his true desmene.
Yet I've encountered this
Debarked voyageur
At more than one waystation,
Caught in the eddies of
Caustic eyebrows and the gnomish
Air of Puck turned barrister.
Truth is, after all, that
Time incarnate might well
Have been such an essayist,
Peninsular appendage on
The literary corpus.
It's all a matter of flavor:
A recipe for roguish traveler
Seasoned in myriad exotic smokes;
Parboiled to leach away the
Sandy leavings of machinery worked
Too long in services less noble
Than those commanded to the fool;
Peppered with the buckshot
Of ease embraced and scorned;
And cocooned away to leather in
The wind that blows higher
Than keening can rise.

But squirrel-tailed autumn comes:
The wraith of honor condenses
From its fog and curls on
The hearth, waiting for sustenance.
Time for peeking into bindles,
Cultivating trade beads,
And wryly offering bargains
To the ghosts of werewolves past.

The sage's rewards are too meager
To be stolen lightly and
So may be freely wished:
Peace, a long road, laughter
Of companionship,
Sweet waters flowing,
Slow journeys home,
A candle on the mountain.

Concertina in F-Stop Major

True, warming oneself
By an evening glowworm,
Far from the Affray Cafe,
Is the one of the few
Great pleasures of
The true antique woodrat.

The desire to put paid
To wordwars grows on one
With the advent of new childishnesses.
It's all summarized in that
Ancient verse form known as
A 'Corker:

It is an ancient poet and
He estoppeth one of three:
 "By thy lank and languid trochee
 And beard becrumbed with piroshky,
Now whyfore estoppest thou
Me?"

Critique

The prize problem lies in the fact

That it's almost as hard to tell the pearls from the swine

As to separate the chaff from the goats...

Cursive Reclaimed

How odd that you've never seen
My hand set pen to paper,
Fits and starts clearly
Tracing crevasses skirted;
Patches of all-fours scrabbling;
Wild downswoops across ice so blue
It waits breathless to melt
And wing you skyward, transfiguring
The cloudspace between words.

So many tidy electron-edges here
That the universe encompassed by
An inkblot is remote as Andromeda
Or yesterday's tears.

Cutting Corners - I

Desire for a life without corners
Is strongest in the blind,
Whose implicit enjoyment of the random
Carom is greatly restrained by edges.
But poets follow close on their heels,
Not so much led as beguiled,
Hoping to find a smooth, lingering
Transition from pod to pea.

Cutting Corners II

My grandfather taught me
That cutting corners leads
To dogeared lives.
He was a shingleweaver:
No thumbs.

The Departure of the Roses

Once upon a sullen fable,
In that day far beyond
The reach of sallow hoarding,
In that time when the land grew
Poets with a grand abandon fit
For unfettered forests, sprawling them
Across the pagescapes of ten thousand
Headless mechanics' tidy dreams,
On that very day when fully espaliered
Bondage was achieved, the roses turned
Their backs on well-fed, well-groomed
Lives of perfect symmetry and bolted
For the thickets of disorder,
Where they burrowed thornily
Into the heart of some brawling
Literature not yet imagined.

Only the brave can find them now,
Sepulchered in metaphor and brazen
Assonance, holding hostages whose
Fear can be heard on any wind,
As order's invented dust and ashes endure
The torrential laughing languages of
Passion, communion, and a sophistica sun.
Even so, the last madmen still dare the
Brier and the bramble, thirsting
For the secret perfumery of summers
Lost and songs unsung: legend has it
That one of them, blessed of tongue,
Will someday coax the roses to return.

Diasporulation

The scent of castaways grows keener:
An aliajactate rattling of bones
Tremulous on its own tympanum
Deafens all but the white-eyed.

How came you here, you last of
The kinless tribe?? What unpiped
Melodies drew you to lands so barren
Of desire that even rats perish
With dreams unfulfilled and scarce
Tradeable for beans or molehills??

My wanderings are not yours.
The day will not beset me while
I have the thicker blood of those
Who spawned your millennial dilutions:
A liqueur I can share with nights more
Resonant than were felt by any idol
You have graven. Look well. You are
Mirrored in the the pooled bile of
Your ravishments.

Disappearances

We have choked the life

From youth: sent it sprawling

On wintry ice to bow before

Gods lacking even

The sweet vitality

To be false.

Drizzle

The leprechauns have made off
With real rain again this summer,
Leaving us a dampening imitation
That lacks the verve and charisma
Of weather's truly political side;
We are in a Republican season,
Spirits sodden and unheeding of either
Misery or joy: not enough pain for one,
Not enough buoyancy for the other.
The wind has died an Independent's death,
Leaving the field to a paltry shower
Infinitely less congenial than the torrents
That once descended from near-forgotten
Machinery rusting deep beneath a platform
Too vacuous to bear the weight
Of speakers with any gravity.

Doubling Duplicity

Hey guys,

It's a double feature!!!

"Compassionate Conservatism,"

From those creative folks

Who brought you

"Humane Execution"

Eleven Red-Haired Men

The Babylonian surfers were to blame:

They carried sophistic indolence, sybaritism,

And the rancorous incipient oud

Into the divine pastorality of the id.

Only now

Have we learned the

True etiology

Of Sodomiosis and

Gommorrhea.

The Encampment

You must know them:
They were the weathered ones,
Been-there, skewered-'em sorts,
Long past rancor and looking to
Something beyond the night
And the hill.

Quite fitting they should share
A bit of smuggled desert magic
With the poor bastard who
Didn't want to be king either.

Three Etruscan grunts,
A pot of (wink) vinegar
And a happen-to-have-one-here sponge.
The trickle of human kindness
Flows much farther through time
Than the torrents of history.

Epitaph for Floyd

Truly in keeping, this graceful exit by one
Whose hard-won kindness was at the last
To spare others agony and indecision
As he pulled up the sage's chair to join
A new table of welcoming boon companions.

Fangs

The picture you hold in some
Far corner of a fiefdom not yet
Reached (a place where
Sinuosity stalks with the grace
Of your outstretched calf and
Strikes with the repeated
Forked breath of beseeching
Lightning) questions the arts
Of power as conquest; the snarl
As touch-me-not, the liveness
As invitation to admire come
To naught at the corners of your
Lips, where the clear desire is all
To be encased in another skin,
Holding taut to yourself as one
With the imagined rider, catamount
To every undestroyed dream.

Father Time Contemplates Mass

The last gasp of autumn
Soughs off into rhythmic
Whining scraped from a dawn
Stretched taut as night's edge.
The wind's teeth are chattering
Slow staccato passages
That beg for contrapuntal bass:
But winter is still foot-weary
Uneasy in its pipes:
You can hear the rustle
Of foxed blue-note scores,
Sense it tuning through assonance
To a timbre unmarred by reason.
At least this business of meter
Is nearing a close:
It's all I can do to keep my hands
Off the saxophone.

