

Lopsided Birdhouses



Tilted Poems

by

Robert On The Air

Lopsided Birdhouses

Anthology of Tilted Poems

Robert On The Air

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Lopsided birdhouses

surround us. They are everywhere and every bit as beautiful as can be. Let Grandpa show you around the workshop's several rooms. Each room holds a pile of stuff, some of it interesting, some of it undefined (What Is That Thing, Anyway?), some of it is just plain weird. Put your feet up, have a cuppa... something.

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Lopsided Birdhouses

Grandfather busied himself,
building something to admire,
soaking up generous
helpings of solitary 'heart's desire'.

I'm sure you can see,
fearing how some folks frown displeased,
he was cautious, not carefree.
Still, a brightest yellow birdhouse
came to be.

The birdhouse leaned
precipitously,
stability in doubt,
bright dots of too generous yellow
strewn about.

It was a mess.
So, too
is any happiness.

Cat In a Window/ Warm Summer Day

I am a cat in the window,
watching clear sky day
as it plays out.

Warm sun pools on my fur,
delicious.
I contemplate nothing.

I am cat, therefore aloof
though curious.
I glance over my
sleek shoulder at you
who collapse in tears.
I wonder at that...

Do you remember when my leg was broken?
I tried to walk anyway
however bizarre my gait.
I didn't and don't evaluate
the real.
What is... is,
yawn.

Spider And The Fly at Winter's Edge

Casually tossed,
a thin scarf grey
only half-chokes light today
the way
gossamer doesn't completely darken a lamp.

Some giant spider did his best,
drinking summer's soul,
then rested,
leaving in the web
dry, semi-hollowed remains,
gently bound.

Romance, which once annoyed
and always landed
somewhat out of reach,
reclines,
exhausted of flow,
it's tiny wings tight to body,
still.

The spider at rest,
sated for a time,
will continue.
Truth to tell, romance continues also
in yet another
light, buzzing body
to fly again if spring returns.

An Act of Balance

I saw a man carry a basket
the way he would carry
a sack of potatoes,
a twenty five pound sack
held by it's draw string at
half arm's length.

A small child rode thus secured,
father's body leaning,
balancing.

It was not inconvenience I saw,
not struggle,
not burden.

I saw a man with a weight
he was equal to.

Extra

Though not exactly straw
for a weakened back,
I am too much
for the stack,
set aside.

Another portage trip,
some other work day,
I hope to be up
and on the way,
but now must bide...

Howard Carter and The Clock Restaurant

Outside,
a warm, brown wren
nestles down.
I remember that winter spent
eating all we could afford.
Sunny-bright rays leaned,
angling toward shadow on a clear, cold day.
They were peering in,
as Howard Carter must have done,
seeking Tutankhamen.

Carter's single candle was
enough to heat discovery,
reflecting brilliance,
revealing wonders to the desert
gathered just behind him.

I remember only angled light that
briefly found our corner
of an unwelcoming restaurant,
warming nothing
before unpredictable clouds doused enthusiasm
for our thickened, viscous dream.
We slushed back, empty.

Stage Fright/ Airplanes/ Death

Only bright light and
eager microphones stand
looking back at the man,
guitar in hand,
who struggles to remember:
“Where am I?
Why am I here?
Where am I going?
Did I choose this?”

Walking in from the wings
was a thumping heartbeat ride,
a bumpy taxi toward
the end of a long, eventful runway.
Now, a slow turn toward the light
stirs the feeling of a lifted skirt,
held spread, held clear,
held high, held free
in each outstretched aluminum hand.
Ready, or not,
rear view's a fading, tiny dot.

Far off sounds of voices,
shadowed, quick,
drift in and out.
It is the audience but sounds like:
Rushed ambulance attendants?
A crackling, excited radio?

"Ready on Runway two-niner..."

"Ready."

"Clear."

Momentum gathers in a run,

what has been - becomes

the point of no return, none.

It's fly or die and dying has begun,

feared song ends as if already sung,

at the moment started, gone and done.

The Spider's Contemplation

I am spider.
I will be decapitated by a lover
one day
but I am not afraid.

I am spider,
legs, fangs, poison,
cephalothorax, spinneret
and desire.

I am spider.
I spin gossamer,
capture and bind prey.
I draw off all the joy
thirsted for today.
I am spider.

I am living though,
eventually will cease to be
some beautiful way.

Familiar Dark

Familiar dark soothes
like a whiff of fresh baked bread,
calms,
like hot pie cooling in a kitchen window,
reminds

that home and comfort
are always there,
close as a well worn handmade wrap
draped across the armchair,
waiting to settle pain around restless shoulders.

Kinetic

Of late I am become
convinced,
when all is done,
bitter death's alone for living ones.

I will try to explain.

Witnessed, flowers
bloom and fade,
with seeds a-falling retrograde,
which burst again
when sun greets the glade.

The soul, the stem,
fur, fin and feather,
potential
share together
and never truly die.

Worried eye sees
what breathed turn still
as though in final sleep
but the sleeping one
will
wake.
Another time, another day,
another sun
rising as one
from a good or bad dream.

No Fire Extinguishers

Smooth road is running out.
Pot-holes and broken concrete
protrude, grow,
stalagmites rising from the underworld,
amongst which we are already threading our way.

