California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

From the SelectedWorks of Brian G. Kennelly

Fall October 13, 2019

Me Three

Brian G. Kennelly

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/bkennell/61/
ME THREE

bits and pieces by

BRIAN KENNELLY
You speak of pearls. But pearls don’t make the necklace; it’s the string....
Everything depends upon the plan, the outline.

--Gustave Flaubert to Louise Colet
(February 1, 1852)

So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters; and
whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say.

--Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own
Beginnings
To start with, sure, I am a little anxious. With two days’ worth of pretending, or trying, not to need to shit, of holding my breath at 35,000 feet, of coaxing myself into interseasonal changes of pace. Fewer—although with the upcoming time changes, I wonder—than two days’ experiences away, I have yet to turn attention to my preparation, my “soaping up,” my filtering period. There’s still an awful lot to do: so very many pushes, some risks, and a few extracurricular odds and ends. My intercontinental hop promises much, but, until today, I’ve done very little: my burgundy suitcase, its toy padlock jesting, remains unstuffed, its zippered lips still pursed, in anxious preparation.
Prologue to The Cango Caves
(a misplaced drama)

Scene One

MASTER: Peterson, when did the Battle of Hastings occur?

MASTER PETERSON: 1066. Anything else, sir?

MASTER: Your cap, Peterson. Did you not forget to raise your cap? I shall need to see you promptly at six after supper outside my study. Is that understood?

MASTER PETERSON: (Noticeably ashen faced, shaken substantially) Understood. Very good, sir.

Scene Two

(Opens with a very dark impression of a somber corridor. Strobe lighting in conjunction with Peterson’s words are married essentially.)

Peterson: (clutching a bloody sheet, which he has wrapped around himself to clot his bleeding and hide his nudity; holding back his emotions) Control, Peterson: it’s the British way.
Scene Three

NARRATOR: And, with the wink of an eye, we find the entire classroom of boys transferred to the English Anthropological Institute. Inside, and now sheltered from both the outside storm, and, undoubtedly, far from the confines of Georgetown Preparatory, the boys seem intrigued by the scores of Bushmen, Neanderthal relics, and soft clay-pottered histories. A tour is conducted by their master, the ever-competent Michael Pike.

BOY: (reading) “The grotesquity/Invented culturality,/Inward curvality./The Dodo bird reformitarian/Approach.” Goodness, sir. Whatever does all of this mean, then?

MASTER: (moving over from prior exhibit, a T. rex replica) What now, then, McEliot? (reading, equally fascinated and appearing baffled) “…The Dodo bird reformitarian/Approach.” Intriguing, McEliot. What do you suppose he was trying to convey in writing that, then?

(Silence)

Alright, then, if you need to be reminded. Did you read Chapter 3 of Understanding the French Investigative Technique? It may, seemingly, have no relevance. But do you, McEliot, recall reading—and reciting—the passage which went something to the effect of “…and is so very meek and right to do so”?

THOMASON: (interrupting) But sir, I am quite conscious of
our homework reading, and yet still I am having considerable difficulty understanding our lack of comprehension of the cardboard—for that’s all it is—sign attached to this large aquarium in which there doesn’t seem, and we’ve be staring for quite an interval now, if you please, sir, to be any—whatsoever, before you add it—sign of association. Pardon my asking, sir, but I don’t seem to understand the correlation.

MASTER: It is evident, boy, that your father is misguided. He is wasting his dreams, his pounds, and risks suspension from the squash club on a lazy usurper, a frothy, failing (pronounced in his most exaggerated French accent) catastrophe.

(Boys snigger between bones, quickly scribbling digits)

VOICE: (coming directly from above early flower arrangement exhibit) Closing time in 47 seconds. For additional time, please see the nearest guard.
Nowhere
Scene One (of a jaunty comedy)

(A vast warehouse, trees and blocks on one side. The other side, as per director’s wishes. But scene/stage completely and obviously divided down the middle, although absolutely no tape/dividing line of physically obvious annoyance should be employed. Lighting should be a marriage between that of “Oklahoma!” and “Midnight Express”—as if imagined as a play.

Wait seven seconds. In rushes right-hand man, followed by sixteen footmen. All halt then turn around abruptly. Eight of them rush out. Eight remain, doing a series of push-ups, or chin-ups—maybe a combination of both. The first eight return, forcing the other eight to take up watch.)

ABSOLUTE JUSTICE: (adopting the role of Narrator, or Assistant to the Narrator) And so begins what will be referred to as bold new theater, and you’ll notice how I’ll always pronounce the “t,” not as the Americans spell or mispronounce it.

(Lights on the audience abruptly go out, having until this moment remained on, but unobtrusively so. Curtain falls. Lights quickly go on, then, just abruptly, off. Curtain is raised
again. A figure appears on the stage. If a political figure is used, it must either be the US Secretary of State, his/her partner, or a ballooned Eiffel Tower quickly to say: “And then…” Curtain falls again. This time a whole new cast of characters appears, completely replacing and contradicting anything that might have come before. The light gets bad… a shade of yellow or yellow, mixed with blood-orange.)
Overheard

Old man stumbles his way to pay telephone (3rd on right), removes hearing aid (miniature device attached inside right ear), and dials number in fumbling manner, struggling with coins while muttering to himself. Left-hand-side telephone opposite old man (with middle phone unoccupied) cradled by woman involved in private conversation.

Doris (pause)... Doris (pause)... Hello... Doris ?... Doris ?... I can’t hear you. Doris (voice gradually increasing in volume, as conversation proceeds, the old man becomes more and more frustrated) Hello, Doris... What? I can’t hear you, Doris. (Occasional glance over to old man by woman opposite him) Hello, Doris. Speak up, Doris. I can’t understand what you’re saying. Doris, I can’t understand you. Get closer to the phone, Doris. Do you hear me, Doris? I can’t hear you. Get closer to the phone, Doris. What? Hello. Hello. Doris, why don’t you speak up, Doris? What? It’s your husband, Doris. Your husband! What? Doris? I wanted to know, Doris, I forgot what you wanted me to get at the store, Doris. Your husband, Doris. A loaf of bread?... OK, Doris. What? Yes, Doris (a muttered “shit” on the side) Now, Doris, I can’t understand you, Doris. I’ll talk to you back at the house, Doris. Goodbye, Doris. Goodbye, dear. Bye, Doris (replaces receiver, pushed back hearing aid into his ear, shuffles
onward—towards grocery store, stage left, while other woman continues her conversation)

[Simultaneous conversation by woman on neighboring phone]

... and then she says: “Don’t you know, I knew that he’d be saying those things about you.” Get this, I could’ve told you about that man a long time ago... Sure... Sure... Speak up, this man’s having a shouting contest with some dame on the phone... next to me... I swear... some consideration! Yeah. Yeah. Yeah... uh huh... Right... right... OK, fine. Nice of him. My kind of person, indeed. I say. Hell no. I’d have given him some kind of talking to before he came over. Sure, sure. It’s this new technique, I tell you. Oh, nothing but results. Sure. Yeah. Yeah. That’s right. Sure... OK. OK. Uh huh... yes. So, what’re you going to cook, then? Huh? Oh nice... nice. Very romantic. He likes them? Oh yeah... sure. Yeah, I could’ve told you that, too. Alright. Okey dokey.

***
It was another one of those times in his life that he seemed trapped. For, disregarding the escape to Haiti, which, incidentally was now aflame in revolution, a fine twist to the promised calm, to the serenity promised him by the woman in the travel agency when he had initially expressed an interest in a Caribbean getaway, it appeared once more that not only was this one of those days, a preprogrammed shift, a more than subtle reminder not to drift too far into the—what he so often would conclude as—shallow swamp harboring the zillions with whom he neighbored, but another (and they were repeating themselves oh so much more frequently, in fact, he often wondered whether they were not encroaching on the other types, the less uncomfortable, quieter times) of those awkward times of introspection where, after repeated, often desperate attempts at meaningful (alightings), after fruitless exploration of his wilderness within, his artificial road-signs, his built-in signals all pointed nowhere. But the nowhere to which he—and when he really concentrated on its origin, the real tourguide, so-to-speak, and he would emphasize the “he,” realizing that it was the fault, or, if he felt particularly kind to himself, the
result of his own personal, and he often mentally smacked himself for his inability to separate “own” from “personal,” victimization by, he supposed, or if again treating himself with kindness, participation, collaboration in the redundancy (and here, he often remarked, the word was never so aptly created, the “-cy” quite accurate in its connotations, there being more than one, of vastness, almost “sea-like” thereness, if he could take the liberty of coining a word) stifling his every move, every option, every idea, every step, he usually generalized, his perfectly legal right, given the nature of the force with which he was dealing, his past, present, and future—was directed, in an indirect yet, after thought again, perfectly reasonable and common-sensical fashion, headed in one very specific direction: that of escape; he needed, then, in introspecting, to venture grasping in a less claustrophobic, or so he thought, for the opposite could just as well be argued, way, precisely because of the reality around him that he would find himself forced to the hopeless escape of introspection. In a roundabout sort of way, he would, time and time again, have to realize it was an all too crucial compoundment of his very basic problem. Whether suddenly reawakening to the familiar, but easily forgotten, more or less shunned reality, the (and he realized in losing himself in introspection, in rediscovering time and time again that his temporary confusion was, in essence, just the reflection, the indirect illumination of the disorder from which he could never really
escape, an at least imagined or recreated, ordered reality) nature of things, this being such a misleading dilution of his perfectly horrific situation, this reawakening, most usually the abrupt and unwelcome signal that a telephone conversation would progress from shallow nebulosity, a painful automaticism, that an everyday encounter on the street might result in the face, voice, gestures, of the encountered one simply dissolving into living questioning, hounding, or whether simply through, and he knew that his body’s more immediate needs would eventually gain command of his consciousness, another of the uncountable bouts in which not only the day’s but the week’s, the month’s past, sometimes, and usually if he was particularly excited about an upcoming event, this being quite rare save for the odd exceptions, everybody, he assured himself, had those, just about everybody, at least, even of the times to come, occurrences, events, peculiarities were called into question, into a closer, what he would think, more controlled set of conditions, he could never escape it.