Fingersongs I

Patience I have in abundance,
Born of knowledge deep as the
Mountains by whose grace I catch
Sweet green water in my palms,
Carry it to the parched places
Between your shoulder blades and,
With each drop's incantation,
Bless the unknown blooms
Awaiting the warmth of summer
Beneath your skin.

For Edna, and John, and All

Only fitting to leave for this
Time the kingdom drowned;
To let the bearers sleep near
The burden, while the quiet amnion
Repatterns the steel for another
Forging, in some unnoticed cataclysm
Of the depths. Bared to the fire, the
Rock will grow around it once more,
The wait begin. Splinter-roofed,
The keep is tattered and open to
A sky that still seems blind, yet sees;
The caretaker makes ever slower rounds
And asks the ravens yet more
Querulously for news of whom
Among them stolidly endures;
They only nod toward the cave,
The firefly-dimness
in the farthest corner.
It is just a single candle,
But it will last the night.

For Jessica and the Williams

I'm not sure that my second
Childhood won't be better
Than the first, for all
The right reasons.
I wish you could have
Been there just to smell
And hear how time passed
Then, as yours passes in
Scents and sounds I am
Privileged to share

Still, there's a tale of
The politics of time that
Hasn't changed one Whitsun's bit
And will hold for every feast-day.

The world of 1944 was brown
And acrid in summer, dank and
Rank in what passed for winter
Even around the sickbed.

Given the thousand-minute hours
Prefiguring essence of Hell
For endless-aching fevered
Four year-old rheumatics
In wartime, when bombs might seek
Us huddled at siren-call
Under the massive maple table;
Given the shredding of old
Brooklyn Eagles, Lifes, Times

To make pieces for nonexistent,
Even yet unimagined games;
Given the bold new world of
Shiny hucksterism bringing an
Uncle Don to every despised
Quasi-nephew in Buster's shoes:
The family council presented me
With a fifth-hand RCA bedside
Presbyopticon, a worshipful
Congregation of old nags,
Threepenny dreadfuls, unartful
Dodgers, unslaked thirsts,
Alien alleys, rainbow illuminants,
And myriad plastic come-alongs.

Science was the magic word even then,
And the encouragement of madcap drunken
Street dances celebrating urban August
In Japan led to new experiments in
Combinatorial magic.

Unfortunately, soaking the Magic
Decoder Ring in Ovaltine had no more
Effect than peering through the
Holes in backing Masonite hoping
To see Musial and Barney face off
At Ebbets Field in the evening
Stained-ion glow flooding
My Cathodic cathedral.

That was the year my brother,
Who'd spent a decade unraveling
In the counterpane prison before
Parole to chess and cello,
Raided the library and brought

Books with more convincingly
Impossible stories and real images
To wander through in the obligatory
Darkness adults believed brought healing.
No other intoxicant has ever
Held the escape of those magic marks
On fingermuddied twice-alive pulp:
In six months I was sneaking Volume VI
Of the Maroon Miracle, Compton's
Compendium of everything a child could
Ever imagine, down to the bucket brigade
Through the esophagus and the great
Seething gastric boiler-room, from which all
Noxious odors were exported via the Lincoln
And Holland tunnels to my grandfather's
Apartment in East Orange, a place so
Void of citrus that I never trusted
Meaning again.

But ahhhhh, the words.
The lovely mutable
Rearrangeable
Costumable
Consumable
Cossetting
Possetting
Compelling
Melding
Molding
Molting
Melting
Words.

Even numbers never
Became better playmates

For the dark hours,
And the words I still so
Freely prescribe as anodyne
For miseries of mind
Are lineal descendants
Of those magic days,
Of the morning when a
Cloud was blown away from
The moon and, even though
No one would believe me,
I saw the crack of dawn.

The urn root-enfolded
In his daughter's garden
Holds a few hundred
Wonderfully malformed words
And my brother's immutably
Geologic presence.

For Mimi Farina: Bread and Roses

This other voice now lingers
Closer to its counterpoint in heart,
And the two seem even stronger in
Memory's deepwater venue.
As I stand beneath the long-dead
Snag that harbors generations
Of chatty woodpeckers and jays,
I hear no laughter, no quarrels,
Only the faintest chittering.
But the sea breeze carries
Today, as always in fogs,
The polyphonic hills
Echoing Mission bells
As roses nod assent
Beyond the vines and
Roots that feed us,
As she did so many.
The waters into which she cast
Infinite gritudes and sorrows
(Endless salvatory loaves of
Sweetest not-quite-leavened wholeness)
Mirror in their rippling descant
The heavens held to momentary earth;
Sighing tides and quieted spume remain,
And I will listen closely today
For the magical song being woven
Far beyond what any tears can ken.

From A to Z and Back Again

I'm no longer much concerned
About the mortal helicoid
As it receives the Jamesian twist.
Attendance at All Hallows
Has made the enlarged volume
Of the Salesman's travels
A bit more contractile, and
I've decided on the modality
Of my ultimate return:
It'll be a quest for number one
In SF's Presidio, but by the Book....
Ideally, a duet with Erdos
Played ectoplasmalemmically
On Fermat's last theremin.

Gummere, Morley !!
Gin's at hand
And the Game's afoot.

Goulashification

Some small tidbits

Are still floating for the scavenger

Out there on the industrial

Causeway, now that the sirens

Have died and the ambulances left

The scene of the great collision:

Out there where the sleekly modern

Containerized gravy train

Jumped the tubby gravy boat,

And only the garlic survived.

Heard On the Concertina Wire

Baruch or Moses,

Francis or Augustine,

Ishi or Ishmael?

Whose candles shall I burn

In the ebony centuries

Before the sun grows chill?

Helicocochoidal Figmentation

The Tribune hired him on
At a thousand a month
To write exotica, marginalia,
Compendia, apocalyptica,
And frothing reviews of time

(Which they cheerfully minced
Into seconds on Mondays,
Minutes on Tuesdays

...

And miniscular
Centuries for the Sabbath).

Then leap year devolved
And our poor synchronous boob
Went millennial between
Sunday and Monday,
Where he dissolved to a knotted
Pool of quarks
And was soon consumed
By the restless throng
With tachyonically buttered scones.

Hexing the Circle

For Stan Fairchild, 23 June 2000

In the darkness of Paris nights,
Some levees are neither riotous
Nor light-fingered, leaving no
Trace beyond a smudged brand
In the gulf between
Peace and Commerce.

