Solid Gold October

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Work

Bustling in the small metal dust
factory at the edge of the forest

I bend the metal
with my bare hands

I have no power over people
As they pass like money

And I am bad at naming
But, every so often

I am given a green grace
Like rusty books burning

Smells coming over the mountains
And then I can just listen

To small wings
I normally wouldn’t hear

I say the sparks are not enough
And they are not but to the left

And then to the right of them
Are things worth regarding

Things worth sleeping to
Brain in a Vat

When I fly through the cloud
in the video game, somehow
the game doesn’t know what to do.
I am exposed as a brain in a vat.
It looks like I am trapped in a tower
of beer at the Arizona Pizza Kitchen,
but someone must love me very much,
or I am being used in a scheme to skim
the recipes I come up with in my dreams.
When the lights go out
they go out for a couple millennia,
and then I don’t really care what happens next.
I am flying on a plane through the international dateline,
a couple people vanish in first class and
I ask the stewardess if I can have their seats.
I heard that the Bermuda triangle has been
hovering in Buffalo for the past 20 years,
says the twilight man beside me.
The movie on his laptop looks abstract from this angle.
It is a movie called "Magnetic Basin."
When I arrive on the tarmac and
descend the stairs onto the airfield,
I feel exposed. It is winter in the city.
I am trying to find a place to go to the bathroom,
as I think about Modigliani in turn of the century Paris.
How will I reward myself when I am normal again?
Thunderstorms mean someone is trying to get
at your snacks, I am told in the vat.
After a struggle against my own foreign limbs
I realize that during rest I am
propelled in a mysterious direction,
but you have egg on your pants I am
told in the vat. It must have come
from the man sitting next to me, I say into the liquid.
I ask to be kept central to my own story, but I find
that I am becoming more and more of a minor character.
I make a break for it by closing my eyes.
I spend long hours at home with books
about yarn and cabinetry. I am coming closer and closer
to realizing my dream of becoming
a single note sung out into a wide valley
by some 17th century village child.
Tetris Logic

I have not been chosen to work
on the extraterrestrial project, but then
neither has anyone else. All those years
of mastering my private world with
Tetris logic has not paid off, but continues
to perpetuate itself none the less. To please
the remaining earth I will make a small car
that is powered by a sail. I refuse to go
to the Home Depot, so I must re-organize
the old things—I pull out lengths of canvas
from chests of dust and dull but
beautiful glass. There are so many
unique combinations of strange
items and at times it seems like
there is no sailboat car, at other
times it seems like there are many.
A Snowman in Medieval France

I am waiting in the architecture
of Brutalists for my car registration.

Sitting in a chair, it becomes easy for
my mind to be enveloped

in insulation or engulfed by an
air conditioning duct.

Much the way my ancestors
may have been bisected by gargoyles,

I am penetrated by turtle like cameras,
which make a document pool of non-

incident the size of Angouleme cathedral
in France. I contain vast stores of

information too, but unlike the
camera’s portraits, mine become

holy and faded by the sun
of forgetfulness and end up

like some iridescent snowman
melting in the rear-view mirror

of a car with no registration
headed for the derelict coast.
Sprite Razorblades

I want a diamond face,
a blockhead, a circle;

I will pass through
time like a mannequin

and wake when you
splash me with white

Gatorade. I am
forever wet,

even in the
Desert, where

I am covered in
sweat, in protoplasm.

The blades are like
a licorice whip

used to tame a lion,
or a raven with a

human body, wearing
a small white cloak,

using a cane, that
turns into an angular
snake, that bites
each individual hair,
painlessly.
Time Machine

The people that appeared in movies
that were the same age I am now,
were single minded,
were pure in their vision of
analog jungles and clothes that shone.

