Mag City #1

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Cigarettes

Emotions are like clothes. As I'm putting mine on and you're taking yours off. Today I wore total blue. And what I was selling was blue. I kept them in a blue bag and I didn't sell a thing. People passing by admiring all the blue. Every morning I throw cigarettes under the faucet. Every night I'm licking salt from my fingers, ketchup from my clothes. I can see good reasons for why MacDonald's exists. Constant stage for our provocations to dance from. Andy Warhol said it would be nice if all the cars were black. Creative fascist pure beauty of streams of black traffic. And all the brightly colored people coming in and out of cars. Cigarettes are my pet degradation. I smoke them so much that everything's smoke. Then I stop and breathe up the excess. Do you need a match? The tic and the tac go shrugging and then you get toe. Fourteen cigarettes under the faucet.
Song on My Oud for Willem de Kooning

I raise my pear-shaped instrument
and I will play for you, Bill. Each note
is a twangy heart throb and I hope you enjoy
my twanging thunks. Bill, In thanks for all the color
I'm trying to paint your ears. I want to pour
a bucket of soundlings across your tympanum.
I want your percussive co-operation. Also
as you're closing your eyes I hope my thunks
from Marrakech from Zanzibar the dead ghosts
of countries on obsolete maps
Estonia Latvia Lithuania
or songs of countries I just made up
Economia Lower Andromedea
I hope my thunkings awaken these lands
...Bill, I think we should collaborate on a color.
Somewhere between the sound of your orange and
the hue of my thunkings
titled perhaps, The Decoded Opera of the All Deaf
& Blind Chromosome Brigade. For a dry run
we can whisper it
in the ears of sleeping bankers. On various
Wednesdays.
Aural History

All 86 of my albums have skips on them. Outside
Sirens are wailing. One
Child is crying.
Two are laughing. Someone's phone
Is violently ringing. The wind
Lightly wallops the loose
Casements and once
In a while I turn
When it really sounds
Like assault. Cars honking.
One dog barks. Some
Kids are really cheering. Down
The street the MacDougals
Street polls are jammed
And one by one people
Step behind the grey
Curtain, pull down the
Red handle, the curtain
Shuts and they make their secret vote
For who will be the next
President of the
United States of America
I debate if I will eat
After this drink
And if I will go out, if
He calls. One truck honks
Like a goose in an
Echo chamber. And now
I can even hear the
Trains.
Thirteen Strange Urges

she reeks of goodness
still her heart is a glossy black bowling ball
Anna Bliss Beasley donated this room
why is the volume raising
I already went to lunch so I'll save you the time
in fact I'll go for you now
gave my tveeeve away
now now on ought to be there for myself
whenever whenever whenever
do pigs have wings
I grow icecube nodes yet learn to love everyone
I would be green in a rock-garden
do bears shit in the woods
Onwards Upwards & Always

Nobody could deny no other bad times.
An electric torch as a matter of course, a mixed blessing.
Marvelously up to date, June 10th.
33 dogs under the sea. They had slept in their clothes.
"This entailed."
In a fortnight they were obliged to spend a second summer
In the hut under the active volcano. 25 of them
Living there, really ill, complaining of stuffiness
And too many lectures; 3 a week.
Trustful by nature, sun-up was by 7. Cherry Garrard,
Sometimes a latin dictionary, is not a complete answer.
They said no. Their loyalty to each other was fantastic.
Full of light and shade, no beer.
Very funny indeed.
Hooker died that very year, 1911. An adorable person,
The egg of an emperor. Paternity
Is the only joy. Indiscriminately breaking and killing
in the process.
On the coast everybody volunteered for everything.
They steered by Jupiter, the simplest action. I hope I have not
Disappointed him, a party of four.
Meant for four. He had eaten most of the dogs,
A hot stew, the bold way in which he met his death.
Now the weather changed, ordinary good luck.
My dear Mrs. Wilson: he died as he lived. The sun
Reappeared terribly soon
Smiling into cupboards.
Morning after the reading and
I find myself fully clothed in bed
silvery jersey  sans jungle necklace
no boots
green combat pants  Christmas sock
Whoops! Guess I got smashed again.
Trying to pull that one together
I call my boss, a sympathetic lady.
She says, "It's OK. Call it a sick day."
I sure will. So
I'm making coffee I'm cutting a
grapefruit to wake my tongue up
I'm stirring oatmeal, stomach-
ballast  I drop a few
Anacin.
I'm walking around naked
like a nude bombardier.
Gary & I discussed marriage
last night. Why not.
I'm 27 & it's slightly embarrassing
that I've never "been"
made. I don't yen for the
state so much, but its nostalgia
sounds terribly adult.
"I been there. Man."
Anyway, that would happen Wednesday.
This is only Tuesday so I've got plenty
of time to decide.
And I can walk around naked all day
if I want. Like a nude bombardier.
Slowly I'm landing.
The headache's vanishing. My cat has
relaxed and is lying down.
The disc-jockey plays a song
from the first eagles album called "Mr. Big."
Now he sounds alright.
I like rock & roll more every day.
Unlike the time when I could not
possibly state "I like rock & roll."
It just was. Marriage
too was comprehended differently.
It wasn't a state. It was,
"I want this man so bad"
I'd like to marry him & make it permanent. Should I get pregnant?"