The Hillock and the Holly

Ahhhh, the songs that got
Snagged in our hair and
Never quite combed out.
I hear some of them every
Day as I walk down under the
Trees where Richard must have
Hummed to himself, putting
Together the frame that still
Holds our rank of mailboxes, walk
Down on my feet toward the Pacific
And in my head toward Tannery Brook,
Remembering with startling regularity
The shock, the unthinkable loss of
Voice from the duet of two rabbling
Rivers running through the heart's
Mosses and boulders. Asked to
Shore up his long-ago did-it-right
The-first-time job after the ground
Moved beneath it, the task
Took a year or so of nerving up.
So the rains came again, the sands
And pebbles rolled back from some
Hidden pocket of melodies half sung;
The hand extended to judge necessity
Met only solidity, fell away as though
Comforted by one of those hello or
Farewell pats that leave one
Gape-minded at being understood.
All in all,
It's a pity that nowadays

One can't be caught with
Thread and berry in Carmel,
Unless, of course, one professes
To be on the verge of preparing
Trout incarnidine with capers
And macaquery grotesque.
But here on the knoll, there's a
Dulcimer on the wall (who knows why:
I've never asked). I'll take it down
One day soon, and the first song,
The one I've lived by, will be for him,
And you, and Willy, and her, and them,
And us, in these days of unreeling
Time and all the unforgotten tears.
There are only a few I've really missed:
I had a cathedral to stop by for John
And it almost sufficed, until Robert,
Until Steve, until Martin.
I had a library to bury myself in
For Marilyn: somehow it didn't work and
She wove herself into the fabric of
Reaching, just as Nanda Devi did.
Given the heights I will never scale,
There is a great peace
In meandering down for the mail every day,
Collecting those amazing fragments of far
Lives brought near, and stealing a moment
To lay my hand on Richard's: I think I am
Promising him a song.
In pace, in pace....

How I Knew What to Do

In the long ago
ee demonstrated just how:
Every evening at 6,
He stalked out of a
Long-forgotten side street
North of 65 5th,
Where I sat waiting
For the rattle and honk
Of his crossing,
Never looking, never stopping.
Olaf incarnate, unarmed and
Invincible.

In Praise of Thumbs

If you wish to
Find the fulcrum
Of all your balances,
All counterpoising
Of body and soul,
You need only look
With exquisite care at

How your thumbs
Quietly, minutely conduct
The harmonies of
Every motion set
Adrift by the
Less-than-conscious brain.

Hardly anyone knows
Id-is persona well enough
To appreciate the false-fold
At finger base, where third
Joint and palm seam together
Halfway down bone to
Create an illusion of flexion.
One's lifeline actually
Rises just beneath
The knobs of knuckles.
That's thumbs' own secret
And lies at the heart
Of their eternal laughing
Dance.

In Praise of Thumbs II

The perishability of clay
Isn't common knowledge
But to potters and others
Whose fields of play
Require permeability beyond
The common run of slippage.

It's only by grace of thumb,
That ruler of eye and muscle,
That we find the skill
Of molding, kneading,
Forming, stroking,
Smoothing, parching,
Wetting, juicing,
Wringing, wresting,
Flatting, rounding,
Turning, pinching.

So too the emphatic
Punctuator of grasp
Discovers those other
Skills of sculpting
That require yielding
Appression of bone to flesh
For expressing the undammed
Measure of energies
No other artist's tool
Can summon forth
From stores withheld
Until pointilles of

Prescient harmony oppose
The deft fingerings of
Bach to those of
Bacchus ad libatum.

In the Mailstrom

Six weeks: we have exchanged
Two hundred twenty-eight emails,
Half a major fable,
Anguishes from two lifetimes,
The gentleness of the lost-and-found,
What remains of living;
We have published a handful of poems,
Made a place for new universes,
Set sail to seed the stars,
At last come back to Earth again.

And this is the day the shrouds are wound,
Sand to sand, rust to rust;
The light is water, water light;
They run where gravity pours out.
There will be mercy, perhaps peace,
Slaking of the hollow thirst that cores
The solipsistic soul:
Time has chosen sides.

In Sacramental Jeans

(in Honor of M.E.D.)

Unrepentant and utterly alive,
She proffered at the last
Siddhartha's flower,
So purple that time
No longer flows,
And thus redeemed a generation,
History, and every image
Of the just.

The Infinite Regress of Dawn

There are days when I just want
To sit at morning like a feast.
Pulled-up, tucked-down, crinkled
At the edges, a used laugh
Lying on the corner of your plate;
Want to pass you the day's own
Thousand-taste relish with a tart
Fillip of the gracespoon, watch the
Resonances play across your palate
And tweak you into mischief;
Want to stretch a half-thought through
The earnest sun lying nearly risen
In your hair, hear the counterpoint
Gurgling beneath the wind, feel
A breath of whisper on the soul.

Jardin

We grew up believing that
It was turtles who poked
Holes in the sky to
Let in light,
So used to their own
Draughty shells that
They's no feel for the black
Photonic wind whistling
In their psyches.
Some nights I sit and listen
To the blue tympani, the orange
Oboes, the white piccolos:
The incessant bubbling
Of a tenor's mock-viola soup,
Out there on the old stump
Of heaven's tree.

Just the Other End of the Block

Corners marked the boundaries of
A seven-year lifetime, edges
Beyond which even the air was foreign.
Ceaseless wanderlust led down alleys
And through darkened backyards,
But never across the formal lines
Between me and the terrors that lived
On the other side of their street.

Leprechaunly Admonition

It is uttermost in pursuing rainbows
To catch the corner of one's eye
On the golden mien rather than
The golden end, quartering the dream.
The best of lycanthrope can tell you
That mornings are made for denning
In warm familiar scent-of-home and
That luck is the wind's fair sister.

Life Dead Center

It's interesting here in
The median strip, listening to
The rush and drool of mechanical
Rabbitry, wobble-footed and panting,
In its frantic attempt to catch the
Greyhounds riant, who seem determined
To leave bright yellow pawprints
Right down the catpool lane.

Oh, well. No speed limits for orchids.
It's worth being considered parasitic
If someone else is stuck with
Pumping the nectar. Anyhow, my
Tastes run more to polar bears,
Ambidextrous mullet juggling,
And thirty-year sunsets.
Bring the larks when you come.

Listening for Another Bach

Rain lies across the dunes
In slow waves, periods set
By reach of eye rather than
Force of nature; the day too
Marches in some self-determined
Rhythm, captive to your absence
And the echoes of a life
As yet unscored by any
Melodist audible in
The fields of our winter dance.

The Mariner Hitchhikes in a Drought

The rain isn't wholly unsibylline today:

Forbear of saltier waters yet

To meet within this gyre, it will

No more stand for catching

Than slighter shadows bending past

To take the swallow's notice. It defers

To no flight, preferring to remain

Where hands' breath cannot reach,

Borne away in the exultant triumph of feathers

Over fashion, of seed and space in times

When every droplet might have led the way

To oceans.

Methuselistics

Aged gods are the best

Of creche-keepers:

Their acquaintance with

Lambs is intimate,

No supernova has

Yet outlived them,

And they are devoutly

Sick of kings.

Morphing the Weenie: an Exorcism

I hate post-mortem apologies,
Preferring the onus of fool
While it can still linger
On the palate,
Aurificate from the Pilate's seat.

Hence this curtain-call by
That noted Catskills diva, Mea Culpa,
Accompanied by a fanfare couched
In the selfsame bongoid timbre once,
In night-long relays, used to drub
From our devolved existence a tiresome
Over-established, underwritten, and
Ideologically bevested seedling
With visions of Jackian growth.