***
I am about to attempt documentation of what undeniably will be a most difficult period. In order for me fully to understand at some time, when, retrospectively, I might be able to reconsider it all with a tear or two, a smile, or maybe silent rage, this fluid transportation is born.

Tomorrow shall mark my setting forth back into the home of my parents. Having spent a most educational and emotionally driven eight months in a rented space of a good friend, I am ready now to return for preparation of my uprooting and reestablishment on the East coast. Oddly enough, my appearances at the club should shortly début, as well. And, perhaps most draining of all my “conversions,” will be saying farewell to my family of birds.

Most saddened and overwhelmed by this state of affairs, I stride forth, grim and determined to see it through. Perhaps tomorrow, will the benefits of severity make themselves known.

Keeping an open account of what shall happen will be a challenge. My present composure, relaxed but exhausted, will never again, I fear, be revealed in quite the same way.

But my bedroom here lends itself as a backdrop for an imagined episode or two.
He let his mind wander backwards, allowing these unbidden thoughts to overtake his concentrated effort, his fixed three-thousand-mile intention, to stick to the road. At least it was safer than that early morning several years before, when, returning home from the Kabuki in San Francisco, a Frankie Goes to Hollywood concert it had been, a six-pack or two, three encores, and many cloves later, his eyes had slipped off the catseyes cradling them. He and Sean had exited in the sixty-seven Volkswagen from the two-lane highway almost simultaneous with an uncoffined and irreparable intrusion into a seemingly semi-final dimension. But the sudden crunching of gravel, the immediate lurch to the left, had grabbed them both and, like a blunt club wedged between them, had prodded at their overcoated sides the rest of the way home, yielding bruises again and again, the early dawn exposing speechless guilt, embarrassed perplexity and a feeling of near inadequacy.

He wandered back this time several thousand miles, crossing continents, delving, as it were, into episodes that he thought he had long since forgotten, reactivating feelings, anger, that had remained, for years, curiously bottled up, only now, on passing through the strange New Mexican desert, reignited, bathed in a curiously purple twilight, a blended monotony of scorching midday sun and frigid pre-dawn
BRIAN KENNELLY

loneliness on the southern-most route West.

He supposed that a lot had begun with the Choir tour. He smiled, his lips painfully dry, his bladder having recently been emptied at the Curio shop about seventy miles back. The old Navaho woman having looked so out of place behind the shelves of cacti, pistachios, and fresh oranges. Somewhere, tucked beside the neatly stacked keyrings and plastic bubbled wintry scenes—he remembered these well from his childhood and had always hated them, probably, he supposed, resenting the ease with which, after a flick of the wrist, the clouds would open up, smothering the stick man and woman on the see-saw, fresh snow something he had only dreamed about, always at least two days’ drive into the mountains in the East—he came upon the simple toilet and disrupted the heavy, lazy quiet of the roadside shop with the forceful jet of a three-hundred mile piss that could no longer be contained.

It had been a mottled brown and purple, not so much a jet actually as a diarrhoead echo that reverberated in the back of the shop. It reminded him of spoiled yoghurt, his old maid’s concoction that she would set out to sour on the stoep of her rondavel, the converted stable of Bobbles and two sheep, before the lazy scrub and mangey dogs like those he’d seen on a couple of occasions at the Ilha da Sol airport. It was clotted and uneasy, had been churned inside him until he could no longer hold it in. And like the first speckled black clod which had torn him apart and started
the stinking splats of zitlike mush that left a custardy mess in the small round toilet bowl, the choir tour itself oozed out somehow.

There had been about fifty boys, all about twelve-years-old. He was, at the time, a second soprano, not yet an alto, and according to Mr. Badmington, had one of the finest voices. He sang all the solos at the Christmas service, both for the college and the prep. In fact, he was supposed to be leading his section of the tour. He imagined afternoons exploring old villages, braaing, maybe even sharing macheroons. It seemed that at every concert they put on, even those with the brass band, the old ladies present would pass around trays of them, which the boys would dip in their tea, extracting chiding cluck-cluckings from the wizened old farts for whom they had pierced their lips or strained their vocal cords. But only after performances, never before. And they always carried those gentle smiles on their old faces.

In Rhodesia, he imagined town halls followed by pig-outs, the clickety clack of the railway trains, and the excitement of crossing the Victoria Falls into a strange land. He only knew three people from out of South Africa: there was that sickly boy from Zambia; every January he’d return to school, only to be stricken until mid-March—sometimes later—with the malaria from his home; then the Torr twins were from Salisbury; they’d delight him with their grand old stories of their farm, their grandfather’s old Wolsley. And Trevor was
from South-West. That made four, technically, although the Torr’s, he supposed, could count as one. Rhodesia. He’d be able, finally, to see the country about which he’d learned in Mr. Holland’s geography class, the one in which he had to name every African country, its crops and peoples, their mysterious ways, climates; as Mr. Holland always said in his strangely nasal voice, they were shifting around. He always failed the tests but came out alright in the end. Somehow, he pulled miracles on the final exams… in algebra too. And he liked the Kodak films that they’d see each Monday, to illustrate a point or just to escape the afternoon heat, in the cool room with wooden benches, the one just below the library where Mr. Charlton would also make them watch videotapes of “The World at War.” Rhodesia it was to be, and he was to be the first soloist. His name on the program. He could already imagine his photo in the school magazine, the blue one that they sent to all the old boys, O.D.’s for Old Diocesans, they were more often called, the one his dad would read in the lavatory, that curiously smelling hundred-page quarterly progress report that extolled money received, bursaries awarded, athletic prowess, scholarly excellence, and the overall superiority of the private school nestled under the pines below Table Mountain. One day soon, they’d be reading about him. “Brilliantly successful tour reported by young Diocesans,” “Bishops takes Rhodesia’s breath away.” He might be lucky enough to make the front page of The Cape Times or The Argus. He’d
be there one day soon, he surmised.

That was until his mother had her way. Without a scholarship—and there were none offered by the school for the tour—and with money being very tight during those times of unrest, it was out of the question. He had approached her instead of his father one late Sunday just before the half-hour drive back on the national road to his school. He had spent the entire day thinking about how he would bring up the tour to her. From Chapel, where they had talked about stewardship, to the drive back to Somerset West in the Coombe’s kombie, up the driveway, on the long Cheese and Onions’ bicycle ride, with the dogs, jogging through the pines with his dad, he’d thought about it long and hard. Why this was such a difficult issue to broach, he couldn’t quite peg. However, there was something keeping him from it. His schooling was costing his brother and sisters their education at private schools; they had been moved to the local government school in order for him to continue “excelling” at the exclusive private boarding school, known all around South Africa, the whole continent, for that matter. He knew times were tight. They no longer went out to eat. They had had to sell their caravan, their plot, and the yachts that they occasionally raced were in danger of being auctioned sometime later that year. Even driving to pick him up on the odd Sunday morning had become costly for them. Dangerous, even. Every once in a while, they’d see men on the sides of the national road with rocks ready to
hurl at the motorists. They’d usually wait for a Mercedes or something similarly fancy, but the Coombes’ Kombie had been targeted a few times too. It must have been its size and relatively slow pace. Maybe its white and blue stripes too. So, dad had suggested a system of lifts where they’d only have to drive once per month, and this had seemed to work out much better. It had given everybody more of a chance to watch the house. Two acres were becoming difficult to keep. There were gangs of what his gran would call *klonkies*, strutting around the hills where they lived. And their labourer’s cottages seemed to be a haven for the undesirable types. Times were tough.

The answer was categorical. Dead no. “You should be ashamed for asking” was all he got, and that was that. Only, it wasn’t that. It was the beginning, as far as he could tell, a fairly accurate measure of the start, of something much harder to discard, something that grew and grew until it had become unmanageable, until each day it burned his heart, seethed his soul.

Or apparently so.

Later it would become unbearable. His friends all knew people who had overdosed on their parents’ pills, who had attached rubber hoses to the exhaust pipes of their dads’ cars, who had put a neighbor’s gun to their temples. He sometimes thought about it too. The quickest way would be to jump from a tall building, he would often think. He could never quite pick between the Union Tower or the new Sun
Hotel. He’d even considered throwing himself in front of a railway train or a heavy lorry, but the building idea he preferred.

It gnawed at him, distracted him in every matter between him and his parents. Like some of his nightmares, where his tongue would swell, taking possession of his mouth, preventing him from calling for help, this would burn him, never letting up.

Still, there were many days before things got that bad. All the while, he supposed, this thing was growing inside him, gathering force before finally it began to let off little eruptions such as those that manifested themselves, starting with the choir tour. Those were good, long days. They’d have huts at the bottom of the property. Each would construct his private spot against the fence at the bottom of the field, gathering the sticks, the odd bits of carpeting, the occasional furniture from the neighborhood hills. But they never lasted. They gave way to tree huts or some other project, like the golf course, the gardens, the sundials. He remembered in the days when they were building new houses in the neighbourhood they’d practice what their friends at school were all talking about. He’d never really liked it, but then they’d be in some smelly concrete room amidst bags of nails, planks and broken glass. Those were days very long ago, those times the prologue for future difficulties.
Truth and Reconciliation

For really, what with eating, drinking, and mating, the bad days and food, life had been no mere matter of roses [...]

--Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway

Were I to jump from my 23rd-floor condominium, the cash I have saved to end it could be spent instead on a truck rental to carry away the evidence, a final dinner—a pre-plunge feast to weigh me down in defiance of Newton—and on shipping my last effects home. It would be cost-effective and less messy. But to look down over the concrete barrier separating me from the chickens, dogs, cows, frogs, and dried fish of the bushes below, to think about how much quicker, easier, natural, accidental, symbolic a fall from up high would seem than the long-planned self-inflicted gunshot to the head is to lose my nerve. So for now, I continue to weigh my options, muster my courage, strengthen my resolve. Why not reinvent the suicide note? Almost requisite. I have always had literary ambitions, after all.

The “Thailand Initiative”: the opportunity for students from St. Louis and our extended campuses in Geneva, Vienna, Leiden, Shanghai, and Vienna to study in Cha’am. That, I suppose, is where you might say it all started. An online banner advertisement touted the unparalleled opportunity
back when summer’s slow slip into fall guaranteed ice, depression, and bleak brown. Despite its facile repetitiveness, who could resist? Endless balmy days, a charmed existence: daquiris, coconut palms, incense. “This spring education and paradise come together in one affordable package. Live in paradise, live near the beach, live in a different world, live out your dreams... and still go to school!” Hello.

For little more than two thousand dollars, pale Midwestern students could escape the cold, wash the effects of 9/11 from their systems, and bask in the tropical sun while taking courses ranging in topics from business to Buddhism. To staff these courses would be a cohort of faculty from the university’s network of campuses. Paid. Housing and round-trip transportation covered. Bingo. I was one of seven sent from our midwestern home campus. The “Thailand Initiative,” indeed. But mine was more practical. Self-serving? Perverse? Go on.

It had become increasingly clear to me since my teenaged years that the meaning of life was self-perpetuation. One’s trace in the gene pool mattered more than one’s stock portfolio, property, or the space one’s books might occupy on library shelves. As I had, since my early college days, accepted my homosexuality, ceased sleeping with women, as sperm banks had systematically screened me out, and as I thought it abhorrent to pose as straight, marry, procreate, and then divorce with kids in tow
(the pattern, it appeared, of many men seeking a quickie in the parking lots and bushes of Forest Park), my options were limited.

In the five years since moving to St. Louis and starting my Assistant Professorship, I had considered paternity just as important a goal as publication. With that in mind, I had embraced the possibilities of the World Wide Web and tried sowing virtual seeds. But my ill-fated “ShakeNBaste.com” had amounted to nothing more than a bad play on words and had attracted only passing curiosity. I had talked up fatherhood with my lesbian friends at the school. But in their world of U-Hauls, golf, and Home Depot, they all had other fish to fry, so to speak.

To make matters worse, I did not consider rape an option. So desperate was I that for six months, I had pondered legal adoption. But the children in need who might ultimately have called me dad were all considered “at risk.” Sexual, physical, chemical, emotional abuse… babies conceived like mold on a toilet rim. Why accept second best? My sperm (and ultimately my kids) had places to go.

Thailand, with its reputation for sexual tourism, might provide the answer, I thought. I would teach my requisite couple of classes per week and, when not enjoying massages on the beach, would seek out the bearer for (at least the first of) my children. Thus, on 7 January when I arrived in the capital of Siam—after having driven my pets from Missouri to Southern California, taken planes from
Carlsbad to Los Angeles, from Hong Kong to Bangkok—my initiative marked the beginning of my end.

After nearly two weeks settling into my expatriate lifestyle as “Mr. Brian” in a seafront condominium rented on my behalf by the university—having taught my first classes of wide-eyed students from Burma, Vietnam, India, Nepal, and China, having survived my first bout with food poisoning, and having accepted, with regret, that sexual tourism, at least as I had imagined it from news reports and the recent French bestseller, Plateforme, by poète maudit Michel Houellebecq, held no currency north of Hua Hin, where I was staying—I decided to send an investigatory email to the agency I had seen advertised in the Guide of Bangkok (even though I was at least a two-and-a-half-hour drive south). Although I had rejected the straight card, I thought the wording of the advertisement interesting enough not to be ignored. Almost double in width to the ad that occupied the bottom of page 13 of the December 2001 issue with it (the Hua Hin Hilton was a month behind the times) and featuring “Pink Lady Entertainment & Massage Service,” “Super Oil Massage,” “Special [sic] Body to Body,” “Service to your Room,” perhaps this question could only be answered upon further investigation. “Looking for a sincere Thai wife?” Well, not really. But now that you ask… “We have a large collection of decent Thai lady members for your choice […] We provide quick introduction of our lady members in a private and relaxed atmosphere […] We

24
provide expert assistance as to marriage registration, visa application and translation of papers."

Since sincerity seemed to be the *mot du jour*, I would keep my inquiry brief and to the point.

---

**TO:** pivk1@cscom.com  
**FROM:** liveones@hotmail.com  
**RE:** Procreation Potential  
**BODY:** I am potentially interested in your service/s. Would you have Thai ladies interested in motherhood (surrogate or otherwise)?

I had expected a pat response that merely reiterated information already displayed on the website, which I had consulted. That, however, was not the case.

***
Middles
As if Alice in Wonderland had been bound and gagged, then dragged by a seven-foot-long *vas deferens*, bumping, as she was pulled, over corpses of rotting squirrels, long ago expired triple-A specials. As if her pants had left torn reminders of a painful passage. Scraped kneecaps by pieces of skull, physiological testaments to the overture for a symphonic suicide.

***
Some nights, words flow unharnessed, unchecked from my right hand, as if I were drunk or drugged or something. Just on and on and on and on. They catch up with the graphite. My voice, all overflow. When they start, there's no stopping them. Anarchy. Physiological and psychological discoveries become instantaneous, unreasonable substitutes for unparalleled pleasure, of pain, about to be endured. Life itself is to be completely foregone.

You almost collapse out of the head of your discoverer. No plunger or liquid plumber can probe your story. Your birth is so unbelievably shit-like that you beg your hypothalamus to investigate, or at least to look it up in the Darwin manuals. University: the lab where you compared squirrel tails, rat skulls, and bats—sometimes alive. Everything is so terribly unreasonable.

It was the story, the life story of the elephant joke, that's how I've always tried to characterize it. The joke was almost associated with the "Chaises" phone message bit that was never erased. Their message could never come out of what was permanently engrained. Hell, English was hard, and still is, even with computers. And the television would always explain things, so you'd want to use them usually. It was purely the shits. All caught up, and suddenly, there you were. No wait. No lag period. You lay there screaming. Totally fucked up. You had almost become part of someone's life. You might even have belonged to
somebody.

Years later, pages could only represent uncharacteristic hatred. Your plot. Your mother’s maiden name. Everything suddenly started making you think that glasses were really only for the kids down the street, who watch the screen with the lights out.

***
The pinnacle of conception came with Jaap. His mother, sensing obligation, gross lunging sensations, (spells of) dizziness, and, inevitably, a lurching maternal conversion, had never quite imagined it to be this way. Her doctor, quite well known in lower suburban circles, had always suggested abstinence. However, Mrs. Broeksma—inspired by feelings similar to those that she imagined of young sparrows in the heat of the spring, or bitches constricted to 25-square-foot year residential neighborhood backyards might have when in desire of a good screw, and she chuckled to herself when mentally verbalizing this word, so uncouth in her circle of friends—telephoned the 38 year-old handicapped man that she bathed so early every morning of the week. Other than the seven to eight o’clock sessions during which she sponged him and prepared him for morning sessions at the tomatoe-seeding factory, Mrs. Broeksma rarely spoke to, let alone telephoned Mr. Greene. In fact, the only times they ever spoke were during the morning bathing sessions and occasionally when the bank had questions about the amount indicated on her check. He had awful tremors, which translated into despicably poor penmanship. These were the tremors that Jaselle yearned right now. Like a pregnant woman, although she was as untouched as Mary had claimed to be, craving gherkins or charred tenderloin, Jaselle Broeksma needed to touch Mr. Greene, her employer, or, as the Handicapped Center in
town liked to refer to him, her business associate in need—the business, of course, being the process of getting along in her fairly normal life.

Disturbed from shallow sleep, for he always claimed that sleep came difficulty to him, ever since his having lost both arms in an accident, one in which several of his army mates had lost their lives, Mr. Greene’s feet fumbled for his telephone which was now ringing off the hook. Several minutes of uncharacteristically nasty conversation followed, and Janelle felt herself unusually manipulative during it.

Within seconds of replacing the telephone back on the counter, Janelle had turned off the lights in her house, had put the cat out, and was well on her way down the winding road to the convalescents’ home. She often thought it rather funny to think of Mr. Greene as convalescent, but somehow it was very hard for her to imagine a 38-year-old man with bad eyesight operating in the nine-to-five world of businessmen, jammed roads, and hurried lunch hours. He did, after all, only seed tomatoes.

***
No, his entrapment, as we would often term it (he was, of course, misled or, perhaps, too inebriated to realize his mistake: it was obviously usable only once and all the other situations, usually sodden with whiskey mash of some sort, were the mere mistakes of a dampened sobriety) was not a never-ending roundabout—neither was it, incidentally (realizing the incidental misplacement of the “incidentally”) an entrapment, rather more of an envelopment. Often, he wondered whether these occasional down days, these seemingly inexitable moodswings (by swing, he already implied an upshift) were tricks of an unfathomable nature or simply reality harbored in a swamp of listlessness.