So, the nude bombardier walks slowly through Tuesday considering marriage clothed in self-conscious rock & roll. How droll. "The nude bombardier" She weighs in at 126.
Let Me Put It This Way

If I didn't know you what famous historical personnage
Might your changing visage call to mind.
Why does an image of Ulysses S. Grant keep shouting
Itself
Across my weltanschauung like a Top Forty song?
Dwell on that, Space Man. I also keep seeing
A classical baseball, one corner of its scarf
Hanging loose as it sails...
Ozymandias occurring on "?8" while the other three speeds
Are only functional. O Space Man!
Does any of this make sense?
Will I recognize you among flocks of birds
Or the latest kids rushing the water-fountain?
And why, as I gaze at my favorite group portrait
Multiple image careens to the left
Speeding off to the right, as if
New moves are the star of the day...
Comet me that, you infinity dullard.
December 2, 1976

Early morning bell rings me out of sleep,
I jump into army khakis kicked off my feet
in late night sleepy haste to drop off consciousness
and sink into dreamless, neck muscles too tight
to rest sleep, after a night of tossing loose
limbs from side to side an early morning electric buzz
of my bell pulls me to my door,
I first peek through the edge of an army green shade
that blinds street eyes from staring
into my inners,
it's Eddie and Leroy,
I open the door, "¿qué pasa?"
"Sorry bro but we heard you died."
"I'm dead?"
"Yes."
"I'm here."
"You are."
"Thanks."
I close my door, feed the cat and turn to bed again,
a shower, morning phone calls and hours later
I walk to the Orpheum Theatre where Maritza smiles
and acts surprised that I'm alive,
"We thought you'd died and Bimbo said
it happened just when you were beginning
to do all that there is to do,"
"I'm here, cold, hungry and on the planet,"
"I'm glad."
she said smiling her feelings at me,
leaving I take the "A" train to Brooklyn
where I visit Lois and Pedro gathering energy
I travel back to Manhattan where Raúl meets me
as I'm paying the cab,
"I left the equipment inside, but your landlord Felix told me you died,"
"Felix, Raúl, told you I died?"
"Yeah, he went in there and knocked then he and the other guy went upstairs and the other guy asked Felix if you had died."
"Raúl, I'm here."
"I see. I see. Coño bro pero,"
"Pero, pero what? I just told you I'm here."
"I'm glad bro. I'm glad."
"I'm glad too."
December 2, 1976:

I'm born. Just born.
Died in somebody's mind.
I did, I died in somebody's mind.
But I'm here all, all, perhaps,
too much alive for somebody's mind
because in mine I'm still in body form
and that, perhaps, is much too much
alive, perhaps, in somebody's mind.

December 2, 1976: Miguel in montage

Cut ups. Somebody should do
a cut up of my limbs and reassemble,
just to see if my subliminal levels
surpass the sequential order
of present muscle co-ordination.
December 3, 1976: early morning bus

It was easy to get up,
I'd only had four hours sleep
but the will was strong and the engine in tune,
building boiler broke down during the night
so the glass of water left on typing table froze
but the will motored muscles into coordinated movements,
didn't try to shower since there was no body odor,
threw clothes on, took cab to Port Authority
got on the 8 o'clock bus to New Brunswick,
read about Duberman's Kerouac theater piece,
fell off to sleep on back seat,
woke just in time to pull coat on,
pull cord and move to the front of bus,
got off at Landing Lane Bridge,
walked across, waited for a Campus Bus
but got a ride instead,
walked rapidly to school,
entered creative writing room and started to listen
to all that was read.
Another count down,
the fissionable material:
---
5 kilograms of U235
are on the way
and I find love in open
furnaces radiating heat
that loosens my tight,
tighter than tight muscles
from the homemade marmalade
that is my mind as it
articulates fears about who's
going to build the first homemade
atom bomb while my mild lady's desire
seduces me away from Theodore Taylor's
paranoia about rapists, muggers
and psychos following the process
to make plutonium fuse up
and let the fire of hell
free to detonate reality into shrubble.
Plutonium Mist

Raw atoms in flux,
stainless metal love
full of rust dust,
I pronounce the finger switchblades
that you caressed my feverish face with,
the source of uranium and plutonium,
raw atomic information for the having,
secrets stolen lead to execution,
raw atomic information,
France and Pakistan knock on senior
Princeton undergraduate door
looking for precious detonation information,
burn the will to hate, let all private knowledge go,
if hate perseveres beyond the will to survive
then let wrath digest the full flower of atomic fruits
and blow the ordered sequence of this moment,
erupt it into nail sharp shards that poison
on contact the live tissue of all that lives.
An Intentional Beginning