There was no interest in trade beans
Or other mercenary biofacts,
Particularly since the cow had already
Been slaughtered, sauced, ribbed, and skirted.
We planted them instead, in the woodwork,
Fertilized with otters and the mace of divine right,
Where they quietly ate their way into the somber
Rites of beatification, lending the corkscrew directrix
To sanctitropicity and eventually producing the
Gaudiest invisible man ever to reemerge from the
Bleak cubbyhole I inherited and fled,
Spending my hours in Morley's chair to escape
The vengeful defending moral linebackers.

Not until my kid came home one day, bigeyed
And dripping with untold surprises, saved for the

Juiciest skipabeat moment of dinner and then unleashed:
"You know that story you tell about the Baltimore beatnik?
How he told you the truth about nutmeg? How all
You guys got stoned and sick on mace
The night before the big (unreported) conference
And woke up to a dining room full of Native ancestors in
Full regalia? Well, my friends have this book..... AND
THAT STORY'S RIGHT THERE IN THE
INTRODUCTION."

So it was indeed, a reminder that the supposed enemy spy
Sometimes is merely the true outsider following a call
Heard through other mufflings, a first responder
Whose answer we can't yet recognize.

The drums are tachyonically unwound, Andrew,
Their beat no longer even a summons, just a reggae
Grace note behind the memory of fire, a lilt
For the inward stroll we all must take alone.
They will be muffled someday, at heart's end, but
The unsought resonances will have danced the web
Through decades of shimmering and made of us all
Things we never looked to be.

If other rooms had housed us, perhaps we might have
Become in part what the other found in those etched
plywood
Mysteries and sagas: generations will inhabit our reliquary,
To be safely bequeathed the questing.
Best ourselves now: my part is to pass the drums
To you, that they may speak in full the dreams
We never saw for fearing the precipice.

Sleep sweetly. It is done.

MS Found In A Guinness Cap

It was a good day in the Highlands,
Where the pipes ran truer than runes
In keening a nosegay so blue
That even the doldrums were muffled,
So soft that I looked for an oarsman's cloak
But surfaced with only a small
Beminted tin of adnoidal wind
That levied its deckage in all
The hues of some Paganite hymn
To a Neochristic pandorum.
A brassy token of Menchlichkeit,
It breached as "Curiously tangly,"
And the pastiches within
Smelled of unoriginal sin
And the vagueness of Black Briary;
They were corky of sweetness,
Brightlit as Powys,
Gravenside grey on the tongue
Neither distilled to nilness nor
Countably there, just furrily
Nathanic (of Coney).
I curtsied an eyebrow,
Wished them mauvespeed
With a lashing of tongues loosed in the air;
Sent them by carob, return by nabob,
To Rancifer in the farthest north;
Awaited the shuttle, the looming cuttle,
For a noncicle with purple Isis.
And sure as bullocks will tarry in mud,
And sludge is the hammer of Cain,
The beasties came round in

A Mobioïd way, cancelled like
Escherly checkers,
For all Novum Scotum
Quite rondelay mooted,
And dun as they'd first arrived.

MS Found in a Guinness Cap IV

Twixt Sisyphus and Socrates

Norman was, of course, a
Conquered Byzantine redone
By William the Decorator
In Hunnish hues, slow
Balustrades overhanging a
Ravennoid mosaic stairsweep
Of elegantine and travail,
Down which we foresaw
The hastings of Blue Ann
(In all those ways she hath)
En route from Avon to
Revelation: a secondhand
Apocalypse, her pestilences
Seeming trivial beside the
Placental gnawings of this
Conscientious tattooed whelping
Boy but a dragoon's tooth removed
From San Sebastian, yet every
Bit as lively on the griddle.
At the end, we were forced
To baste him for his hemming,
Take him up a smudgeon higher
Than his eyebrows would acknowledge
And set him curbly out for cartage
When the mimesweepers came about.

Night Squall

As we corner on the following gusts,
Rain driving past our ears
With an edged murmur we can
No longer outrun, no matter
How fleet memory holds us to be,
The sea rises to meet us, spuming
In the wrath of its tenants, for whom
The rent on breath itself has become
Unpayable in any coin but
The ashes they will soon inherit.

Now the Other MM's Gone

Knowing McNeilley:

He's organized the handmaids,

Replaced the harps with saxes,

Is writing Dixieland cantatas

And having the time of all times

Walking on water.

Obbligatto for Poets

If in all your life,
You create one phrase
That, some centuries hence,
Still is shorthand for a
Kind of beauty, a touch
Of love, an instant of peace,
The moment of illumination that
Every soul knows and desires,
Then you will have changed the world more
Than any builder of monuments,
Any slayer of tyrants,
Or any prattler of the madness
We so mistake for sanity.

The Oblivionist: I

I have found the most fascinating
Of transubstantiations in the laps of
Friends adept at constructive blankness,
The mental stare of stark disbelief
That accompanies impingement of reality
On the perfect weave of unsized canvas:
"But I never thought..."
"I really meant to..."
"If I'd only known..."

The litany rises to true sanctimony,
A self-absorbed
Gregorian beatitude
That shames the Mona Lisa and
Defies the ingenuity of da Vinci.

The Oblivionist: II

They who carry the
Wind in buckets are seldom
Brightly reflected.

The Odds On Oregano

It is manifestly true that,
if one allows (perhaps) a hundred
thousand random keyboard-buffer-fillers
to feed a DNA assembler for
a number of millennia,
there is a very good chance
of generating all the monkeys
who ever wrote anything.

Often in the Fog

The still nights of this longest summer are
Kind in their fogbound separateness,
Useful for measuring time in which
No clock or calendar holds sway.
Lights fade to the obscurity of minds
Whose edges have been sheathed, gone to
Seek truths that antedate their vast ambitions
And to surf their medullary midnight lives.

When I became a sleeper in days, a child
For whom pain was banished only at the whim
Of others, their notions of suffering small
And full of brief remediation; when I was
Given the night watch and instructed in the
Keeping of others' dreams, wispy clouds of
Fanged rage or reaching desire unrealized;
When I became a tracer of souls in recollected worlds
And followed the veins of their days across the
Backs of weathered hands and faltering hearts:
Then often in the fog I wondered why I could
Hear no voice at all, comprehend nothing of
Fate or future beyond the flow of rivers and
The flash of dawn cracking down the alleys.

But mountains would come, and the clouds descend
To them as fog to the sea, leaving me to pace
Duffy paths through new nights and old summers,
Salvor of the unsalvageable and dreamer of
Calmatives passed to dark-bewildered eyes crying for
Some tiny light; there is often peace in the

Mists of this final endless season,
And I still reach quietly into the abyss
To take the questing hand,
Now when time's murmuring is hushed
Enough that I can hear and recount
The whisper of photons against the fog.