I am moving towards a castle in my past.
The snacks are all gone
and I am crawling on the dark.
MAKE THIS HAPPEN OR PASS AWAY
I have been away from the city for so long, and yet I arrive there every night in my dreams. One thousand birds sing over the concert hall. A mole passes underneath the stage. A deer stumbles into a barber shop. I would like to think that I have some knowledge of this area, but have never seen this alleyway. Minnows pass in a chute overhead. Rats scurry from out of the dumpsters. If I survive, I will learn where I come from.

**

Mold in a place where you thought there could be no mold. Death comes to the stone. Macbeth, act one, scene three, written by someone with twenty years to life, remembered from middle school. A deep fog that lingers. Orange mulch on a brisk October day. Failed relationships. Bubbles rippling though the earth's crust. Single people out in the woods. Witches burned at the stake.

**

Our installation was mostly a culmination of bad ideas, but we worked so hard that it came to pass. The fall bled out over the green lands. I was waiting for tea that I never started brewing. A Styrofoam igloo in the moonlight. A crush on distant stars, on people that don't exist. The ceiling blew off the house. Everything has a presence in slow motion.

**

You are desperately lonely in the middle of the night. Mosquitoes disperse. Toilet paper sways in the trees. A Funeral procession disappears into the mountains. Gorilla mist lurking in the hills of New Jersey. A busted flannel portal flaps in the wind, as I open this Byzantine car door one more time.

**

In the large city, misery was sliding into place. I lived on the 5th floor of a cube. A small toaster oven. A pile of quartz. Inside a colonial museum, through the windows of a horse carriage, I could see a small satchel. I reached out for my destiny.
She counts her money outside. The opera house falls silent. The curtain rises on the television screen and I turn the volume way down. I turn the tint way down. I turned the contrast way down. And then I wait. Indescribable mist. Bear mace, batteries, raincoat, sweet-tarts. I am one of those clowns that hides in sewers. On the surface, God’s landscaping business.

Flooded tributaries. A Peacock’s feathers. A diagram of this past September. Primal relationships. Why was she so beautiful working at Quiznos? We entered the castle and went up into the turret. A pile of teenagers sprawled out quietly. Sailboats in the distance. Imagined Torture. Far off, beyond the horizon, more water. Free pile cassettes. A pile of diamonds. Broken compact disks.


State sponsored wandering. A walk up into New York through New Jersey. A mysterious people who stay. You make your way up through the lower strata of the banquet. A church service begins earlier and earlier. Boulders slide out from the back entrance of Mount Rushmore where you can see what the forefathers thought. Floating beach balls at the hospital pool. Commemorative water. Spray-painted rocks. Charred earth where the lichen seem to enjoy themselves.

Foggy mountain-tops on the side of an aluminum can. Branches in a symbiotic relationship with city power-lines. The donut you have been waiting for all these years. I enter the stadium and am struck by the majesty of the arcing walkways. An imbalance of nitrogen. A magazine of only human rear-ends. A tent in a parking lot. A murkiness lifts from her face like a veil. Everyone’s little public relations firms. Carbon atoms discarded on the floor of a casino. I sung into the cassette recorder as drove across the panhandle. The part of the Mississippi that looks like a smile, but is not. I sung louder and louder. The billboards receded from my rearview. Satan lived in a tree like a little boy.
Divorced by the Moon

Peace, looks like they are holding hands

    a mirror

    trick,

they don’t know each other,

    1989 Brooke Shields

I had been traveling with.

This imaginary photographic world,

like a child’s toy song: 8-4-4-4 elephant wing,

that I’d been traveling with.

    Lost in the pained bus depot,

    the outline of a cat in the hills

    of a worn out video loop,

I had been traveling with.

Let this candy bar be the one that I love for the rest of my life is gone,

that I’d been traveling with.

In the earliest morning,

    a white butt

divorced by the moon,

I had been traveling with.

Sending thoughts out through a moving window:

    my friends are all dreaming of the same barn,

or shed,

    that is

    beyond plain view.
Ducks Beware! Dad’s Home, Max!