Before the beginning there was a beginning,
a long intentional beginning
travelling in feathers of ink swiped time,
caught in the meanderings of a sentence
referring the infernal message of Raskolnikov's
need to be punished for the killing deed
that crippled his solo god-flight
into taking human life,
Raskolnikov, your guilt crippled you to the detective's
blood thirsty drive to pin the killer,
Raskolnikov's Russia driving intelligence to homicide,
now at night I wash my soul of ingrained hatred
before sleep catches me in Dostoevsky's snow white nights
where motives to invent, to stretch the world
become demonic dives into bloody terror and despair
in between the solitary sheets of a solitary I in bed
with his overdeveloped love of paranoia and guilt,
before the beginning there was a beginning in self-love
but soon it became self-doubt,
self-destruction
and self-consumption inside the bee-hive of nuclear guilt
that a fully efficient Greek-Orthodox Russian church
instilled deep, down, on the other side of Raskolnikov's cranium
where a long intentional beginning was caught in an icon
of the nativity.
Saliendo

Moving out on the sidewalk, leaving my inner cranium living room space to regenerate while external living keeps energy flow becoming muscular volcanic eruptions, saliendo, coming out, moving out, looking around, shaping, responding to children screeching their love at Kojak as he leaves "Faco's Antique Tienda" wearing his navy blue cashmere overcoat, dark blue velvet hat and gold-rimmed shades.
Kojak's down on sixth street! stepped right out of the boob-tube, settling crime on New York streets, arriving just in time to catch the punk by the collar and make him pay for wrongs he's done, children screech when they see Kojak, they move out of inner-livingroom space to shout arrows of joy at Kojak, to touch him, to feel illusion harden into fact in their presence, Kojak in the living room of actual space and time, illusion become reality, hero become matter, touchable, sensual time, Kojak's here! Same as T.V. saliendo, coming out of myself, out of my T.V. image of self, out of my inner self, out, out, out of myself, out, out onto the sidewalks of my astral projections where I'm Kojak with a Flash Gordon electronic gun that shoots arrows of art through villainous hearts, saliendo......saliento......saliento, leaving my inner cranium living room space to regenerate.
Catskill Song And Dance

When Hank Williams sings
    "Like a piece of driftwood on the sea
    May you never be alone like me"
I don't compare him to Shakespeare
I say "that's beautiful"
and play it again

What's in store for America?
Higher prices? Years of my poetry?
A renaissance of pretense and fascism?
The scholarship of shadows?
Love syndicated and blest
as uninspired businessmen consume the nation tolerating words?

I'm so glad to learn what spirit is
Now I'm not hungry
I'm a disciple peeling an orange
I'm he who sits on steps
watching the rain fall
wishing to feel relieved
After a while I'm back inside
thinking the same old thoughts

Solitary as a Russian novel
I hang my head in sorrow

Sorrow? I can't finish with sorrow
Not after Frank O'Hara
His selected self collected in my kitchen
Fast? Man he was fast
He was so fast he's dead
He was faster than a day or a shower
Faster than the Middle Ages and faster
At work
No one wants to take out the garbage
The waitresses just won't do it
and are allowed not to
They yell "Garbage" when the bag is full
And someone
Could be me
Steps out front

And when I step out the back door
And toss the dripping goods over the black rail
Into the green bin perfect!
I look around
And sometimes I can see the moon
Seymour's Coffee Shop

Kenny, the sandwich man, is sixteen.
He's reading The Godfather and asks me, "What's Hell's Kitchen?"

Shelly, Kenny's sister, is eating french fries.
Showing me her Cosmopolitan she says,
"No one thinks the model is that pretty."

Hal says he read some Freud and learned,
"Girls like it as much as boys."

Barry's a photographer.
He's been reading The Sun Also Rises for a month.

Elyse just broke up with her hometown boyfriend,
"a possessive creep."

Her mother's upset.
She's reading A Kind Of Rape "just to pass the time."
It's a novel about a psychiatrist and a model.

Barbra is quiet.
One postcard from her boyfriend in three weeks.
Her uncle's Postmaster General of Loch Sheldrake.
She's reading in Redbook
    Dr. Spock's Opinion
On The Effects Of Nudity On Children.

Wendy's playing solitaire.
She lives up here all year.

Seymour's mother is cashier.
She gets all her books from the library.
"Everyone's always talking about Tennessee Williams.
Thought I'd try one. Couldn't finish the damn thing,
Which is rare for me."

Seymour enters and says to me, "Go out to my car
and bring in a carton of tomatoes."
In his trunk a few Mickey Spillane novels.
When I come back he's eating
A double cheeseburger on a hoagy with grilled onions.

Plato's in my pocket.
The part about knowledge and memory.

Scholnick/22
For Irwin Heilner

Experience is disappointing,
that's why life's absurd.
I learned this watching you shave
lecturing about Beethoven
and prison reform
Polite man bathrobed
standing in your livingroom
I was company
"...and all we can do," you said,
finger scanning skin neck cheeks
feeling baby red smooth skin,
"Is punish, punish, punish."
Now finding a hair then clipping
delicately
with a conductor's wrist

Wisdom flows in your speech
of an art to consciousness
heavier than Beethoven's fist
Amazing how he tamed such wildness
ordering blue soldiers in blue chariots
to march around the white Chinese teacup of his mind
How zapped with power he lifted his wrath
above the birds and clouds
above Napoleon's imagination
And smashed antiquity
dropping Quartets 14 15 & 16
on God's porcelain tongue