On the Season of the Slug

I passed the deepest greenfield

On this day of whiffy summersun
And instantly was captured: had
To stop and bob a bill toward a
Herd of little-leggers moeing runty-shins
Untoward about a most unlikely burg.
They arrived in a thousand shades
Of Bambini, pudge, and ghost,
High on hope and shylights,
All fawning on the slider
That never yet had slud,
The dizzy that itself had no mind
To spin and hung there like
A maiden unbound in gallant homage
While the revolution forged so far,
So fast that it was lodged
In Mudville hours before the
Nightcap Limited invoked
Its roundhouse right.
Somehow the jeery canbreaks
Called to mind the year
We planted the old green gallows
With throneberries and bally-whackers,
Fully expecting a harvest
Of half-blind nightingales
And the oftimes ribald lark;
Youthful of moment,
We were unsurprised
And full of heady cackle

At the fall's implosion of dusty jays
Skewered between safe and home:
So we consoled ourselves in crushing
A wholly canted September
With half a chilled October
To make the wine
That left its lees
In the tatters of their tales.
It no longer matters that
The goat got all the chaff
In aspiring to be a sheep:
Pleasures lie in the motley tang
Of failure lined with grace;
No calling higher
Than to put out the fire
Blown awry by the heroes of spring.

On The Diagnosis And Treatment Of Poetry

The learned appear confused by the fact
That, at birth,
Some of us are issued AK47's
And some only get nascent poems.

It doesn't much matter:
At the sight of something too
Grotesque for the mind to absorb,
We all scream the same four-letter word
And pull the same trigger..

The ganzegeist folks are only jealous because
Those with the brain-seeking ammunition,
The soft underbelly types,
Seem to stay alive from generation
To generation.

On the Constancy of Fluxes

It's only natural that
Planck's constant goes
Against the lay of things.
After all, it's just a multiple
Of the grain of the information,
Transmitted universally
And implemented locally,
That constitutes the universal sense
Made insubstantial substance:
Water here, loaves there,
A few fish for the seal.
A neutrino serves as Mass,
Escapes the chalice wherefrom
All is poured, for our
Transmogrified moment of
Resonance with the modulator
That all energetic languages
Decode to eternal novelty.
The sun will rise tomorrow,
Speaking in tongues.

On the Gatesian Portello

The perfect operating system
Appeared yesterday at midnight.
She has a jeweled navel and,
With archly pointed pedality,
Limns the flatted calf while
Dancing in all the other keys
That dangle from night's waist.
No clef's too wide for her
To bridge, nor coda too abstruse.
I sent her out to peddle dreams:
She'll be back a billionaire.

On Those Last White Nights

Like the cat who stole
Baby's breath to weave
Into garlands for nightingales,
I come to this enchanting
With light tread and small
Intentions: a few matches,
Shavings from the Tree of
Endless Winnowing,
A pannier of herbed fir chips,
A small candle made in
The dark of Cygnus,
And a handful of melodies
Not heard in these lands
Since Death was still alive.
We will sit here together,
Now friends in the darkness
As the wheel so slowly spins,
Until the stars take their bows
And retreat into the wings:
Then set these tiny lamps
To keep vigil for the few reckless
Barbarians of the psyche
Who still believe that there is
Hope beyond the edges of
The light, who can dare the needed
Reach to catch the Planet-Eater
By a claw as he snatches for them;
And like a lion's thorn worked
Loose by endless flexing,
One day be deposited on

That outpost where the solace
Of knowing is all the forgetting
Needed to remember who
You are.

Orders of the Night

Sympathy is thin gruel
To those who remain apart
From Love to embellish
Loving, that they may
Shelter without walling,
Embrace without conquering,
Forswear though not forsaking.

Rather pity the grandiose sacrificants
Celibate from fear and loss,
Bleak in their envy,
Whose acidulous tears are
An angry rain of tyranny
Falling sulphurous under
The black moon of Mordor.

Overdrive

It is paradigmatic commentary
On the speed of light
That the twinkling voyageur craft
Of other compulsive wanderers
Bear some who, through deep
Analysis and deconstruction,
Still hold to the failed deduction
That there exist objects
Bigger than a breadbox and
Smaller than Jugoslavia.

Passing the Solstice

The comforts of living are deep,
Far sweeter than the residual pains
Swaying the lazy mobile of other
Nirvanas that hangs from visions
No riper than the spring ahead;
It's time to stay a while in this
Place of moments, where softening
Days carry the bones in warmer hands
Than we had ever hoped to feel.

Patchen up the Breeches

On the whole,
Not a half-bad day on the
Other side of the rainbow,
Out past Neverwhere...
Snoopy and Rackety-Coon Child
Curled up at King Aroo's feet,
Rolling in furry hysterics
As he outlandishly voices
Last Sunday's "Little Flower";
The roundheaded kid staring
In utter devotion at the Princess
From the Kingdom Next Door,
Joined in adulation by
The little redheaded girl;
Lucy, Albert, and Yup-Yop gabbling
With their heads together over the
Small dark Pigpen cloud near where
Sparky's trying to convince Walt and
Jack that something's gone wrong if
He's been allowed in here.
Walt's been threatening to call out
Ken and the Little Green Deer as
Classic counterexample, but
As usual, it's Ol' Porky who sets
The old grey heart to beating again:
"No, Sparky. You're here because you
Convinced a gazillion kids that
Everyone's really too much everybody
Everywhere. We've met you, Charles,
And you're part of us."

Poetogenesis

No, Holmes, I regret to inform you
That the prescription was for
Cortisone, not courtesans;
And the instructions specified quite
Clearly "fever-reducing rest," though you
Profess my clear Spencerian hand
To be so blurred as to mryyghisd and frounth.
I would look to your syringe for
The source of your visions and
Voices, and am not overly enthralled
By your summons, couched as it is in
Such phrases as "The hunt is now,
While the game's abed."

As your immanent departure for
"The fleshports of the continent,
In which I mean to stew until I have
Absorbed sufficient juices to withstand
Another onslaught of sanity,"
I can only urge upon you a less
Rudderbound hidelessness and greater
Care for the effortean squiggles just
Beneath the stamp you have glaubrously
Asked me to lick and affix in the STRIATIONS
So kindredly wedded to the heathen surface
Of this great Jungle (Our Mother's lair) hidden
In the lustrous fibers of the all-encompassing
Envelope of the Heavens that you shall
Hostpaste from my herewith be dispatched soonest.
The porters are struggling to pack me,
But I shall be with you anon.

Ever your Obed't Cervantes

Watson

The Poet's Apologia

The world out there sometimes seems
A vast colony of limbless leprous
Scavengers, incanters of reckless
Liturgies, elephants blinded by
An endless quest for meaning.
I cannot give them alms in any coin
They might spend among themselves:
My work is the dreaming of words
To melodies heard in vaulted silences
Where images and echoes never die;
A ritual sacrifice of sensibility
To flow and eddy; the sound of
A syllabary forged in the liver
Of some god more favored than clawed
By eagles.

The Poet's Solstice

The oddity of this meandering life
Is only emphasized by its failure
Of metaphor: the long slow passage
From too early autumnal nights,
Meager harvests, brief Indian summer
Into withering winter, ice in the
Marrow, grind of joints too frozen
To slide, cheekbones sadder than granite.