***
This, my second book, is rather more dedicated. It’ll date longer, there’s no question of it. But much more importantly, its scope is of a different scale, its ways, a must, its birth, facultatif, necessarily—and happily—so. Here’s to the preparation, on with it, continue with it and through, may it unfold freely and quietly, softly but do its job, excise all others, absorb till the end, the gently gravel, soft sand the edge of a river. A bridge to the sea...

***
ME THREE

(A new play by a stunning new playwright—
Bold new talent—
A fresh hold on my breath, swerve, brisk to the finish—
A Nobel at 30?)

***
For it was almost as if I had purposefully strayed from the main road. Instead, I had swayed, swerved the run of the mill, discovered only afterwards. Before ever undoing the automaticality, the automatically autwarkedneinger (look this up in the Fügrer’s personal account dictionary, No. 47, if necessary).

***
Ends
Mr. Jones, Going Out

By breakfast, the choice:
Boy,
At bottom of hill,
Only eight.

Already July.

That he,
Some day,
Might succumb:
Terrifying,
Tantalizing,
Thrilling
Thought

Transformed: discovery, key, deliverance
From temptation.
On earth
As it is in heaven.

Shuts blinds,
Locks door.
Galvanotaxis.
Mrs. Jones

Her sixty-five degree,  
“Home”-cured hand outstretched,  
Eyes, tainted marbles,  
Trapped in a film of glue,  
Gaze beyond twin caves.  
Her lips,  
Brittle arcs,  
An unpathed entrance,  
(the final sigh’s exit)  
Cracked apart,  
Mrs. Jones  
Accepts the ultimate curtain,  
(no encore for corpses)  
This veil,  
A starched, seven-foot sheet.  

Fewer by one,  
Thousands shuffle forward.
Pleasant

Push
Pushing
Pushed in:
Pushy
Pondering Change

Not like that dry Serengeti *coup-de-chance*,
Just after elevenses,
Fifteen odd kilometers from *rondavel* number seven,
From our little village, our BOAC-stickered trunks,
And the carefully chiseled ivory that we were
To take back for our mantelpiece
Along with the hundreds of black-and-white slides,
Our rolls of film,
Late morning gin and tonics still perfuming our breath,
Our pressed khakis,
Only worn a few times, as were our *veldskoene*,
The cucumber sandwiches carefully packed away,
Next to the Dettol and snakebite kit,
When we shared the dusty road with the elephants,
Nora, Philip, Jeanna, and me,
And the landrover seemed to idle for hours.
The evening unreal,
A momentous stroke of luck
Gobbeled up by Philip’s Cine 16,
An excited cricket,
Keeping *Everyready* treble time
To the matriarch, the pachydermal waltz.
Later, in alcoholic lounges,
After candles snuffed and dishes cleared,
To be reproduced at *soirées* for years to follow.

No,
This time there was no hamper,
Just two bloated pumpkins, weighing down the trunk.

The films, long since buried in a mess of webs and dust,
Our sideboards cleared months before,
To spite foreclosure.
Keeping time on this occasion,
The painful clunk-clunking
Of a rusting exhaust and, somewhere deep inside the chest,
A pacemaker.
My boot, coaxing the accelerator
In an attempt to pacify the Olds with super-unleaded
Slowly farted with the passing of cows.

No,
This time we were many miles away,
But BP and Esso, soothing old friends.

On this cold November afternoon,
The flies, which would
Crowd the head of the water jug,
Buzz and furiously tease the black, drooping eyes,
Flopped at by tired, irritated ears,
Distant relatives,
Unceremoniously swished away,
Goaded on,
Their frenzy augmented,
Disturbing the awkward rhythm.

This time, the smell, the sound, so real,
The unmistakable discomfort of bloated udders,
ME THREE
The sharp clod-clodding across County Road 27,
The increasingly loud thunderclaps.
Even the powerlines zig-zagging dangerously between
The jagged, tired old oaks.

No,
Like the trail of mud, of filth so carelessly smudged
By hooves, the rest of our day seemed
Unavoidable.
After interruption, finally
We drove on, many pounds heavier,
To Thanksgiving dinner at the next town’s farm.
Reciprocity

Like discovering America,
An added incentive,
A get one free addition:
Absolutism at its best.

The Bermuda Triangle’s
Exertion:
A stranger,
Less intense example.

Your traditional hopelessness
Recognized again.
Initial Entry

Has not time elapsed
Since my gift was known?
Is not passing a phase,
An ever-constant lasting?
These questions,
My friend,
Just posed inquiries.
No less bound tonight.

Yes, tonight, it will be.

For this is the uncovering,
The final bust unveiling.
Smothered no longer,
Subdued in other dimensions.
No more will the cloak
Of the past determine the mood.
No longer its sullenness
A secret virtue.
Rather, a quick stuntlike dashing about:
A perpetual, forlornful
Longing.
After Memorial Day

Sitting,
Legs apart,
Not quite awkward,
On firm wooden graduation steps.
Almost docks,
To leveled green.
Hosting whitewashed pillars,
Playing photographic
Games.
Bushes
On either
Side, rustling ever
So gently.
Quiet reminders.
Careful repositories for convenient sperm.
A soft Virginia summer night.
Deep dark witness
To pent-up frustration.
Echoes away from
Tomorrow’s humidity.
Discours Indirect Libre

It was all so terribly boring.
The peasant costumes,
The fresh bread, baked before.

All the grass cuttings
The raking
Placed in the composter.

For three hard days
It had rained
And rained.

Just the night before
They’d come.
After all, they were
Your friends.

Soft spoken,
Soft in their views.
But for three days,
Not weeks, you’d slept alone.

Four nights before,
Your felt-tipped pen
Was your only witness.

Four days before,
The news reports
Were your only henchmen.
Taking Stock

Plunder me.
Harvest me.
Usurp my spirit.

Just don’t save me for a rainy day.
Tomorrow, at dawn,
I will rise
Before the paper boy.

I knew no Léopoldine.
Miles of mournful hiking are not my style.
Graveyards are, for me,
Simple sideroad oddities.

Skeletal, winter-
Hoarsened tree limbs
Force out promises
Of a six-month fancy-dress pageant.

Tomorrow, at dawn,
I will rise
Before the paper boy
To continue living.
Not for Christening

Tomasette
Romanovia
Sepuldova
Esperchic
Wilternoz
Renchedoc
Filtapoca
Semanovac
Hatamonia
Lipersuce
Nicatonia
Festponia
Remterdon
Festaconi
Ubatonica
Escadonia
Fetaponia
Esterdoni
Pesternov
Acracponi
Fusstapim
Findawaya
Eachisown
Ulbesorya
Inowatisa
Festaponi
For Planning Purposes

If Tomasette saw Romanovia by the checkerstand talking to Sepuldova, I’d have to call Esperchic to do the bathroom inspection before Wilternoz could ever tell Renchedoc by just looking at Filtapoca’s brothel design, which mightn’t ever be shared with Semanovac before his wedding with Hatamonia, if, of course, the weather holds out, as announced by Lipersuce, whose information comes directly from Nicatonia who lives down the street from Festponia, the one who bought the light pony from Remterdon who lived three blocks from Festaconi, also down the street from Ubatonica. After seriously considering Escadonia’s proposal, I suppose I could invite Fetaponia, Esterdoni, Pesternov, Acracponi, and Fusstapim, if, and only if, Findaways consents to Eachisown’s being there with Ulbesorya. Inowatisa, Festaponi, Quilpacon, Hesternov, Adnilston, Belkawint, Ulseewhen, Havtogono, Whymustuc, Ihavetogo (my heavens!), Willnever, Standupon, Eatabouti, Eckraponi, and Bestaponi may very well all come in the same car. Whereas Wenchapot, Pissalotu, Welverwer, and Myoldonec will probably come on foot, because Ieveruse told them that Hadaboner is patrolling the streets and Willcome2 and Myopinion advised them not to drive. Easaponur will provide the drinks and Somesayno is bringing the cheese
before Illsayyes and Hellsayur find some other sort of entertainment for the evening. Whatever happens, Findapers will come and make sure he tells his cousins, Stealashi and Yournalsi.
Tribut(ary)

Grotesque erection,
Plunging metal barbs
Into a flaggid mist.
Winking twinkled farewells
To supersonic cousins
Whose not too distant
Orly and de Gaulle pisstops
Represent your Versailles.
Still skeletal shepherd
To the Pont-Neuf, and
Her many sisters.
Only, today,
Stray horses canter
Through Pan Am’s Supersaver Club –
After Louvre – three day see-it-all tour.
Before the rain
This afternoon.
Even the cricket has gone back
In.
André Breton, this time,
He says,
Passed years ago.
Apollinaire,
A zone away, as far removed as
Mary Poppins’ Francophone cousin,
En route to a gentler suicide.
The Parisian pesto dieter’s
Dexterously ornamented
Beacon.
Of rusty sentiment.
A world fair that expositions
Could never faithfully anticipate.
Rosemary’s long-ago baby.