For you a musician
An eccentric librarian
whose deepest thoughts
dwell dusty and unpublished
The eternal is fierce and now
Who can deny your chilly chords?
For you scores of inspiration
Manuals cartons of sage sense
A humble universe
The science of your soul
in an unknown basement
on Dawson Avenue
in Clifton, New Jersey

Scholnick/23
I-hand
L-ox-goad
N-fish
O-eye
S-tooth
T-mark
Y-hook

Hand fish eye
tooth mark hook
O boy Sonny Liston

In my mind
I link his death
with the death of Mama Cass

Mystery surrounded Sonny's death
He died in a motel room
So did Mama
eating her last lonely sandwich
farting blood becoming philosophy

And Sonny
found overdosed dead
in his raging rented bed
a corpse of contracts
fame in his drunken Las Vegas eyes

If I dreamt of myself
fighting mighty Sonny
Laugh would stun global consciousness
if I asked, "Are you the tooth fairy?"
And him fairly hooking my teeth
into the canvas of the ceremonial ring

And if the world were as compassionate as dreams
Mama would have put down her turkey doom
Not down her throat where it got stuck
murdering luck on the set of America's bedrooms
And if we understood fall
more than a season of Neilson ratings
Sonny's death would rise in our universe
He'd be a God in the cataract
of our Bicentennial slop
His life would tell a vision
if we were innocent songs

His was the fate of the whale
poisoned by a simple need
Suffocated in a world turned hook
by enormous men drinking greed
Fade Out

I see myself
in past cities
in past plans
I see best in conversation
I saw myself on video a few times
outside 42nd Street theatres

I see myself on television
I never saw myself on television
I saw Sam Rivers on First Avenue
I never saw Sam Rivers in concert
I got lost all over Manhattan one night
looking for his studio in the rain

One night I wept and trembled
listening to Beethoven stretch his mouth
I saw clear ear vistas being dreamed

Today I bought some yams
counted pennies left
bought an onion

I see myself reading Keats
recording his vision rhythms on my cassette
listening back days later
spaced out in livingroom
Greg visiting one day

Keats lived a rather quiet life
his father died in a riding accident

his brother emigrated to America
and settled in Kentucky
From Here And Now

hard edge of what you are
woman keeping her sanity
without painting her nails
out of the shower into summer
twisting dull days into choices
buying new guitar strings

it's hot in here
and all the windows are open

your mediterranean eyes swim
in the important new plant
of your $13 layer cut
i dive over an abyss of kisses
spreading the memory of your high cheekbones

are we in the same world
or just in the same room
in the same room you say
casting out doubt
Field Trip

words are international energy
yours take off like a menu of everything
an aura unravelling my horrid scope
into a straight dialogue line
the architecture is serene
the german tourists have a roadmap and a camera
see that column no windows pure mass in the breeze
is it an american camera you ask
discarding observation for fact
though you don't speak german
you've been to france
and can recognize a good picture
over someone's shoulder when you see it
i have to go travelling you're right
so we leave the u.n. plaza
its blazing green swarm
bowling my thoughts into the east river
i have to get sunglasses you say
and disappear like a cigarette
Mr. Jiggs really loves my baby.
I kiss a sparrow
on the beak
As he cruises through the air
I watch him
like a speck

* * *

the umbrella
hides my tear
in a raindrop
of blood
and pain
in
my fantasy
of green earth
that collects the dirt
Huge squares stand in front of me
I am washed away by the sound of your arm
Sweeping my soul up to the sky
And placing it gently on a cloud

Where I see the earth spinning
It was meant for me + thousands of others
Rolling around in the stoney field of life

I wander to the edge
And grab hold of a grasshopper
And touch his tiny leg
As he clears the ground for animated suspension in air,

Where we spill a sigh of relief
In the wake of his return
And the like-wise return
of all the ants + other bugs

as they make their way
into the green halls
of truth + beauty
above the mud

II

and bristles
over scattered coats of paint
we call landscape
reaching out beyond the hills + valleys

in the sunset of an azure skyline
i hold my secret
+ give it to you
when the moon is wise

the secret of birth
that bursts out of my blubbering mind
that gawks at thoughts that churn

and appear in earth's contractions
The tub is out of order
I paid my dues
but the drain don't work
and I'm stuck with a barrel of water
like a humid sandbox
without air
you just have to sit
and sink

*   *

I read the paper
The Daily News
with pictures
it spreads all over my table
I walk on my hands to see it
It's all very backwards.
The subway train sits with me in the station
I watch patiently as it rolls in
I drink whiskey that they serve you on the billboards
And throw up breakfast waiting for the local
With the music from The Fantastics clanging in my ear —
    hung over from my midnight dreams
When a cat meowed into my vision as I lay deep in sleep
I thought it was a parakeet

Three handsome Wallstreeters were sitting across from me
    in their plaid and striped vested suits
I thought they were from a musical show — maybe Stop The World.
The Oreo Cookie
Stuck
to the roof
of my mouth
in plain English

English –
A language
I shall cherish
till March winds
send their flowering
baskets
of cherry buds
for me to eat
each spring

In spring
I fill my
fountain
of word reserves
with cloudlike formations
in the scent of
cherry blossoms –
ready to flower
over the heads
of state officials
all over the world
The telephone
rang
in my ear
I was deaf
I hate noise
New York, you ring too loud
You blow my cool
When I try to listen to nice music
You spit out your pollution
In my gut I get a poem
Haltingly
I
stop
after
every
word
like that and then it gets quiet, and I can hear my
mind's grumblings
stampedes of notes
Cars that gurgle.
Trucks that snore
Dogs that harp away on my quickly vanishing sanity
My intelligence - torn to shreds
A short story begins with a time and place. For the first time, I call upon the short setting as we snuggle up and listen to what there is to know about the so-called "Winter Breeze Story" of 1977 - New York City.