Others climbed uphill toward the sun,
Found basking places, came to rest,
But I moved past them, sought glaciers
In which to imprison youth, numb its
Edges against the pain of will, not yet
Tired of boredom as the boon companion
Of incarceration, still comforted by the
Crack and shatter of sledge on stone.

Strange that the wind becomes thinner
As oxygen fails, that rainbows survive
The heights, not caring the form of water.
How could I know life would linger,
That in its briefest season
The thawing margins of the summit
Would reach to plump out scant seed, impel
It to seek the source that scented
Warmer, still-rising air with the
Faint bittersweet of butterfly scales,
The pungent tears of spring's first storms.

The body faintly wishes to resist this
Journey toward gentler repose, but
The way lies downward, daisy-marked,
Across slopes of talus and scree.
The feet already find hewn pebbles that
Have rolled this way before me, bearing
Faint impressions of decades' labor:
A few have been pocketed as keepsakes,
Reminders of how little endures.
The heart has revived to the point where
Milestones are no longer beneath notice:
Yesterday I paused at the first and was
Struck dumb at finding another's seasons
Stitched up and left as a wayfarer's gift:
After a night beneath that cloak, I've
Shed my tatters and wrapped it about me.
It speaks of solace and longing
On the road to summer.

Priming the Pumpkin

A true All-Hallows, when
Most ancient coin might buy
Damask to nape the hills:
A cloud of soprano lace-notes
Sliding across dawn's underflash,
The twice-set places more festal
Than raw souls might wish cleaved
To palate. Yet all's still provender
For the plasmodium, with its pipes
Ranked cardinalic beyond the
Tabled sacraments, stuff of
Oratorios so ornately turgid that
Tongues eschew speaking. Basque
Embraces Hungarian to loose floods
Of finnipedian excess,
Syllables strung up by the auricles
And stretched to assonant ruin.
Back of the head lies a tang of
Ill-concealed sun, some deity's poor
Mockery of jalapeño verve. Seemly now
To draw close the fog, comfort for
Those who wish to be stricken with
Ghastly alimentations and bobbed to
The quick, where they may find the dead
As long in irony as those believing
Themselves to live.

Reablution

I constantly pass them in
These elegant streets,
The glarers and disdainers.
Every now and then
The temptation becomes overwhelming:
I sidle up to one and
Present a delicately engraved
Cream envelope, tastefully advising
'An Invitation'.
The contents??
A crisp hundred dollar bill
And a note that reads:
"So you can wash your mind out
With soap now made
Affordable to the
Most miserly."

Reflections on a Tuffet

It seems only appropriate to maintain
An elegant, well-tatted parlor for visiting
Spiders, who deserve no less than they've
Given over the last few million years.
The inspirational quality of orbistics
In minuscule permeates more history
Than the learned, the warrior, or the artificer;
It's hard to reconcile loathing of
Artist with love of art in any sphere
But the human, where all burnished surfaces
Seem bent on luring talent to a greed
More poisonous than the paralytic
And solvent venom of other ideovores.

Refrain Ad Inf.

Time now to hoist the cornerstone

For one more magpie brew,

For slyly gathering geegaws

To braid into cornsilk dew;

Not day enough remains for sight

Not night enough for flight:

Many a shire shall crawl this tune

Ere another Bonnie's Doon.

{{The archiver regrets that the other three hundred twenty verses are in Tartan, and await a suitable translation}}

Renaissance of the Barons

Might is dense beneath the quilted sky,
Scarcely pierced by the light of revelry;
In the blue mirage, stately carriages
Bear a resurrected royalty to coronation,
Their largesse a flinging of half-molten stars
Stolen from lands smelted to petty coinage
By the atomic flame of greed.

Report from the Bindlesphere

Dead of day, but not lost.
Another summons echoing of
Maquetry looses the poetiped
Into freefall, tumbling against
Tesselated walls as though
Possessed by falcon's lust.

It's a matter for slowness
In repenting, a chasm verged
But not encroached. Larks are
Fonder in the tongue but small
Of whispering, an artifice some
Other thief has smoothly tuned.

The falter-hearted cannot
Venture into precepts so
Finely edged; the feathering
Of dives beyond their
Meagerness as much a strain
Of atmospheric as of pinnae.

We nomads have the string and
Chalk to measure you, and that
Remains the wherefore of your
Need; without us, you will
Wither into petty vintners and
Viniform surmise.

So we come at beck and dawn;
Shine in the vast reflected
Blue of Baryonikov irradiant,
Plicated anger of a thousand
Million multiplexor nuclei;
Revel in our demi-musics,
Paired and gemmatified
Into roundels no archer's
Aim can fasten on; flicker
Like the suns that pass you
In your muckle dreams of
Endless fleeing.

Don't bother envying:
These journeys too shall
End crumpled beside the bed,
Dented damask scented by
Novels written in the
Belly of unsulfured fires.

There's little glamor left
In brigandage: it all belongs
To toffeemakers and lancers
Of unresisting boils, courtiers
Of a royalty too agued to see
Shadows of the knifely gesture
Homed on sallow throats. We
Dance in your corridas, play
The threnodies you stop your
Ears against, and eat
The veriest hollow souls
Of children you once believed
You owned but failed to sell.

We are the journeymen of
Trades no one ever thought
To see reborn; your doom
Is calling us from graves less
Quiet than you'll find. Pay
Us at your peril. We will
Earn our keep, and in
The keeping you'll do worse
Than perish: live instead
In ghastly, garish splendor.
The stones themselves will pity
You, passing limpetish from
Tongue to tongue in fevered brandy.
You'll have no respite from
This prattleskulling until
The Universe itself goes mute .

Return to Ogygia

Articles of salvage do not

Govern willful grounding:

Terms of legend

(Seven eternities enraptured upon

This island in the wind)

Indenture only the prideful.

The bonds that held one

Night-blind earthly mariner

As ransom for his wanderlust

Now are loosed to weftwork

And freely chosen

By a sailor of the stars.

Rounding Up to Zero

How did it get

To be dawn again??

The thornweavers are out

Atop the cattlements,

Razor-tongued in the dull glow

Of rising steel.

I can hear the ill-penned

Seeking to move on, to rustle

Across some dewy grassland

Toward mountainous dreams.

So long, and still they

Fail to comprehend

The essence of steerage.

The Salving of Earth's Heart

These are the words of
My great grandmother,
Feigele Rachel,
Once known as
The Saint of Hester Street
For her hand in
Messages passed
From heart to heart
Across the barrier oceans:
As she might know
You all may know.)

"Time is short, so short that
It soon will end for you,
Lest you take the moment and
Remember who you are
And have been,
Lest you heed the voices
Of the mothers,
Ten thousand years
Of mothers,
Who bore you to this
Place in time,
To Earth's Heart, the
Desert you have made.

It is now that you
Must lay that heart bare,
Open it to every being
Who has wakened in the sweat
Of knowing wrong and rage
At how this pass has come.