The cow is lying in a mud lot next to a boat
that has been beached some hundred miles inland.
The fence now grows raspberries over
some winding strips of metal. Also,
there is nothing worth stealing inside;
Jesus will heal you from drugs.

Old trees with eyes:
imagining winter here,
for lack of better color,
white.

Inside the house it was very Christian.
Burger King Newsletter, July 1999:
Russ has been promoted further and further into the light
and awoke in a different town all together.
Come spring we will introduce the rodeo burger
and will you let me back into your life?

The window opened the door
and we had already moved away:
the pink insulation was being
barfed out into the snow.
The dream came back to me slowly throughout the day:
I will build a series of sheds around the property,
each one would stand for a feeling,
but left alone they would all come back to being “grown over,”

it might look like abandonment, lonesomeness,
but also could be seen as going home:
the suntan fading, the snow returning
and some warm breathe from somewhere always.
Time Spent With Her Multiplied Ad Infinitum Against Television

She did not want
to watch the game.

She said that
people born with
an overactive sense
of sharing were
crushed into
the margins of the game.

It was hard to establish
a rhythm between us because
the sitcoms she held
as a moral ideal involved
people who never had to work.

I was having trouble at work.

It was like loading black
and white televisions into a rainbow.

It was like the time
her fake tooth fell
out and I asked
her to never put it back.

I showed her my wallet and
said “take me coupon card and all!”
But she was looking
at an article on the dangers
of amateur hypnosis where
cars were flying off cliffs,
farm machinery was eating up children.

I spent the night at my house, where
I decided to spend the night at her house.

On the way over there
none of the songs on the radio
represented how I was feeling.
The Void

To remember home
I built a tree fort
in the gymnasium
of our space ship.

I took naps there
and dreamed of two big
rotating eyes that hypnotized me
into believing I was a Victorian Lover.

Drifting in my sleeping bag
as if etherized by earthly memories:
I could practically smell the wood chips
that had found their way into my sneakers.

I was the ship’s video artist.
I was also the cook and
sometimes I would talk to the crew
through my food.

I mean I burned it.

I was homesick,
I said to myself.

It was like a DMV line of feelings.
Moment after moment of knob twiddling
and button pushing.
I stopped watering my plants,
just to see what would happen.

I was a wild bugs bunny of crying,
but slowed down 54 percent.

I wasn’t making any videos.
I was trying to communicate to you,
through the window.

The captain tried to calm me down—

“Try to imagine a condor soaring,
herself plump.

An omelet, with
fresh water cress and
ham,

please.”
Séance Radio

On the radio
little half
pointer sister
little
half keys

They also pull some originals
up from something
called “the vault”—So,
silence is blown
Séance Radio

These radio hits are original fantasies—
totem pole sized

turning

police into lovers

and dancing into money
Between Mediums

Under the candlelight the monks moved the ectoplasm with their bare hands. We spray painted our favorite design on an outer wall of the medieval castle. It was a small answering machine. I pressed the place where the record button would be. The windows to the car won’t go up, snakes crawled in. I held your hand as we broke up over the radio.
Séance Radio

Little half need
Little half crime
Little half phone
Little half blind
Transfer

During the break,
Alex publicly chats
with the contestants.
The credits roll. What
eye saying is a mystery.
Through giant scrolling
words, Alex looks to be
smoothing over the losers.
This lasts 30 seconds.
Séance Radio

Little half boot
Little half beat
Little half sob
Little half shirt
Little half Hall
Little half Oates
His Classiness, Baby Washington

Like wine violins,
the shades are drawn
and a dim egg of light
surrounds us.

Chemists are figuring
out new shapes
for furniture and
I saw Johnny Cash
play someone
like himself on
Colombo.

During commercials,
I create a gospel of
myself, one step
at a wounded
time. My mind wanders
into scenes of me
as Johnny,

this is done
to the soundtrack
of Johnny.