A winter bear came to call on us a few months back; this is now February 15, a day after so-called Valentine's Day. In a little while we shall all feel the cold air upon our skins and rush into our small apartments and wrap ourselves in sheets and blankets until the blood runs back in our souls to remind us of summer and warm times we've known. I can't say for sure but running a temperature is the last thing anyone can put their finger on, in terms of making a real situation.

In the meantime, all we can talk about is how dirty the City streets become after a thaw. Shuddering in our filthy clothes and dirty socks, we reminisce about how clean things can be when times are better. In a way, all any of us can think about is the temperature and how we shudder in the face of the low.

A report stating the new messages about the freezing stay of mercury climbs into the starting position. We almost view it as a sports event, a competition, wondering when the fall will start and if there is any cleavage in sight. Nobody is any the better or worse for false predictions, however, a false hope could cause tears and bitter thoughts.

On to the shopping mall for a bit of diversion. Eating lunch causes our palates to freshen up, our eyes to bulge a bit. Everything looks OK from a Luncheonette; it's just when you step outside that the going looks and feels strange, often uncomfortable. The protective all-weather condition proof shield container that makes living a one-temperature ideal reigns. We go out of the Luncheonette, or store, for example, and wait for a voice to call and report a change in wind velocity. How many times have we waited for a new scope to envelop our souls? Waiting outside in a shopping mall is like waiting in a dream. Nothing ever happens except man-made changes. The weather is just a passing fancy.

We all want to hide and not face the terrible storms that threaten to take away our inhibitions. We look up to the sky and anticipate a short story for our own when we notice that a crack in the heavens is stirring and a cloud storm is heading downward into our eyes as we stare. Is there room in this story for a hot chocolate? I have to drink one, myself.
It's rather hot out, now. How is that? Well, I got situated in the Pan Am Building, and the breathers here are standing around letting out hot air in their conference rooms. And I am their receptionist. I kiss their cheeks and wait for calls to come in to give them their due in a matter of time. It's all very clear to me. I pick up the phone when the bell dilates and receive the message as it becomes clear.

In the face of all my work, I still find time to work.

Sitting in the waiting room, I fill out stacks of Revenue Questionnaires, not really, but I like the way that sounds: official; office-like; what you should do.

Something just happened. I took a sip of my coffee and a man popped out and when I asked him to explain himself, he just shook his head and said he was on his way to a meeting. I smiled up front, but he looked kind of unsure of himself.

I want to do my job right, but I know that when it gets hot and the going gets heavy (I love clichés), I often fuck up. I mean, I have a lot on my mind, and if a person comes in looking for a particular executive, I've got to put the slammer on my joyous activities and look out for the other person. It gets to be tedious, so I wait for a coffee break to cut up the inconvenience, and then I go home. You can't win.
DISCONNECT
REMOVE
DISATTACH
REMOVE
Phoning the President

Spring begins on the East River
depressing me in the tender sidewalk.
Coatless under Brooklyn sun
Jeff & I smoke out pretext & go to sea.
We fold Personal Injury.
"Sean Connery carries Candice Bergen
into the desert
& the President has to send in the Marines."
He chats with the nation like Once-upon-a-time
failing to address my Barbary passion.
Hello, Mr. President,
I'm just not her candidate.
She remains unswashbuckled
as I scamper across the Sahara,
hers uncompromised vote
beyond my natural resources. I'm New York City
striding briskly &
she's a banker obdurate
behind a 7-foot desk. She's Transheroic
& I borrowed this camel. Christ, Mr. Jimmy,
it's hell here in Frontierland.
I don't want to submerge her in petroleum
like a Uruguayan patriot, or electro-shock
her clitoris like they do in South Korea,
except metaphorically speaking.
Geography is faces on my planet
where bourbon rips veins like nuclear explosions,
eyes drop compendious oceans,
& lips crack along the San Andreas fault.
I recognize there are limits to your power.
Truth is, your atomic Navy won't impress her.
On her deck she carries hardware
to awe the insatiable thaw. & into her flood
I trickle uninspired
as your aqueous speech
on 7th Avenue in October.
Auntie of the Rag

I hurl the rag onto
the table top in Memphis.
The table top's formica
over a plywood base.

Its folds into the wall
of my Winnebago van.
Tomorrow I can be in
New Orleans or Chicago.