Even the very least of you,
Even the greatest of you,
Even the straw in the wind
And the blossom that
Will be the olive.

Earth's Heart must be opened
To each by each,
To the least and greatest,
To the joyous and
The weeping.
For the length of two
Nights journey by the swiftest
Afoot, sunset to sunrise,
In every direction
Earth's Heart shall be returned
To each and every of you,
For you have all been dispossessed:
Mind and soul and the making
Of knowledge into those fruits
You might have the will
Not to wither with your touch.

You shall each bring or send
A handful of fertile soil;
You shall each bring or send
A handful of fresh water;
You shall each bring or send
The teaching of your children,
The knowing that there is but
One us, and every hand lifted
Against any of us is a penstroke
On our decree of condemnation to
An eternal desert.

You will mesh your wills to
Make this place, from the
Nearest to the farthest,
From the lightest to the darkest.
And if the birds return, the
Animals of field and hearth,
The flowers of your history,
The fruits that once nourished you;
If no hand or weapon is raised to
Spill the living blood of
Earth's Heart, of which you
Are each a mote,
Then there will be time
In which forgiveness may
Bloom, and the mothers ranked
Behind you on their bleeding feet
May hold each others' sons to
Hearts that join to make
This place where rest begins.

And if you fail,
So will Earth fail,
And you shall as surely
Perish as the stars die,
Though long before
Your appointed time.

We are but one:
Cast out the names
By which you know the other:
Become yourself,
And take the name
No one dares to speak:
"We..."

Scaling the Piscinnines

It was some weeks after hearing
The diagnosis of terminal
Infallibility (and a projected
Departure date now less
Than a century off) that I began
To carve The Admirable Sturgeon.
It seemed likely the life of so much
Soapstone would soak into every pore,
That a still uncaught eighty-footer lurking
In the deepest riffle of the soul
Would rise to its clear temporal mate
And launch a cascade of milted roe
That might, millennia hence, be
The prized geodes of undreamt
Prospectors, from a race vying with
The lordly scarab for dung in amber.

Sculptor's Midnight

Palpability

Rises from

Uncarven marble:

A rain of odalisques

Whispers rebellion

Against the chisel.

Scriabin sighs

And reaches

For the clay again,

Essaying a tourmaline

Left.

Spring Song

Because being eight
Is a Serious Thing,
Because spiderweb kites
And ospreys' wings
Share the sky
In springtime flings;
Because birdsong and treebuzz
Keep whispering...

We've all decided
To tell the truth
About blossoms and blooms
And moss on the roof,
Having discovered
A Remarkable Thing:
That Katelyn is one
Of the names of Spring.

Standing Prematurely Before Benedictio's Tomb

I have never looked for Guy's name in
The Funerary Times or Gestalt World,
Preferring to chuckle on finding it
In unexpected indices.

Adroitest of scholars,
Impeccably reticent,
He understood the commonality of
Socrates and oaken tables.

It took two generations for me
To comprehend that the internal link
Between the elegant poet and my blunt father
Was the purity of their honor.

Still - Air

High headlands displace the sky
Forming a cradle of motion, a place
Of directions, whirling compasses,
And the dances that hide longing
For more than ground beneath the feet.
There are sweet pools below these bluffs,
Where still air and endless depths
Bring us closer to both ends of life,
Bring us closer, each to both.

Sunrise over the Santa Lucias

Two monks sitting on a fallen branch
Looking cowlish, blue and grey against
The likely sky, just a yap away
From philosophy, perhaps an
Epiphonous chanticleerism;
The one on the left has
Halcyonitis and sips from
Leaf-fonts with an air of celebration;
The one on the right is just back
From the ironymonger's and is still
Squeaky around the coverts.
A likely pair to vote for the
Fellows in the black suits next week,
Like so many of the other
Ravening lumpenpoetariat.

Surfing the Background Radiation

It's a hell of a lot easier
To ride out wanderstorms
Since crew made off
With all the legs
And there's no one left
To scuttle down ratlines
In the dead of calms.
Anchors bite deeper;
Molecular hawsers slacken
As the Gray Loon lies off
These salt-wine planets
Our advancing tides.
Even so, contemplating lint
Leaves us well short of song.
Time now to duffle out again,
Piper paid with trappings and
Accouchements from barddoms
No cosmologist has excavated;
Breeze enough to luff photon sails
And wait, until the last fuel fades
From those nebular eyes.

Thoughts on Satie

A frangible epistle:

The clatter of ivory

Again made dentate;

Blacklings Ariadne, accompanied

By the palest of Saturnines.

Tora Torah Torus

The crowd armed him with beribboned pécadilloes

And roaring paced his entrance as bravurador;

He stumbled bleary-lipped and wobble-eyed,

Snarkish

In his glory lust,

And never saw the grimy hands that stole his boots.

The Utility of Gnatflies

I really miss that Biercian encirclement
Of truth, the wrynecked glance over
Half-spectacles from the
Gazebo on some far hill:
Mencken had a dollop of it,
But often mistook rancor for wit;
And of the few still alive only
Carlin is getting just as close,
If one forgives the occasional
Wild party all those ghosts host
In the back rooms of his cerebrum.

But the old man of Owl Creek
Was a paragon of persistence.
No matter how you swatted at him,
He never went far from the point
Or lost that elegance of pushing
The proboscis precisely home:
Living proof that you can
Find more aromatic honey with flies
Than with vinegar.

Varanasi: Outside the Archbishop's Garden

So it once was:
Time measured as
Threads, the fineness
Of moments suspended
In dust and rivers.
Rising smoke still
Clocks seasons and
Meals alike, all
Separated by the
Work of fragility.

Nothing measures
Civilization's descent
To rubble
Better than
The garden walls
Where Ghurkas and
Beggars will
Let one rest
If only shown
A poem.

Voyages II

Dawn is suffusively moist,
Eclectically alive, heavy of promise
In nostrils that conjure braziers in
Tonga and Hokkaido. Yet
The day outside our window is filled with
Figures leaning into a clamorous
Wind, tilting at gelmills with
Nikean strides, proud in regal
Headlessness designed for speed
We choose not to match.
The gift we're granted now leaves
Statues ranked down the endless beach:
Our time (moving at a pace so languorous
That speed is frozen) makes waves into
Symphonies, play of seals into all
The cantatas Bach failed to write.
The tactile becomes a continent: its
Exploration opens vistas where colors
Lie outside the known and fall to us for
Naming. How delightful that you share a word
With the brightest hue of sunrise.

The Warmth of the Sun - I

Days that skate on summer's
North wind, hard by the edge
Of a bedraggled sea, still unkempt
In this best-adorned season;
Dusks that fade into
Iridescent stillness, portions of
Unfinished night waiting for
The indiscretion of fog;
Midnights twice wrapped around
The moon's waning charisma
And muffled behind the
Mad world's eyelids;
Dawns barely perceived by
Any but the waking swallow,
A petty drizzle of new light
Romantic only to youth.
I will trade you all these
For a single endless afternoon
In the warmth of the sun.