As you gulp the
Sewer juice spewed from
Your displaced pomme d’Adam,
Disturbing the latest
Michelin belch,
Distant sirens remind you
Of forgotten fires
Of long ago.
A guillotineless dawn.
Python Scar

Absence’s
Curious presence.
Each seven a.m. news report
To you, an indictment of
The system.
Of birth without
The head to
Be repulsed
Permanently.
Gargamelle,
A natural example to follow.
Force-fed,
Undisciplined
Pain.
Undiscovered dimensions
Of loneliness, wherein you reinvent
Calculus.
Your own private
Clockwork Orange screening.
Anything,
Where everything
Unbinds you.
An undiscovered misery
That pierces an almost-
Curious spleen.
Natmach Womanchild

A quickly whittled poem
To pin in front of homophobes

A devastation
Abomination
Alliteration
No, an altercation

For ditches are deep,
Blood fritters far

And always an anthem.
Separate Development

You know I’ve saved and saved.
My garden blooms in spring,
The neighbors’ rage:
Roses in full bloom,
Meringue pie,
Plums a-begging.
But still no boy.
The fan’s at full blast:
Twenty-eight tomorrow.
Heavens,
Di, Di, where are you love?
Terrible fleas,
Terrible scratch,
Terrible sores,
Terrible help these days.
Go check the vet’s number
In the book.
Come on Alderman’s hours,
Physiotherapy afterwards.
Then the home and Pic’n Pay.
After dark the Christmas lights.
Just how one outdoes oneself in a day.

What a good thing that man
Donald Woods has been booked:
Such a skelm;
Blew up schools in Port Elizabeth,
So they say.
You’ve no idea
The nasty things
He writes about his country:
Hateful.
Were one to try and imagine
Simply touching stalks of wheat
During hot summer afternoons,

Now, place your thumb
And forefinger gently into the soft
White snowy underneath portion.

The mounds of leaves,
Far wetter than your early
Spring washing.

Already a part of your life
Unfolds itself.
Far from late.
Sometimes I look at myself
Buried intellectually,
Stifled socially,
Drowning through my twenties.
Then I look with zeal
Through the wind-whipped high rise
Classroom,
And remember autumn’s fury,
Winter’s makeup—
The underground, a far more interesting
Society.
Decision ‘88

I often think that
Sophie had an easier choice.
My bowels quickly spread out;
Below the mantelpiece, my library books.
Yearbooks, moreover written, but very visual
Testaments.
Forced back in, I clutch at reality.
Time marches on.
Things continue as planned.
Peeved

Unfortunately for some
I don’t reschedule my already tight appointments.
When 5 o’clock
Becomes 6 in somebody’s mind
It never alters,
Or is automatically forgotten
About, in a permanent manner.
I absolutely hate when people
Try playing God with me.
Regrouping

When you’re the only one to whom you ever really talk,
Even looking forward to the shitting times.
When you can ask yourself to look with you.
To hate together.

If somebody schedules something with me and stands
Me up,
Changes things after I have planned it that way,
Whenever people call me with day-before favors,
I strike back:
They strike out.

In order for you to build,
You have to clear away fresh space
For construction to be imaginable.
A.M. Relief

I dismantled myself
Before the first-strike response
Beckoned otherwise action.
Early warning signals
Substitutes for today’s dawn.
Looking Back

Do you remember last summer,
The yachts belched from the rocky mouth of Newport harbor,
The blistered seamen, their beards atangle, frosted with salty film?

Do you remember last summer,
Its early morning low clouds,
Its dead seagulls washed ashore?
Do you too cling to images of bloated dingos between Needles and Barstow
Purple and blue swarms feasting in molten burgundy,
Sweet pus oozing, the visual for a heavy stench?

Do you remember last summer,
Its books, sunset parties, fireworks?
Was your grocery bill rung up by rosy-faced clerks at Lucky’s?
Were your paper bags stuffed by bad-breathed but cheery seventeen-year-olds with dirty brown bowties?

Do you remember last summer’s heady days,
Its cool dawns and rusty dusks?
Did you choke in your sleep, sweat, and wipe your painful eyes
As did the neighbor’s little boy when his fever broke in late
July?
Did you hear his moans over the clinking glasses by the poolside?

I remember last summer,
Deep gold skin, plump ripe plums, interest mounting in the bank,
Holiday weekend death-toll records, kittens born under the eaves.

The long, lazy days.
Holiday Weekend

Force cigarette smoke through my lungs
So only my ears exhale.
Singe the hair on my brow
Till burnt flesh perfumes the back alleys.
Float my green liver in baths of two-day-old paraffin;
Just keep me from paying my three dollars' admission;
Save me from tears in overflowing toilets;
Spare me the four hours of stale conversations
And my eyes their inevitable overindulgence,
Their subsequent glassy wreath,
Testament to yet another visit to the thrice-condemned sewer:
Two and a half whiskeys down the street.
You forgot that you come back,
That every ticket does have a return.
Somewhere.
The other side of things,
The outsiders,
Continue in their struggle,
While you mistakenly
Suppose that you can lavish and wallow
In your self-induced state.
Faith Healing

If someone handed me
My walking papers,
I’d have to cry.

If someone handed me
A white plus
Or a no,
I’d misunderstand
The good.

If someone handed me
Five rejection letters,
A permanent discharge;

If someone handed me
My one-way insurance-
Paid vacation;

If someone told me,
Welcome to the Loveboat,
I’d want to walk off
The set.
Sideway Stephen

Looking up,  
Staring longingly,  
As from a toilet.  
Looking up,  
Staring longingly,  
As from under the manure heap.  
In the back stable.  
Looking up,  
Staring longingly,  
As though gripped by the balls.  
Looking up,  
Staring longingly,  
Slowly falling,  
Slowly cumming,  
Blood parched.  
Wasted lines  
Of a biological will,  
Realized too late.
Midwinter

You know how even just one can change your life,
You know how seeing a cat run over,
A buck somersaulting by its own free will
Through the lounge window,
And you don’t even live near a forest.
You know how a rhino came and talked to you,
Your biological clock, a false alarm-ridden monster,
A sparrow trapped in a greenhouse.
You know the expense.
You know your car,
When lurching forward.
You know your inborn projection mechanism
Will force you through the ice.
You know the result of a self-induced
Breaking of the head.
T.V.
Is such a corrupt influence in one’s life.
Its peaks,
Soft dinosaurs.
The range in which it’s understood,
Almost Oprah Winfreyed.
The captivation,
All o’ertaking
Majesty.

More permanent even
Than cheap caskets
And a prepayed liver-transplant vacation.
Just because I don’t live
Next door to
Guillaume Apollinaire.
As if Paris were a small
Far-away star.
Although I have neither historians
Nor critics
Clamoring over me like old books.
My words still muster currency, no doubt.
Forced out love,
Like rediscovered toothpaste,
Long ago, tucked forgetfully in a
Frozen washbag,
Like the ketchup,
Its plastic
But muffled suffocation,
Its table in the upper
Corner,
Its stand
And permanence.
Six months’ worth
Of Lyons-Brown leaves,
Even dreamt about
Then-forgotten pets,
Naked goslings,
Rubber bladders
Of regurgitating Shitzuhs,
And, once in a while,
The Mores’ monkeys.
Chloroformed,
They all look
Better
Undone,
Investigated at least,
Unclothed.
The handkerchief view
M E T H R E E
Has unbridgeable Craters.
I dunno
If I secretly
Always wanted to be a
Waffle.
Or what.
I just can't
Seem to keep myself
Out of the
Sun.
It draws
All sense from
Me.
Even your piss seems guilty.
Your car, a terrorist’s dream.
Your house, a letterbomb.
Your aching fear, fatality’s snigger.
Even your mother carries a gun.
Paranoia.
Again and again, the voice of contempt.
Love’s Effects

I feel like the most discarded Individual.
And yet, of everyone,
I probably have the most.
Another bad weekend:
One more broken tire.
More than just my warranty
Period.
Just a small ocean
Separating me from an overflowing
Sewerage system.
I’d like no more than to talk,
To hear, to understand.
I own the rights to untouched plots,
To territories, as of yet uncharted.
Fragmentary poetry,
A long-lost beauty
Parlor.
Five-month-old
Jam jar.
Sometimes sweet,
Sometimes
Filthy with mould.
Maximes

He who looks like a maid, thinks like a maid, but does not act like a maid, will forever be a maid.

She who wears tight pants has painful sex.

He whose toupee shows off a bulge is hiding inadequacy below.

Tentmakers should not be clothed.

Volga boatwomen should not be coxwains.

Forever seems like a long time when you cannot orgasm.
Old Menu

If at some unconscionable moment
During the wee hours
Indiscernible rattles transform the pane,
One thin
Unchitlinike invitation to entrenchment,
Collect the shakes,
Store the scratchings,
Gather the ‘yowsahs,’
Attempt another plunge.
Only surface after
Submersion.
Then act.

No flock to remind you it’s 4 a.m.
And 42 degrees outside.
No incense sticks by which to measure
Courtesy hours.
No fire-hazarded front door,
Reverse walls,
Patriotism, or
Flags for curtains.
No late-night ear-piercing sessions,
No “resident involvement,”
No Remington barrages on
ME THREE

Two-year-old snow,
No "How's the family?"
No good answer—Jo Floyd or Rodney—
No stench policy handouts,
No flour-caked, Hershey-decorated
Study-break masks,
No 1984-85.

For
In your invitational, "self-imposed"
$2,500,
Your full-time co-op posting,
Green campus record,
Toilet-paper-threat
Posterman position,
Your better than "possibly unapproachable"
Séjour,
Lies,
Is loaded
1985-86.

From one,
A doubtful being,
A fluke,
Teeter-tottering tightrope trial,
Trained,
Tried,
Terminated…
To one Hiroshi
(Could you pass me next year's special, please)
Koshiyama,
Vasbyt.
Ten months in 102,
Ignore the illusions,
The phantom budgerigars,
The Indian scents,
The safari cats.