"A how's your mother," I inquire
keeping up the chili sauce.
Beyond your auburn hair
Memphis's stunned panorama.
The Education of Henry Adams

We meet on a layover
in O'Hare Airport;
you are the jet of my dreams
blonde from Chicago to Easter.
In the airport bar young Marines
long for your bare shoulders
over beer, but
you give your vaccination
to my freaky red beard,
your biceps so creamy & suburban
that your boyfriend lifts weights
& your father is vice-president
of Continental Can.
I am vacuum-packed like coffee,
radically skinny & self-conscious
of my grammar, climbing
the ladder to your wing-tips.
It's Cambodian Spring &
I'm your proletariat;
your weight-lifter isn't working out.
It's lovely chanting Ho Chi Minh with you
& trashing bank windows. I score 25 points
in a basketball game,
you make me that tall. I stride across
cow pastures like scorning Mayakovsky,
burn libraries cluttered with incendiary fictions,
learn to sleep laboriously
on your avocado silk sheets.
We schedule LSD babies for our listening pleasure
& you try to stab me
after finding me with Rose.
I had moved out while your father was in town;
she needed help with her paper on Henry James.

I am John Glenn & you are Cape Canaveral,
launching me into poetry with your ridicule
& your legs, never unshaved
even sitting-in the Chemistry Building.
Massaging your flushed body with talcum
I feel like Marc Antony, no longer
some Adam from a home-town planet
hanging out in the wake of astrophysics.
I leave you Moby Dick
& you firebomb the supermarket, hoping to lure me back from San Francisco. I'm circumambulating Mount Tamalpais.
Sex

I want to do it different
in my overstated way
removing the blue mote that
flickers
above the stereo
like a trick
of the imagination or the light.
I mistrust as poetry
anything that comes to mind
when I hear the word sustenance.
Yet the ocean against my window
imitating rain
prompts me to thought
of that anxious old man in his cuff-links.
He exerts himself with a delicacy
apocalyptic in this roast beef world
exciting me, at least, to an austerity
that slices every word electrically,
packaging the fibrous connotations
in a cellophane purchased with metaphorical sweat.
Burnt! you accuse, celebrating Natural as if it bleeds.
Rare! I respond, but not so rare as angels
anymore. A kind of lust, yes,
merciless & polite.
Why I Write

I sit in my muscles
on a satisfied wallet &
stare at a turntable
too tired to revolve.
Up 5 flights
like a conceptual artist in training,
down 6
to the basement of Friday night,
unconvinced that ecstasy exists
although I remember Monday
& the pleasure of her bicycle
in the kitchen.

Ah, the reductionism
of contemporary German cinema,
where madness is a jukebox of confusion.
Select E-5 & you're numb in a phonebooth,
B-7 you vacation in Berlin
without a passport.
The silence is frightening
because you expect to hear guitar &
here you sit before a movie
pretentiously black & white.
You are the banal hero
of this suds & sausage melodrama,
a maker of movies searching
for the UnSelf-Conscious Shot.
On the cutting-room floor,
last week's amber passion.
On the screen
the train goes nowhere in noonlight,
the peeled potato on the sink.
On the Road

Much of today is yesterday
waiting to get going.
I'm in a toll booth on an interstate
highway & nobody
rolls down their window.
It's easy to be aloof
when the Highway Patrol is giving you
its full support, but
impossible to hear the passing radios.
I'm "le dovanier" giving music lessons
with a badge, teaching prodigies
to smile like Mahler or Chopin.
My students are infatuated with
my naive facade. Later I corner them
on the piano. "Make music, you see,
visible." I am the genial undertaker
interpreting love, unctuously
taking care of business. No
I don't know what soul means. To speak
at that instant, however, when
the first violin awaits a cue &
refuse to be ingratiating; to get
the pallbearers in the appropriate limousine,
such is my potato labor.

Living
on the fourth floor guarantees nothing.
Sometimes the door slides open
with that reassuring
Swoosh & you're in the bargain basement
where you've always longed to be.
Sometimes you're in a tool shed
on an interstate in Pennsylvania with
the woman or man of your dreams. I wake
in a cold cold sweat & there
on the floor it's visible
as red worsted knit. I click on the radio
for the basketball scores &
it's Artur Rubinstein with the traffic
report. "Cars backed up on the Deegan Expressway,
radios blaring Chopin, who, in his
aristocratic way is indeed charming
when he controls that hacking. His
elegant Impromptus, which by their nature
demand from the listener
no profound attention, inspire me.