The Warmth of the Sun - II

Strange. Why isn't it cool
Where your body shades
The ground from the
Warmth of the sun?
I've often suspected you
Of owning a key to the weather,
But it's suddenly clear
That it comes from within.

Weathervane

The wind is soft from the south,
Barely stirring the tepid pool
Of sunshine and fritillary tracings
In which we sit, but still
Strong enough to have carried
The tendrils now woven into promise
That winter will not come again.

You Gave Me a Sheaf of Yellowed Poem

Today began yesterday:
I read far more than I intended,
But the texture of having lived
The same life under two skins
Was not easily set aside.
In the dream that remains
From 1966, there is a dark-haired girl
Reading in a tiny winter bedroom
Under a bold blanket checked with
Six inch red and black squares.
You understand that I am largely no
Different now than then, as
I understand how much remains of
Life lived in you.
We cannot cast each other out
Into that again, so we will not,
Even in the face of sorrow and
Imperfections of making do.
The dreams of lostness and
Danger are the common ground
We've walked, paced, trampled,
Rolled blindly upon to
Put out the flames.
They are our heritage and we
Now parcel them out between us
Like Roman coins, a Caesar for you,
A Minerva for me.
We will go on together regardless
Of what the months or years bring
To pass as otherness:

That isn't even a promise,
Merely a simple fact based
In our very existence.
There are some loves
One cannot leave.

HAIKU

The Poet

In the court of the
Dowager Empress of Time
Sits one last seamstress.

Drawing the Shades

Why be outraged now
That dead men take no umbrage?
Adulorum Claymore.

The Locust Eaters

Some heritages
Are far crunchier than mere
Petaliphagy.

Slowdays

The blue wind sings
Time's own dirge, lying at rest
In a turtle's eye.

Tearscapes

Pass the cup of your
Sadness: it runs like fall dreams
Through silent fingers.

Menuscape

Fine minds dine on their
Own cooking: no recipes
More tastily spiced.

Hume at Last

Nothing is more
Soothing than deft mindscapes thrumming:
Tabla rasa.

At the St. Michel Cafe

New chefs this week,
Seasoned now: raison verte
With pomade fritters.

Disembarkation

In the year the crows
Learned Bartok, spring never left
For summer grieving.

Galapagos

The dreams are sweet yet,
Too deep for waking: dawn lies
Turtled in the mist.

The Jennif(er) Genes

So, it's the frayed spots???
Ravelled threads reveal
The First Shiksa of Lodz.

Dawn Moire

Three chains of dew bloom,
Burnish night with spidersilk:
Owl holds the center.

May

The heart of time holds
Spring frozen deep in amber:
A gaunt last whalesong.

Astrolables

A languid trail of
Whippoorwill nights ripples the
Moon's eerie waters.

Chanticleer and Morpheus

The poesy of exogamy
Is not something
The whippoorwill teaches it's young.

Sphinx

Great sprawling wild bards
Encompassed in the flamedance
Of a single sphinx.

Thaw

April reared and loosed
The arrow of time unfledged.
Weary herons stirred.

Dialog

The mirror silvered:
An exquisite pantomime.
Swans hiss, ravens bell.

The Physic of Taoism

Moonbows: entropy
Impels lichens to erode
Granitic hubris.

Syllabary

Stillness: words decay.
The complex becomes simple
As an osprey's dance.

THE EAGLE POEMS

Cwyanna Dyr I the Eyrie

We have been here before, you know --
Stooped to a thousand misty marshes
In the brackish dawns
Before time started to unwind.

The ancient aquiline brain finds it curious:
You are so enchanted by the space between the stars
That you must bring the void to ground and
 cloak yourselves
In the charisma of desolation.

We will introduce you to Our Lady of the Bitter Fog:
Perhaps she can explicate the true import
Of bereavement.

Cwyanna Dyr II ? High Tor

The crags remain only slightly seethed,
Discolored as by boiling time.
You have not succeeded in severing
Our bonds to the unpossessed,
Although grasses harbor little more
Than the offal of your immobile prey,
Themselves creatures beneath the dignity
Of all but the near-starving.

What is left of motion lies
In mirror-image
owls and nightjars,
Vultures and long-scorned corviids,
Whose governance is less strict than ours:
We and the ravens are willed
To conclude a most unlikely peace,
On terms inimical by nature, but perhaps
The antidote to force majeure.

There are yet thunders and trumps to sound,
A great western rising of pegasids.
We too know the summoner king,
The cave, the seal;
You shall have your day in court
Upon these bluffs encircled,
Buffeted, bejudged,
Pierced; bedoomed, befallen.

Cwyanna Dyr III Ensemble

Eagle's nest embowered,
Raindrops pool and roll;
Stone skipping
To a blackbird's call
Reed and sedge
Intercalate marsh and glade;
Flicker's flight from
Grub to fruit and
Home as night
and owls bestir;
Ospreys stitch molten sky
In enduring wild
Freefall, binding
Springs together.

How foolish those,
Wise by cerebation,
Who believe us void of reason
But make their revelry
By dancing out the pages
Of an older historicity
Intoned in other tongues.

Cwyanna Dyr IV Eaglevoice

Why use this blunted,
Ragged talon to claw
At your conscience?

Perhaps
Because once, at the end
Of body's dominion,
By the last tree on the last rock,
The poet sat silent beside
A strayed trumpeter swan
And formed the heart's mind
Into an image of home.

Cwyanna Dyr V ? In Iago's Camp

One is sometimes beguiled by the scent
Of sanctity incardinine,
Seeing purpose in blood spilled
To write the names of gods;

Drowsy memory must be waked by thunder
Before such wastage is seen to be
The spiritual onanism of crippled animae.

One might well be tempted to despoil
The mind-killers, were they not
Unclean even as carrion, palatable
Only to my brother, the malodorous sanitarian.

But I bequeath the mayhem-strewers, beneath
Every hint of wind, a skyward glance:
The prescience of vultures' wings.

Aquila I Constellaria

We have sat tonight in distant conclave
To name the unbounded reach
That may still be grasped
By journeying beyond mete and bound.

We gather to see another mindform
Venture into our cloister,
And submit to eternity those who one day
Will convene at the hub of time:

Apus, heretofore the youngest and most glorious
To the eye, our flower;
Grus, sailor of the landlocked soul, keeper
Of the heart and hearth;
Phoenix, who will sustain the voyageur en route
To new desmenes;
Cygnus, stout and bitter defender of all
Emergent seekers;
Corvus, elder statesman of the dawn, eternal
Justice reincarnate;
Pegasus, harbinger of all that may, when brasses sound,
Ever come of daring;
Myself, spokesman cursed and blessed with raptor's
Vision of the farthest dooms;
And now Peregrinus, swiftest of harriers, who may by
 grace
Outfly the curse of reason and despair:
Ultimate survivor, she is hereby
Decreed namesake of the constellation seen at zenith
From Andromeda's first landfall.

~ ~ ~