In the end, Johnny
confesses to Colombo
that he would have
eventually confessed. That is
if Colombo hadn’t been waiting
in the dark as Johnny pulled
the limp body of a ghost
from the belly of a log.

During the denouement,
Colombo’s reasoning is like
a song, and when
the credits roll
I sing that song.
HOW I FELT, NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW
It is a brilliant plan that remains unexecuted through many lifetimes, then pops up unannounced, then is gone again. Squirrels rattle around in the trees. Night comes to the city. I am emerging from my apartment like a werewolf with a banjo. I see someone take apart a trumpet in front of my eyes. I recreate the lives of my Irish ancestors. Fish jump up from the polluted waters. I punch a hole in my drapes. No one will see me this Sunday night.

**

They entered the giant raindrop and were never seen again. It turns out psychology was wrong the whole time. Winter comes to Texas. Our materials list was empty, so we bought some Twizzlers and headed into the darkness. Trash blows around in the street. The government gives away various secrets to other phylums, they are starting a war. The moon is so bright, you can drive without your headlights.

**

She went out and found trouble. Pixilated moonlight flooded her computer screen. Alone in a rural home, the mail came late and birds rested on the telephone pole. The leaves were like velvet. By June it was hot in Saskatchewan. A small patch of snow was surviving deep in the forest. A one lane highway became 6 and I am here to find a long lost storage unit of a distant cousin. Pixilated moonlight flooded her computer screen. The rural house had a broken satellite dish that the deer drank from.

**

**

The garbage is animated. The recycling goes out in high heels. You approach the darkness with sunglasses. Intricate floral patterns. Random numbers spray out of a computer hose. Sitting around all day is my weapon. A steady distraction disappears suddenly. Mosquitos in snowballs. A pornographic corner of the screen. Melody coming through a small hole in a complicated machine. You pull a plug and are transported to a moribund subway car. Welcome to Bivalve, New Jersey. The lights blink on and off in your ruined transport module as you remove your snowshoes from the trunk.

**

A dead crow outside Subway restaurant. Mingled hands on a dawny night in New Orleans. Broad daylight stays strange for hours. A mutant vegetable goes unsold and then I lose contact. I am the night watchman over my own life. A mangled desk in a free pile. Brand new shoes in a window display. An apartment over a restaurant that that remains mysterious to this day.

**

At the end of the earth was an air conditioner that had been broken for God knows how long. Retired Pirates move in to the house next door. My trees have started to die. A box of mysterious cords. Yoga Mats. Old Cereal. Churches that don’t need money. Lemonade stands. Invasive pathos. Pink Towels. Medical Leave. Rodney Dangerfield.

**

I became old overnight. Through the door and into more construction paper. Tight jeans on a mannequin. Blankets covering us all through the night.

**

A fan was swiveling its head back and forth, saying, do not continue down the path of summer. Antibiotics for snakes. A garden the size of a grave.
Daytime television. A type of flu. The green grass stretches out like a beach goer. Electronics hum with perspiration. Moving in between the cars outside the stadium, I am more excited than I have been in years. Waterfall at the mall. After hours.

Sam’s Club. Muscle corn. Cafix. Custom Soup. Little clapping hands. An empty television. Old Jeans. A cauldron. Crushed up skateboards still hold some wild energy and I am looking forward to meeting you these days as my hair blows over my eyes in this eternal sunset painting in the bathroom again.
BUCKETS AND BATTERIES
Unbeknownst, turned something into nothing
on the electronic magnetic spectrum a drop out
walking by the highway un-mysterious

Throw feedback into the oncoming lane
it would maybe bend back the lane,
a jug-handle!
Pot hole the whole place
flatten all the tires
don’t walk anywhere

Mangle the radio with ear’s hands
bring me the juice from this

A flute plays in and out of the car’s wind
drag the sound out like an old dog
your car is dying