Clear the past,
Vacuum (not once per day,
For that would be copying).

What’s done
Is past.
Accomplished.

Yours is la prochaine,
Yours the “50% plus” returning population.
You’re the challenge,
The burden,
The reward.

Yours
Talara,
The feat,
The nucleus,
The morrow.

Yours then,
Ours now.
My Initial Entry

Has not time elapsed
Since my gift was known?
Is not passing a phase,
An ever-constant?

These are questions,
My friend.
Inquiries,
No less urgent tonight.

Yes, tonight
It will be.

This is the uncovering,
The unveiling of the bust.

Neither sudden,
Nor subdued.

No more will the cloak of the past
Dictate the mood.
No longer will sullenness be a virtue.

Instead,
A quick, stunt-like
Dashing about.
A sort of longing.
Ode to Veronica

Afterwards,
The crevicing effect,
Her scarlet wrapping,
A purple gentleness,
Soft reminder,
Feathered uselessness,
Ugliness.

Her reign,
A dottery,
Somewhat
Talked about
Lopsidedness.
A decade of
Late spring
Gold-turned-yellow
Lifelikeness.

Her screen,
An avian coverup,
Always here,
Always there.
Vonnied energy,
Side tracking
Natural processes
She’ll remain.

Her leftover
Upside-down
Clinging,
Her slightly
Senile,
Overly ambitious
Acrobatic exit,
Her curtaining,
Her heavily veiled debt.

The backlash,
The backwash,
The soiled vacation memory.
relinquishing  
his outpost,  
that savaged,  
so well refined  
plethora,  
his last week’s  
project,  
like a mine  
explosion,  
it broke the  
40-degree frost

light  
quickly  
announced  
the prospect  
of a mid-December dawn
The Courtship Game

Coffeed gazes,
Hands, under precise
Control of snail-
Trained awkwardness,
The backseat,
Aerodynamics.
The undoing
At an evening’s end.
The unwritten rules,
Never right,
Unlearnable.
And time’s flavor,
Always rushed,
Or stifling.

The reward?
You make your own:
A peck,
A smile,
A sweetened letter bomb,
A lifetime of
Self-imposed restraint.

The handcuffs,
So-chosen,
Should have no keys.
ME THREE
But so many
Prove exceptions.
The ‘80s Epidemic

I’m scared to death.
Why won’t people
Look,
Open their eyes,
Admit,
Come to terms with
It?

It’s killing us,
Wiping us out.
Each group
(“high risk”)
A test, an
Ideal breeding ground,
A developmental playground,
Expansion tank,
Perfection chamber,
Simulator—
For the real thing—
(Isn’t that it?).

The death camps:
San Francisco,
Boston,
Paris.
Tainted examples of
ME THREE
“getting back at licentiousness”?

We all breathe,
Eat,
Spit,
Interact.

And we will all die.
It’s killing us,
Quicker, more quickly still,
Its suffocating,
Unplugging,
Is so terribly
Thorough.

Won’t somebody accept it?
We all cry,
And we should be flooded by
Tears.
Please be kind to Santa.
His feet are tired,
His reindeer hoarse,
And his jingle jangle
A ho-ho-ho'd
Memory.

His wife,
The mama of four,
His Missus,
She must now
Reach across
Five cords
For an escape,
A gnawed fantasy.

Christmas,
It hurts
Them now.
No laden
Travel.
Instead,
Bold
But wearied
Black varnishes,
Days observed,
ME THREE
A ruthless
Barracking,
A snow-choked
Penitentiary.

In deep blue
Haze, the
Remembrance.
Lights,
Civilization's
Relics.
Its afterwards
Thank you.
Steep,
This
Get togethering.
Collapsed
Aftershocks,
A pathetic excuse
For radiated forlornity.
Grace on Earth

No disguised,
Over relished
Mushrooming.
Not a many-
Times-folded,
Three-pointed
Alliance.
Instead, a
Reawakening,
An underreconciliatory
Reestabilishment.

Tainted only by its
Representation,
Its all enshrining
Self portraits.
Like a glimmer under
An old Parisian bridge.
Recognition,
Realization
Of an age-old
Charity.
A self-mystifying
Absolution.
Ridden

My own sort of
Pickle fetish,
Mayonnaise-tinged
Mustarding
Of a seemingly
Unwhettable starvation.
The provocation of
Shotgunned slams,
Overtightened twists,
An exaggerated
But unshunnable
Craziness.
The telephone,
Once an ignorable
Stepping stone,
An occasional fixture,
Ruthlessly flaunts
Its impossible
Metamorphosis,
Barbed tail whipping,
Its weaponry
Bombarded into a
Half-finished ring or
Seventeenth snicker,
Everlastingly ringing,
This unwanted
Squeezing.
All of being,
The suffering chaos,
In an unending
Disorder.
Groping sea legs
Only stomp
Their reaching,
My unbelieving,
Inescapable pasting,
In an anemoned
Transposure,
This black
Luxuriated entrapment.
No More

This box, your opportunity,
Its bounds, your box
Your box, my agony,
My suppression, your desire.
My life, someone’s wrong,
Its correction, your right,
Your duty,
In the interest
Of mankind.
Necessary
( Denial).

No sitting in this,
No cramping,
No pushing,
No stuffing away.
I’m no Jack in the Box,
No dumb shit, manipulated
Spring,
No toy,
No woodworker’s smile.
A better than Pinocchioed
Seeing,
Smelling,
Testing,
Hearing,
Touching (sometimes),
Feeling (always),
Hurting
Person.

Stop.
Please.
Help me dismantle.
No More
(variant)

This box is your opportunity,
Its bounds, your box
Your box, my agony,
My suppression, your desire.
My life, someone’s wrong,
Its correction, your right,
Your duty,
In the interest
Of mankind,
Necessary
(Denial).

I won’t sit in this,
Cramped,
Pushed,
Stuffed away;
I’m no Jack in the Box,
No dumb shit manipulated
Spring,
No toy,
No woodworker’s smile.
I’m alive.
I see,
Smell,
Taste,
Hear,
Touch (sometimes),
Feel (always),
Hurt.
Stop. Let me out.
Please.
Ode to My Eastern Henrietta

The juxtaposition of her rusty chain
With her sparkling blue provocative frame,
Too much for them.
Her sexy creak,
Voluptuous wheels,
Enviable frame,
Reasons enough for viciousness.

Henrietta,
With each hill,
Every minute wasted on bus benches,
Her mangled frame,
Jutting ribs,
Distorted kickstand,
That ever-painful cliterectomy,
Her demanification.

Vinegar for my blistered memory.
To the owner of this wheel and lock (if such a person exists),

The rest of your bicycle is on vacation. I decided to give it a change of scenery and some time to “stretch its spokes,” so to speak. I am quite willing, and bound by my honor, to return it to you, thus cut short its liberation, when you so wish. Full details as to the circumstances under which the liberation took place are currently being flouted by the now-happy vehicle. Your wish is my command; my directions should be left right here.

The adoptive parent
This bicycle has been (temporarily?) liberated. After watching it, having walked by it week after week, month after month, (always shamefully chained to the same metal grill, never given the chance to “stretch,” to go out for a spin, confined, it seemed, the same boring piece of concrete between Cabell and Cocke, without view, even, to share in the majest of the Rotunda, cheated out of the happy freewheeling that most other bicycles on the grounds enjoy) brave rainstorms, ice-storms, snowstorms, and many a windwhipped Charlottesville night, I, after much deliberation, decided, today, to offer it a new life, one in which it will be free to “hang out” with the other bikes of different ages and makes, not just suffer their mocking stares each time they try to calculate just how many days and nights it has had to withstand the elements, just how cruel and uncaring its owner has to be to discard it in such a fashion, one in which it will be cared for, where it will, on a daily basis, race with the campus buses, feel the liberating wind rushing through its spokes, be tickled by enthusiastically churning ball-bearings, be cared for, even pampered, on occasion. I emphasize, though, that on my honor as a UVA student, I have, in offering this Schwinn beach cruiser new hope, not willfully violated any standards of conduct, of honor, and insist that if ever the individual who happened to
chain it up and forget about it does materialize and recognizes it as his own, although this would surprise me and almost certainly terrify this poor bicycle, I would be bound to give it up and apologize for any, if any, inconvenience caused to him. I do admit that, in order to make its new life a little more pleasant, and, in keeping with the sense of “mode” that seems to exist among its peers here at UVA, I have furnished this bike with a new front wheel, off my old bicycle, Henrietta, who was viciously raped, then permanently disfigured and crippled late last Fall, and a basket which makes the task of carrying books around far from burdensome, if anything, an envied one. Its old appendages, a front wheel and lock, remain as vestiges of less happy times, behind Cabell hall. If ever occasion should arise for the liberation of this dear bicycle to be questioned, I, as its “adoptive parent” implore the interested party, to leave a note, with a way of contacting him, to this effect, where this note is lying now, for I will be happy and bound by my honor, to answer it with all appropriate speed and honesty. No attempt has been made to hide the true identity of the bicycle, neither, I might add, to lessen my disbelief at the forgetfulness, or apparent callous cruelty, on the part of the prior, and maybe to re-become “continual” owner, or my liberating possibly-distasteful-to-some, harmless act of goodwill, of conscience. We both thank you for your understanding.
F*ck you,

you flaming homo.

I know who you are
and I am going to f*cking kick your
ass from here to eternity, I am
a 3rd degree blackbelt in Taekwondo
and I am going to use your face as
a heavy bag. I also recently found
out where you live and after Spring
Break you are a dead man.

Expect my foot in your face when
you least expect it.