Lenhart/57
roberto: a storypoem

roberto once wanted
to marry the wind
but the rain wouldn't allow it,
she claimed he belonged
to the moisture in the atmosphere,
pero roberto
does not belong to anyone,
roberto would go to all the latin nightclubs
and after dancing with a woman
he would tell her
he was a poet,
they all gave him a weak smile
and slid away
each one he danced with
each one he wanted to kiss
touch
talk to
slipped through his arms like smoke
this happened so many times
that roberto's soul began to crack,
it developed a permanent tear
a cut/un tajo, from that moment on
everything fell
through him
landing in his eyes hard shaking
like the dice in a cupped hand,
roberto threw snake eyes
that nearly cut out his,
this made him feel
like the champion
of all the losers
in the world,
soon afterwards
he replaced all the blood
in his body with alcohol,
his skin turning
a yellow similar
to that
of dirty underwear,
drunk roberto
declared war on the world
and in turn
the world retaliated
by not paying any attention to him
but roberto kept writing poems,
poems about mofongo spiked with strychnine,
poems about his great grandmother
dying of cancer in america,
poems about spanish speaking
thunderclaps muffled
in the eye of the hurricane
of all the english verbs and adjectives
that ripped all las palmas
from la tierra in his father's land,
poems about
little jibaritos y jibaritas
whose spirits collapsed
from lack of oxygen
while sitting behind
a sewing machine or pushing
a hand truck
in the garment district,
poems about their strictly english speaking
sons and daughters
suffering from overdoses
of t.s. eliot, ernest hemingway y ezra pound
out on long island
as they trim the roses
on the lawns of their identical houses
with their identical cars
parked in their identical driveways,
poems about
new york city policemen
trying to shoot
chango
dead
with a silver bullet,
roberto saw so much
that his poetry
gave each one
of his friends
an eviction notice
giving them thirty days
to clear out
of the path
of the light pouring
into his eyes,
there was no room
in this man's life
for darkness,
to roberto
the peephole,
the tear
en la oscuridad
that he sometimes felt
would swallow him
was sacred,
perhaps one of these days
you'll bump into roberto
either on 42nd street or by bethesda fountain,
what's that?
what does he look like?
well other than the yellow skin
that is a dead giveaway
roberto looks
like everybody else around him,
sometimes roberto
is roberta,
because roberto is not one
but many,
roberto is one of those severed limbs
that regenerates
he is el artista puertorriqueño en nueva york
he is the puertorican artist in new york
other than his excessive drinking
and the fact that not many people
listen to him
roberto is a good person,
it is the atmosphere
that needs revising
not him,
it is the world that he exists in
that needs all its nails pulled out
and all its circuits rewired
in order
to create
a different form of movement
a different dance
to move to
not the one
we have been moving to
for so long
what's that?
what dance?
don't tell me
you haven't noticed
the dance
danced by los puertorriqueños
who are afraid
to look down at the floor
while they're in motion
for fear
they will notice
the blood that stains
their footsteps
as they dance
a mambo nueva york
has lined with ice
and cold daggers
that cut
the skin open
just over the heart.
the reason for his rhythm

in a dark corner
of his apartment
where a glow hangs
over the floor roberto
keeps all of his poems
and a pistol with only one
bullet in its chamber
a bullet for a poet/

una bala para un poeta

if his voice cannot
penetrate
reaching the depth of
el corazón y los sentimientos
de su gente to live/write
solely for the people
to feel their pain

to be their poeta/santero
despojando lo malo
del cuerpo

del pueblo this

is the only alternative to death
that life offers roberto
everynight
everynight he takes the pistol
in his hands and weighs
the door of la muerte carefully in his eyes
will i ever have to use it?
will i have the nerve?
self doubts run through his mind
tripping over the wiring

of his self confidence

yes

yes is the answer that fills
the air around him if
i fail in my mission i
will blow my motherfuckin' brains out
because life will not be worth living
if i am not the man
whose destiny i knit
cada noche con mis ojos over
my desk writing about
the world i owe so much to
that owes me nothing
but its ears
these words fall out of roberto's mouth
like the praaaaaka tak of the timbalero
all part of un ritmo that the world
has no choice but to listen to
because roberto will not let it dream
away its existence his poems will fly
into eyes like daggers thrown cutting through
the fabric of their sleep hopefully
even the dead will dance to this guaganco.
roberto dreams

anoche
roberto soñó
que changó
was led blindfolded
off the roof
of a building
in the south bronx
by a plainclothes cop
posing as yemayá también el soñó
que los huesos de ernest hemingway
were dug up
bleached in the sun
and ground down to powder
as white as cocaine
which detectives did up
before they busted
a group of boleteros
on jackson avenue
their high enabling them
to break bones
in the manner of stoics

they did their jobs
without moving
a muscle
on their faces
they kicked
spit
and wiped their cordovans

meaning

clean of the blood
that kept swelling
on the floor
with each new cut
on the flesh
of the puertorriqueño
handcuffed to the chair.
having lost the war
against the elements
roberto now belongs
to the moisture in the atmosphere,
his image travels through el aire
en un aguacero that falls to the
pavement becoming part of la calle,
la gente carry him throughout
el barrio on their wet soles,
the water that gushes out of the johnny
pump carries his rhythms around
corners over beercans under tires
to other places where young trigueñas
pick up his moisture on the points
of their high heels and sneakers
that are soaked through to the nylons
shooting cold chills up their legs
to their spinal columns sending ripples
through brassiere straps his presence
having eaten
through all surfaces
travels to the depth
of the senses at work
around him.
To Frank O'Hara

A.M.
right from work
   coffee break now
I've been shouting out all morning
   with you listening. So far today
I've been on cliffs with fiddle music
   and on Madison Avenue eating a hot dog
amidst the reds and yellows,
Sabrett trucks glistening and
with those new buildings
Frank, a marvel
   going straight up together
like a fortress
Manhattan's well protected
You had paintings to look at
   when you worked
Who'd you have on your inner office walls?
I have the cashiers to look at
Which might be just as good
   maybe better
Except
   the blond one, Ellen
doesn't want to fuck me, I think
And every day is
   her smile which
unfulfilled by me
is at least as hard as
Pollock's eternities