You will have to leave it here
and continue on your own
Dark blue pine tree
I will sing into a cell phone
and ascend into a type
of M.C. Escher purgatory
like an afternoon of backwards
goose and a monotony of vision

This is not what my teeth wanted me to say
diamonds found under the NJ Turnpike

The Garden State Parkway
misled everyone
with tiny emerald signs
I decided to walk

to sleep on the median

I had a spiritual experience with
the ticket holder and the music
he was playing

sports music
I can’t believe
we still listen to this music
as we pick through the

anomic objects
besides the metal hay

A new species of squirrel emerged
one that could be run over
The moat surrounding
New York City housed the
Sewage Antiquity
Tourism Bureau:
benevolent keepers
of slow motion violence

The power station warmed our
buckled deer blankets
Shoegazing

There are lyric secrets everywhere:
letters etched into wax cylinders, then
turned into toothbrushes. In between forms
I do nothing to learn the language of my lovers,
I do nothing to learn the language of hitting bottom,
just plain fearful and floating above a tapestry of
roots and small lichen that look like small maps
of two-dimensional worlds, reminiscent
of my mind's screen impressions, only
at an impossibly high resolution.
Hacker Blues

I threw the tambourine into the giant transmitter expecting some valiant music to spray out of a sublime death, but the grid remained intact and I shuffled back to my cave resigned to recounting the failed events to an autistic phone machine. I was trying to stop people from growing cell phones in the bodies of butternut squashes and selling a juice made from expired aspirin. I was swimming though a sea of “Hello [Firstname]!” interactions and automatic friendships, whose destruction required much of my time. If only Claude Debussy was here right now! I’d like to hear some of his hypnotic circles, that would surely change the context of a digital fireplace or a channel of only cars. But until then, I will use the divining power of the bicycle to lead my thought lines into disappearances and mingle with nothing in particular.
World Records

World records sicken me.
In passing I walked two
days straight and ended
up in pile of feral leaves.
The forest didn’t care,
for its private record
it forgot me, so then I
went there to be forgotten.

The man who owns
the record for running
backwards also holds
the record for running up
the stairs of tall business
buildings. Everyone knows
performance artists are the
best athletes. That’s why
football is so complex.
Soundtrack to an End

Was it illegal to tape over
her mix-tape even though
she had wronged me?

Everything turned out
to be a beat or a loop.
Increments of bus stops
and hours logged
sitting at home.

The batteries on my walkman
died as soon as I sat down.
When I had a car, I felt
mostly cinematic. Even
when it broke down,

I saw that once in a movie.
People just walking around
by the side of the road, it was
after the bomb had dropped,

and this made it seem easier
to score a girlfriend, since we
were all huddled so close to the fire.
Through the Wall, Night

I would like to stay in the cool
grey background of the movie
Night of the Living Dead.

Beyond all the killing,
I noticed some
beautiful vistas.

I pushed away a slow
arm and walked
over a small hill.

As the moon rose, my neighbors
appeared. The snake moving
through the skulls is to be trusted,
I tell them as their minds
drift in the night air.

One neighbor slowly raises his hand
and for a minute, I think
he is going to attack Sally.

It turns out this farm was owned
by Rich’s great grandfather and
no one has ever been murdered here.
The Onion Diamond

The summer job had lasted well into
the winter; you took out a picture
of your homeless parents. You carried
something called the onion diamond,
which was like an onion, only damp
and moldy. You said that you and
I traveled through the same nap portal,
shared the in-ability to “multi task,”
while “at work,” or in “haunted reality.”

_No one knew I passed out_
_in the weeds during lunch break;_
_I can travel through time;_
_remove a cup of coffee_
_from someone's brain._

The job was mostly a fire of
small question marks, a blue print
for Benjamin Franklin’s wooden car,
a bag of fake plants, wigs hidden
deep in the cellar.
The Bling Chakra

The uniform shadows us
in some minor shadow,
from the UPS man,

to the ultimate rainbow
shooting out of the
bling chakra,

and this energy flying
through the city like raver pants
is the bat that flies at night,
a cape made of cat and bird energy.