If, and only if, my bike is
returned here and put together by
April 1st then I will forgive you.

F*ck you,

The Owner.
March 9, 1988

To the owner of this bicycle,

I was true to my word. I expect you to be true to yours. Sorry for the inconvenience. (I suggest counseling to help you deal in a more positive way with your anger in future.)

The ex-adoptive parent
I'm being sucked at,
Almost every second,
Squeezed beyond my means.

Every moment feels
Like heaven and hell.
As Per Prior Conversation

Before tarot cards,
Quickly cooked bread,
Burnt offerings.

Before things occurred,
Made haste,
Caught fire.

My life made so much more sense.

Now,
Every time I breathe,
I’m painfully aware of it.
Ons sal lewe, ons sal sterwe

A very much colonial
Twisted-up paper straw,
Uncoiling,
Reengorging itself on the tepid,
Cheap café water.
Brought to life
Again,
Artificially maintained.
A unidirectional channel of saccharine lies.
A drying up chest,
Donkey’s years of dusty,
Ragged and wrinkled summers,
Of heatwaves,
Typically wet
Usually windy and unbearably cold winters
(Even within brick,
Near a gas fireplace,
A train’s ride from corrugated iron,
From mud initiation huts,
Hostels, hedges, asbestos developments),
Buckshot, stones, chars,
Stacks of passes,
Of unpublishable printed matter,
Unimaginable worries.
Troubles, most often all banned,
You’ve no idea,
Mass funerals,
(One, two, three, four, all locked,
And make sure the windows are locked—too tight
—They come with hacksaws, you know,
They spend all their geld on liquor
Then they come back and steal,
They’re ruining everything we’ve given them,
Burning down their beautiful schools,
Those kaffirs,
They can’t run a country,
They don’t know how,
And they’re paid to throw stones, you know,
It was in the District Mail,
A woman asked a young klonkie in Checkers,
His badly cut-up hand clutching coins,
Where he’d got all that money for sweets,
It’s a well-known fact,
A shame,
Another of the wickedly sinful methods
Those overseas cameramen use to film
All the terrible lies they broadcast overseas.
Hell, when I think of you on T.V.
With Tutu,
That evil man we all hate—
He should stick to his church—
It makes me sick,
I couldn’t sleep at nights for weeks after
You told me,
But you don’t think
The country will go to hell
ME THREE
Like another Rhodesia
Before Grandad and I die,
Do you?
An uncoiling,
Flaking,
Withered old cobra,
Slowly rethinking old moves,
Possibly a boomslang,
Hanging meters high,
Far from the blood and dust,
Upside-down,
Or a puffadder,
Its venom
Uncharacteristically puslike—
Like the leg, the strokes, which,
With the 80 years,
All of a sudden changed everything—
Once more oozing
Carefully guarded,
Milky hatred.
HIV

The giant closet doors
No longer close.
The snug
Tupperware-party lid
No longer fits.
Or it shrank
Or maybe just gave up
Trying.
Old posters,
Crutches,
Sweaters,
Membership cards
To the baths,
Boxes of yellowed articles
Upstaged by skulls,
Eternally aghast
Bags
Of loose skin,
Distorted IVs,
A few home
Blood-test kits,
Some unclaimed,
Some unfinished wills.
Every once in a while—
No
M E T H R E E
More and more
It seems—
The outside cistern
Overflows
With diarrhea
Mixed with tears.
Cirrhosis

A submarine, only once capable
Of resurfacing,
Listlessly dragging
A lengthening tangle
Of barnacles,
Of fishing nets,
Of cans and bottles.
No honeymoon din,
No clank-clanking,
Not the blissful descant
To stiffly starched traditionals.
The wispy tail,
The threadlike trail of shit
That weeping goldfish
Never let go.

I forgot
Somewhere deep
And long ago
To exhale,
Just soaked myself,
Wallowed luxuriously
In a topsy-turvy sea bed.
Nothing could reach me,
Fathoms protected my blissful wilderness.
ME THREE
No alarms,
No light,
No sound
Of any sort.
My periscope,
My rusty propeller,
Clumsy and dinosauresque
Even to me.

Somewhere, deep
And long ago,
I learned to drown.
A submarine, only once capable of
Resurfacing,
Listlessly dragging
A lengthening tangle
Of barnacles,
Of fishing nets,
Of cans and bottles,
No honeymoon din,
No clank-clanking,
Not the blissful
Yet ruinous descant
To stiffly starched traditionals,
But the wispy tail
The threadlike trail of shit
That weeping goldfish
Sometimes pull.

I forgot,
Somewhere long ago,
To exhale.
Just soaked myself,
Wallowed luxuriously
In a topsy-turvy sea bed,
M E T H R E E
Only, nothing could reach me.
Fathoms protected my bliss,
My wilderness.
No alarms,
No light,
No sound
Of any sort.
My periscope,
My rusty propeller,
Clumsy dinosaurs,
Even to me.

Somewhee,
Long ago,
I learned to drown.
Induced Flow

Slightly bent,
My pee
A jet-black St. Louis grey,
A tranquillized,
More voluminous version
Of tears and madness
Play Dough

Feverish purples,  
Unrefrigerated  
Anderson pea soup greens,  
Reluctantly sprinkled,  
Forced from  
The bored mouth of a  
Bright yellow  
Plastic meat grinder.
Stripey’s Show

Overexposed,
Hardly grinning sac of purple,
Supertight shiny overflow,
Along with
Six, very long,
Still slapping centimeters,
You disappear
To exaggerated
Near choreographed
Licking and purring.
Autumn silence, broken

Blended narcissism,
A sort of look at how thick
My whitewashed walls are,
Crack-bang visual response
Punctuating yellows, not greens,
Spike the Jeffersonian porch,
Carefully mowed.
Overextended welcome mats
Ripple careful patriotism.
A vile and hateful stench,
Some unrecognizable vomit
Still coats my words
And stains things I’ve
Since seen.
Also, strangling all advice
As pre-packaged, force feedings,
(Remember when you were an infant, your nose squeezed together, minced apple forced between your lips? Remember the times you choked and those bubbles running down your gentle chin?)
Continue their numbing viciousness.
Writer’s Block

A pen and paper,
Cruel enemies,
Dual witnesses
To what seems
Hopelessness.
Thanksgiving

Oh, soured wound,
Wretched puss-filled hole.
How can you wink at me,
Your ladle-fulls of
Hateful gravy oozing a
Lazy welcome home?

Why force me so?
No more than the crowing cock
Can revisit the shells
Once harboring its limp,
Purple and red beginnings,
Can I squeeze my lips
Over the scabs, once
Whispering milky promises.

Oh, close your livid eye.
My green umbilical cord,
Long withered,
A rotten tangle.
My afterbirth,
Already dried up,
Blended with the earth.
Lest hideous breath
Suffocate me.
A Ford-
Fringed
Tingling sensation.
Most illustrious,
In all his
Wonderfulness.
(Does it interact?
Resolve?
Or mope?)

Don't say that word; it has meaning.
Closed circuitry:
Intimate television,
Apt accomplishment.
Lizardish
Viciousness.
Blinked back,
Acted against,
Unheard of.
Again.

Cocked sideways,
Ever bent,
Slightly unfortunate.

Rhythm swunged
Lowlays slide,
Hanging froth,
Drabbling
Decency,
Delicately daphodilic.
Damn!

So says Sue.
Shout.
Shout.
Silence.
Shout.
Shout.
Silence.

A respirator disengaged.
Swing low,
Sweet chariot,
Coming forth
To expose ignorance.

Swing low,
Sweet chariot,
Making fools
Of insincere peers.

Swing low,
Sweet chariot,
Catching all
These ignoramuses.

Swing low,
Sweet chariot,
New quarter,
New hue and cry.
Different Sides

John’s right.

I have given away my baby birds,
Including Marius and Aristide,
My Saturday and Sunday beach days,
Left Henrietta and Dames,
Tried to forget about living
How I want to,
Control.

Here, the people
Seem not to bow to answering machines,
60-mile-per-hour Vespas.

Instead,
They huddle
In small,
Intimate groups,
Pointing,
Sometimes giggling.
Different Sides
(variant)

John’s right.

I have given away my baby birds—
Even Marius and Aristide—
My Saturday and Sunday beach days,
Left Henrietta and Dames,
Tried to forget about living
As I want,
To control.

Here, the people
Seem not to bow to answering machines,
60 mile-per-hour Vespas.

They huddle
Instead
In small,
Ever-so-intimate groups,
Pointing,
Giggling, even.
When you’re the only one you ever really talk to,  
Even looking forward to the shitting times.  
When you can ask yourself to look with you.  
To hate together.

If somebody schedules something with me and stands  
Me up,  
Changes things after I have planned them that way,  
Whenever people call me with day-before favors,  
I strike back;  
They strike out.

In order for you to build  
You have to clear away fresh space  
For construction to occur.
Tremors

Fear of the known
Perhaps triggers this extraordinary
Fear of the unknown.
Cornered by conscience,
Cowering in wordless consent.
Unwilling, yet unconditionally
Forced
To Perform,
Exhibit,
Share.

Shivering so violently
That even a physicist
Wouldn’t determine it.

Like a fish that offers
Itself for sacrifice,
Its gills inside out,
Its mouth a wide,
Its glassy eyes, a seven-barbed hook requesting.

Shivering so violently,
Cowering in wordless consent,
Shivering so violently.

Like a fish,
M E T H R E E
Its gills inside out,
Shivering so violently,
Cornered by conscience.