P.M.
rushing
   to be in the laundromat
before great Frank O'Hara Memorial Reading at 8:30
I have 45 minutes
with this egg salad sandwich
which I'm eating too fast
wish I had a napkin
and a Schaefer, for a change
and trying to read "Second Avenue"
faster than anyone's ever read it before
while my clothes get clean
Gary's somewhere in NYC now
I'll see him at the reading
as I will
Michael, Barry (from uptown), maybe
Gyorgyi (after group therapy) and the other
St. Mark's faces
and surprises I'm sure tonight
I just put my clothes in the dryer
I have time
I'll make it
Kissinger's talking Jewish on the radio
TODAY'S NEWS: the Utah guy is recovering, his girlfriend's
still critical, Bronfman cried at the trial
Yes
The laundry men really help me
My move from 12th Street to 15th was
like the French Revolution
They give me change, tell me which
washers and dryers are best
I've finished reading "Second Avenue" Bail!
The only time it's ever been read in its entirety
in a laundromat
amidst Marv Alpert and the sports
egg salad and these Chinese men
giving me change for the machines
One's drinking a Miller High Life,
he's an alcoholic
I didn't understand a thing
I'm collapsing

11/17/76
To Michael C.

I came over to this topless bar
the other was getting boring
Here some guy is wearing sunglasses and
an all right looking woman bartender
And I'm wondering
What kind of posts go to topless bars
by themselves
Maybe Toulouse-Lautrec or William Burroughs
But this is me and it's
late Monday night (I'm off tomorrow)
And disco music loud
is trying to wipe out everything
The entire history of the universe is right now
with this $1.50 Miller High Life
(wheneva she gonna dance again)
Let me paint you this
This is the infinite
The topless dancer dances on a
little rectangular raised stage
with cheap flashing lights under a
plexiglass (or some shit) floor
flashing their colors with a red fabric
'go get me some red fabric for the stage'
and there's a step for the girl
Resting on this, alone
with a history
is a shot glass
I can only be at one place at one time
I was drinking red wine somewhere else when
that must have happened
Someone could be shot in this place
....I tried to portray a place
where someone could go mad
basically what Van Gogh said
about his 'Night Cafe'
green with the pool table and yes
(this poem is for Van Gogh and you)
The dancer came over to me after
two or three other guys and
we French kissed like the Old West
She knew I'd been writing poetry and smiled and

Masters/70
talked to me about Allen Ginsberg and
the 60's in this area and Paul Blackburn, dead
'yeah, I know him' she said
I gave her a dollar but
didn't touch her like the other guys did
Maybe I was stupid but I know
what a woman feels like
So
Here's to the French New Wave and
that struggle to get another
$1.50 together for another beer
I can still taste her tongue

Masters/71
What I Like Most About the Snapshot
You Sent Me (from Ireland)

First of all, you
looking younger than I
could have imagined
Then, I guess
Pam's hand on your
sister's stomach
And Pam
Then
the way your scarf is
wrapped around your neck
or your friend Alan
and the way all four of you
bunched together
take over that
clean white
airport formica terminal
(goodbye Pam)
Must be a lot of these type
of airport goodbye shots
This is the best
(there are no thoughts of goodbye)
Pam's purple hat
(back to the subject)
Pam's thin eyeglasses
which I didn't exactly remember
Pam's big fur coat
and
Pam's teeth
Your sister
who I think of first as
your sister
her eyes squinting a little
and her hair
teased up a little
which I don't like on American women
(your sister is exotic,
it's OK for her)
Your sister's belt buckle
Imagining what makes Alan your friend
His hat and eyeglasses
and
Who is taking the shot
   hopefully a stranger
   so no one of the group be left out
   'Sir, would you mind...'
The emptiness of the terminal
The evidence of scotch tape
   (do you call it that, there?)
on the photo front
   proving irreversibly that
   this photo has hung on a wall
   somewhere in Ireland
And
This a finale
That's about it
Pam's rings
The availability of Kodak
   cameras and film over there
   even if the trademarks
   are in French

8/76
Yom Kippur, 1976 (5737)

start with
this holiest of days and
I heard the shofar blow
I ended up with a yarmulke on
separated from my girlfriend
by a curtain over 5000 years old
filled with a Chinatown meal
directed by a cowboy hero cop on horseback to
the only synagogue left in Chinatown
or its humble shadow
the long earth blast of the shofar
cleansed me like it was supposed to
and gave me questions to ask
my childhood rabbi
no thoughts of God
admiring the care and fantasy
of this temple interior remaining
Love Poem for Michael Scholnick

my legs hurt now cause
I've been reading your poems
sitting on the floor
between the speakers
rather than in the good chair
you know,
right behind the knees

now I'm thinking
what great pleasure can I give myself
before going to bed
After two days hanging
    on right side belt loop
I put my watch back on my wrist
That cut, or whatever it was
    looks healed
My body walks without me
    most of the time
Except when Heather punches
    me in the stomach
hard or
    gets up
    real close
Oh watch! back on
    my wrist or
Bob Dylan on my stereo
    angelic chorus thru the left speaker
    believing, yes
    that
    'like a river flows'
For Ted Berrigan