Much the way that the uncle was made of stallions,
some horses can be made of panthers.

The dark gutter mother wakes the children at 3 and says,
"when the dawn comes get your socks on,
It’s time for reverse church."

The wind sews itself into a million knots and this can be something
that God wears when he goes to school, singing a song,
naked with a life jacket on.
Yellow, Yellow, Yellow

The Air Force is a thrift store
for monarchs, and I am one
of those monarchs. When I joined
the Air Force I was handed a mix tape
of moments when I acted like my parents.

I like being a pilot, but I also do not
want to wear a mask of my old stuffed animals.
So I am relegated to a junior position.
I must find the reincarnation of Antoine de St. Expery
here in America. I am what you call

yellow yellow yellow

which means I am a member of Solid Gold October:
a club I have made, where I follow the sun through the trees.
Consign to Oblivion

I bought gas for this forgetting machine, but just ended up in a fume of memory. How can I forget the pattern I am setting for myself? A summer day comes and it is summering things. Maybe it is in the act called “consign to oblivion.” As if I were bringing my memories to a store to sell, and I come back a while later hoping that they have been sold, but all that happens is I see them there in the glass case and feel stricken again. What will I replace the white pattern with? I attach a note to a bird and for a minute I have no face, but then a shadow comes and I am taken back to the room I carry around.
Rap of Rural Spaces

The letter came
from South
Deerfield, looked
like soft deer-field
in her muddled
handwriting and this
name-place made fields
colonial, indian,
precambrian, and
turned me into a
brief theologian
without men.
Neneh Cherry and the Buffalo Stance Feeling

In the air: not witches,
but in the air none the less.
Modern time, dream time,
two people joining in the air,
so it looks like an embrace with
a soft hologram of yourself.

Hips bump in the air, and a stardust explosion.
A memory and sadness,
not usually addressed in these types of videos.
What is this glowing?
On the dance floor moving,
also, sad in the car sometimes.
Thesis Afterword

(I need to get this all down on paper, before I disappear)

by

C.S. Ward

The dream ship that came to fetch us on those evenings must have rocked at our bedside on the waves of conversation, or under the spray of clattering plates, and in the early morning it set us down on the ebb of the carpet beating that came in at the window with the moist air on rainy days and engraved itself more indelibly in the child’s memory than the voice of the beloved in that of the man. The carpet beating that was the language of the nether world, of servant girls, the real grownups, a language that sometimes took its time, languid and muted under the gray sky, breaking at others onto an inexhaustible gallop, as if the servants were pursued by phantoms.¹

I’m in the library stacks, somewhere above the 17th floor. Someone is coming up the stairs, so I have to work fast. I am putting together a thesis. I have the requisite poems, but there are additional materials required. I begin to paste, bind, and place the necessary objects into a large book. From a box on the floor, I add the slides, patches, stickers, horse hair, old family photos, plant cuttings, cassette tapes, feathers, ID cards, dried flowers, and evidence from crime scenes necessary to make my work complete. I am often distracted by the adjacent theses in the library, they are full of fascinating objects that I want to spend time with: crystals, compact disks, temporary tattoos, drawings, video cassettes, carpet samples, but I must keep on. I work furiously with glue and staples, but there seems

to be an endless supply of objects to add. The door opens: someone is here to evaluate my work. But I am nowhere near finished.

I dreamt this over three years ago. I had gone to the library stacks and browsed the theses of writers, historians, exercise scientists, and others. There were graphs, diagrams, large courier fonts, all encased in a hard-bound book designed to withstand the years. Amazing, I thought, how unique, esoteric, forgotten, wide reaching, and crystalline.