Fear of the known,
Forced
To perform,
Exhibit,
Share,
Offer oneself for an
Unattended feast.
Unfinished

My head will explode.
My fist is bloodstained.
Under my nails, the remnants of
Terror-induced shame.

My ears, the tongues of
Fifty rattlesnakes’ refrain.
My eyes, permanently centered
In a hungover battlefield.

Under my covers,
A filthy mess,
The bullet-ridden souvenir,
Never to be forgotten.

My intact memory,
More colorful, more kaleidoscopic
Than any manufactured toy.
Permanently fixed.

An unpinned grenade.
Halfway House

I cannot hope for a day
When dawn might break
On multicolored traffic jams,
When litter might be
Tossed without care
By anyone on any sands.

Every voice,
Every song,
Noise,
Static
In a hopelessly rigged game of promises.

I sense dawn,
Trapped in a pile of bones,
Blotted out by a massive weight
Of bodies,
Caged in corrugated iron,
Its vague splendor
Guarded by camouflaged tanks
And machine guns.

An uncut diamond
Locked away before due process.
Take Two

I feel like a bar of unused soap,
My lathering
A figment
For imagination.
A bathtub, in no real need of a plug.

To me, days and nights pass
Like pitter patters,
Hollow voices of
Kenyan rainstorms.

If only spring,
With all of its blossoms,
Its sea mists, its dupery
Sound-tracked its season.

Instead, like an Alaskan sled-dog,
My tracks, the rust of sobbing
Inactivity, bleed.
Subterfuge

It’s all too easy:
Unsprung windows,
Telephone-answering devices,
Orgies of shame.
Liquor-scorched vital signs.
Santa Ana winds, the sins
Of future; nature’s witch-hunt
Singing kinship to New Haven,
Connecticut.
Unlikely cock-a-doodle-dooed
Exceptions: scrambled, poached, or
Fried.
The shit’s still the same:
Diarrhoead or bird-seeded—
All nothingness,
Unkempt responses to reality.
Juxtaposition

Polishing thick brass
Bannisters,
Artificial lifelines
To a tower
Of illusions,
Expensive filth,
The 4 a.m.
Bellhop,
Charged by
His velvet pockets,
Mini-savings accounts,
His padded
Testament to
Cardboard kings’
Generosity,
Caresses his shining
Godfather
While
A frayed
Garbage bag (2nd-
Hand
Uterus), the
Plastic shelter
Of frail,
Time-tired bones,
Rustles down
ME THREE
A sour,
Piss-stained
Concrete stairway.
Sans Visage

Sometimes it feels as though
I've been through it before,
And the desire to reenact
The same wasted energy
Is stifled.

Why play each day as a role,
And each night perform for the other shapes?
Does the mask hide a script?
Can a script disguise the mask?
My show is frayed,
Our stage is creaking,
And the audience left
Hours ago.

But grocery stores scare me.
My mailbox, the Brighton Hotel.
And the sea doesn't wet but soaks.
Is a royalty check
Not salary for life, enough?
Alternative Routes

Does the hawk,
Entwined in a fumigation pit,
Deftly remove
(With talons)
The spectacles,
Beyond the rim of curvature
With which it captures?

The tiger,
In its chaise-longue,
Purring under a
Fiery Bengal sun,
Does it in its mind
Fiercely stalk the
Livingstonian bather?

Gluttonously delightful,
This bather
Sliding magnificently
Into the dentyne-scraped
Porcelain bath,
With a hint of
Cheroot on his breath,
Does he imagine
Ultra-ecstasy?
Among the fierce chantings of the strutting charcoals,
The obscene, grinning Pygmies,
Cultivating in their peculiar extremity of
Delectabilities,
The missionary,
Does he,
Looking upwards,
Towards home base,
Imagine this as heaven?
Is it the love-
Hate that I like?
I wish I knew.
I only beg,
Wish, and forgive.
It is not any
Man who drops
Integrity.
Neither fool,
Curable member,
Nor potentiality
Would look fantastic
In the eye.
Does society answer
To the norms of belonging?
Or do you use a dictionary?
Smart responses
Never got you
Anywhere,
Toy.
This Congo-
Cured tributary.
Ambiguity

A sunny side-
Upwards-fried
View
Of disaster.
A prosaic
Dictionaric
View of
Synonyms.
Does it set,
The sun?
Or is it
The crimson,
Steamy,
Bloodshot hangover
Of
Another disaster?
Catastrophe
In its wake,
Explosively final?
... gluttonous,  
Self-righteous,  
A topsy-turvy,  
Not wooden,  
Though,  
--Turvy  
Toy.  
Mind your own  
Beeswax.  
Balanced in  
Precisely  
Doubtful,  
Quavering,  
Disarray.  

The juggler...
I don’t like being alone,
Sitting on black plastic chairs,
My choice of a wall of them,
Wondering,
Watching people stand about
(Uncomfortably)
Watching,
Wondering.

I don’t like
The forced,
Frightened
Falsity of it all
Letters of dissolution,
As they come,
Are
Sometimes
Substantiated.

It
Might have
Arisen
That the heinous
Became.

My being,
Fogged, steamed,
Heated—
Unresponsive,
Lacking affectation,
Will never react,
Never accept,
Never resolve
Whatever it was.

But my mind is set,
My course decided,
Struggling,
Trudging bog
After bog,
Wading the marsh
Of discord.

What was, was.
What is, is.
What might become won't
Ever.

And the pain will be ceaseless.
No Light

A silence,
Slowly choking,
Ultimately complete,
Its suffocating pelt,
Eliminating,
Sinking.

I grasp
Emptiness,
Seize
Non-existence.
My memory,
A lopsided
Sea,
Tumbling,
Rolling.

Like a time-lapse
Wilting,
I dissolve,
Churning
Naked
In the blackness.
More fruity than cherries burst,
A tide of lust he rode.
Not understood, neigh felt,
Nor wished,
But undertaken
Nonetheless.

Almost silent,
Parole
Exchanged—
Understanding,
The glances,
Then longing stares,
Shared.
Savored.

Permission,
At least an
*Esprit* unmeshed,
An invitation
To dabble,
Dip, interdelve.

Until now,
A discovery
Long delayed,
Denied.
Delight.
Until the lawnmower gurgles
Its final fifteen,
The trumpet a sonorous
Submersion swings,
Underwoven spreadings,
Beforehold imagery
Of that which was
To come.
Characteristic *jamais*
Time, neverending
Planning.
Undergauged emptiness,
Terminated struggling.
Getting There

A chooka-chooka
Puff-puffing
Push-pushing
Climb-climbing.

I think I can.

Suddenly,
It’s all downhill,
Clackety-clackety,
Fire and spewing,
Churning pistons,
An out-of-control
(At least in comparison,
After a tap-tap stare
At prior regularity,
An agonizing patience,
Forbearance),
Intertwined wildness,
A gush of claps,
Indefatiguable strokes,
Orchestrated chaos,
A clamoring
Bongo-bongo ’ next sign
Nothingness
Enveloping this
Bobsled pelting,  
Vicious and furious.  

I knew I could.  

Red flags,  
Enormous,  
Yet billowless,  
Barely constrain  
The heaving,  
Wheezing aftershocks,  
The fused ensemble of  
Dissipating stream.
Beth

Just dying to
Be, with
Beth.

Alliteration,
Vibrating sensationalism,
Vividity.
A spark,
Frizzling
Clamoring—sensation.

It lasts.
Then lasts.
And lasts,
And lasts
Even more
Than imaginable.

Letters, the
Unlikeliest
Expressions.

If ever
He could
Convey it.
If ever.
The raspberry bush,
A whispering chart,
Concentrated ambush,
Its springtime juice,
Fermenting,
A “dying,” soaking,
Preparatory stage.
Gentle Theater

The Commonwealth Professor,
His right-hand man,
Absolute Justice,
My friend, the scrivener,
Rintintin.

Five female impersonators,
Sixteen footpedalmen,
Uumpteen square blocks

“q”s & “r”s,
To be distributed evenly.

All other characters
“at large.”
The break in poetry
Wasn’t merely a break in inspiration,
A break in continuity
To an (added) end
Groundhog Recall

Ushering,
Only barely forcing oneself
Through agony’s careful simultaneity.
Restless, furious,
Yet channeled in curious tempestuousness—
Albeit lacking totally in
Ties to many hymns—
Besides the possibly still fond
Memories of as of yet pure sopranos.
An impure solitude,
Blightened and pursued,
Like the chapped and bleeding
Lips of an uncommonly bitter winter.
You've found yourself
Caught in the intertwine.
You've felt your way
Well beyond the exterior wall.
You're strangely pulled towards
The featureless shore,
The rippling tidal pool,
Thirsty,
Salty dribble
Drying in the sun.

You've met with it.
Foreback

The cold stare of an Iranian bombing victim,
Only scooped up.

The winter blight with its blankets,
Its other lack.

The minus sign,
The wallpaper covering.

The image,
The desertion,
The disgust.

The discovery
Of hopelessness.
A stone fired into a seventeen-foot, man-made lake.
The claws of the four-thousand-dollar fur coat
Hooked with severe direction.

The eternal rest began—
Mirrors cracking.

Fragments of a very long verse.

The ear of your nanny,
Your mom's last sponge,
Four muskateers laid to rest.

Fair maidens,
Topless go-go dancers:
They all work for a wage.

Somebody;
And some people's
Last hoorah.
And then you find yourself,
Permanently attached to some cause.
Some earbeaten, music-tinged,
Rhythm-swinged
Gospel driver.

For, when the Indians
Galloped. They sweated their lives. They
Defended. Life.
It’s all they (some of them, the
nows)
got