**

I was in love with Walter Benjamin’s *A Berlin Chronicle* this past fall. I feel like the crux of that meandering piece, or what interests me the most now, is where Benjamin creates a diagram of his life—then quickly loses this illustration. I’m concerned here with the process and thinking that might go into reconstructing this diagram:

> Now, however, reconstructing its outline in thought without directly reproducing it, I should, rather, speak of a labyrinth. I am not concerned here with what is installed in the chamber at its enigmatic chamber, ego or fate, but all the more with the many entrances leading into the interior. These entrances I call primal acquaintances; each of them is a graphic symbol of my acquaintance with a person whom I met, not through other people, but through neighborhood, family relationships, school comradeship, mistaken identity, companionship on travels or other such—hardly numerous—situations. So many primal relationships, so many entrances to the maze.²

This passage feels analogous to so many aspects to my own life, including friends who I have felt an immediate affinity to, but also to friends long dead, or living in a far away land, authors that I will probably never meet but remain connected in “primal” way: things, people, places that reinforce

² Benjamin, 31
a hidden web and logic that feels like uncovering the hieroglyphics of your own tribe on a expedition to Micronesia.

**

I remember living in San Francisco as a teenager, attending community college—a blank slate. Walking on Van Ness avenue one evening I stopped into a bookstore and somehow came across Raymond Queneau’s *Pierrot Mon Ami*. Upon reading that book, I began to establish new pathways, as if I were creating a neural network of lyrical possibilities. I’m sure many people have felt this just as strong with other books during their adolescence, but not all decide to pursue these lyrical ideals as an organizing principle of life. When I say organizing principle, I am talking not only about reflective reasoning, but also the creation of new worlds, of poetry. So, for the last couple years I have been able to do just that: write, read, establish new webs. And probably the most valuable lesson I’ve learned is the different depths that one can pursue creative work, and the rewards and consequences inextricably linked to diving deeper into one’s natural connections. I return to Benjamin:

*He who seeks to confront his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.*

*This confers the tone and bearing of genuine reminiscences. He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed from earlier associations, that stand—like precious fragments or torsos in a collector’s gallery—in the prosaic rooms of our later understanding.*

Even though I like the psycho-analytical aspects of this passage, for my own expository purposes, I’d like twist the meaning of this quote: I’d like to think of “buried past” as not only

3 Benjamin, 29
psychologically, but material, and intimately connected to artists and writers of the present and past. And when reading and engaging closely with work from any age, time may collapse, and there will always be enough room for reflection and response. And so how does one uncover one’s treasures, one’s “primal” connections? I believe this is not a totally natural process. One must actively search and sit with various texts and art, in order for them to show their true shapes. In my three years here at UMass I moved in and out of a kind of creative trance. For me, this involves sitting and reading, sometimes out loud, writing every day, creating a thread and holding it up enough each day, in order for connections to coalesce. This happened most easily last year, in a tiny house on the edge of a butternut squash field in Whately, Massachusetts. There was no insulation, no TV, no Internet, only an old computer and my books. I became superstitious: I had to read Paul Celan everyday out loud as the winter sun approached a certain angle. Poems, good prose, became currency; literally, it became the material from which I derived sustenance.

So what is this manuscript you’ve read? Sure, it’s my favorite poems right now, but it is also the labors of digging up connections: of reading comic books, of going to museums, of sitting quietly in workshops, of drawing clubs, and of graduate film seminars. This book is also a chronicle of other worlds. Places that I have created, that now seem foreign to me: I’m not really sure if I was ever there. I could see these places as “the prosaic rooms of our later understanding,” or just as mysterious realms, other universes, which sometimes make more sense to me then the world-at-large. Being able to spend time there is a real gift. And I’m thankful for that gift, for my time here: to feel the power of a sustained creative effort, to integrate that into my life and feel the fullness of that endeavor. And, mostly, I am thankful for the people in my life here in Amherst, Whately, and Northampton. To the friends, librarians, mechanics, and mentors: thank you.