Soon, the troops will come,
pre-echoes wail from civility's shadow.
Birds, beasts, all things are drowning
in this manufactured, air conditioned, flat screen,
indoor flush toilet world
that doesn't recognize it's lifeblood:
oppression.

Oh, dear Sunlight! Lick the landscape ablaze,
it is time,
we have no fire extinguishers.

My Sister, In The First Person

The sun is hot, huge, bright
and so far away that
it rarely becomes a serious target.
The moon is not.

I choose the moon.

It is the moon
I shoot at.
The moon humiliates,
I ebb, I flood.
I feel no heat and
it is my face
in blue cold airlessness.

With the red, white and blue flag,
I am flapping, fake.
I am trying to wave on a stick,
wire in my back, a puppet.
The smile is not real,
eyes are painted on with a shaky hand.

Rhyme (simple)

I'd like to hear,
"I love you,"
whether if or not a lie.

I'd like to hear,
"I love you,"
one more time before I die.

(Doing On) Donning The Veil

"Sun's up," they say
(or not, if you choose to believe that
earth has offered another cheek
toward solar wind's possibility of burning
and dull, relentless sun was there all night,
not hiding but invisible from this angle).
Sun's up.

The cocks have done crowing at
a brightness which happens every measured so often.
I am done, too,
with crowing or roaring.
Done with it.
Sun's up.

I am done with that force which,
aroused/erected by light or
constructed of light,
drives through the green fuse in waves.
It once drove me and released me.
Now, I am tossed past reach
on the wasted beach,
ready for another morning but
energy spent.
Sun's up.

Weary,
drying smile erodes at wind
which carries the lighter, younger, sharper,
sands aloft.
I am Sphinx, mysterious,
not stung anymore
though I remember how grinding feels
(as anyone who looks at me
can see when the sun is up).

Talk Therapy

It is a plain white business totem,
no graphics,
no excitement,
understated.

Thin black line rectangle
surrounds subdued letters on a careful background
which read:

'Patient blank blank
has an appointment with the Doctor on
blank blank
at:
blank a.m. /slash/ p.m.
Please telephone if you are unable to keep this appt.'
The card is carried in a tired wallet,
removed and examined,
fingered,
memorized,
replaced with a gentle hopeful pat
much the same way a teenage boy kept
his precious single condom ready.

(You never know,
things might change,
something could happen...)

Man And The Moon

The moon lies.

I am reminded of this by experience and study.

First:

there is no 'man in the moon'.

Man has been 'on the moon' - 'over the moon',

found only rock, dust,

hollowness;

left behind

a few fantastic worn out machines

with his soft old bent flag.

(if not for a stiff wire down it's back,

the flag would sag)

Next:

there is no love, no warmth.

Brightness is reflected light,

borrowed from the sun

(who happens to be somewhere else just now).

All of this has been calculated,

measured, analyzed, proven.

The moon is a burned out

used up cinder.

You might do better not to dream.

The Train

I am waiting
in a big room, under a watchful clock.

A steady cacaphony of
conversation, laughter,
gentle chatter,
(all of it idle no matter
its' presumed heat or import), rises.

Reminding of herds, flocks, murders,
incredible din slips in
as a bounced marble song,
symphony undirected,
ambient noise, inflected of
nothing.

I am watching,
in a big room, under a waiting clock,
observing that man and beast
share all save
the knowledge of good and evil.

How my guided herd
came to obtain knowledge
hides within purposeful hypotheses
of convenience to the moment,
someone
painted hands upon the clock.

Who?
What?
When?
Where?
How and
Why?

I wonder.

Sometimes,
I count the misspent many hours of patience passed,
gifted of their one good promise to me,
only a few more...

Defined time chimes out.

I am old now, who once was
young and
'round the bend comes,
finally, fearsome, huff/puff/smoke/fire/cloud/silence
... mon destin,
track number ten.

Waiting For God

Today is grey.
The grey is a lumped sky that lies
careless thrown overhead,
bunched up in the east as though God (if I may say so)
had left the bed unmade and staggered off to the washroom.
So, the dude/ess is not on schedule?
He/she/it has a busy day laid out and we are waiting.

I can hear water running somewhere
and the coffee's on, I smell it.
Elsewhere, the moaning, endless grief
rises, smoke from a thousand of
Mrs. Lovett's chimneys, while
Barber Sweeney strops the razor,
his the only cheerful voice.

I feel like a hired cleaner,
a janitor absorbing impatience'
red spoor with the last of fibrous being.
I have, indeed 'sucked it up'
though it wasn't God who ordered that, I'm sure.

Where the hell is he?

Under Noon Sun

Not quite machine, day moves by habit
east to west and repeats.

There is no other satisfactory explanation
save habit in the driver's seat.

As day does
everything real follows an arced path,
rising from pinpoint small,
swelling then ending. It's sometimes glorious
though most often, not at all.

Gradually,
like a child's height outline
climbing a door frame,
the once tiny
become tall
but don't remain.

In this pumping, steam powered world
of gear and grease,
time and machine,
bloom and fade,
climb and descend,
I find myself under noon sun
again,
halfway from somewhere,
halfway to the end.

I Love You With a Question Mark

You just said,
"I love you"
in the same way a man
might say, "I love you"
to a child whom
(though he hasn't been told that yet)
he knows is not his.

A Poem Is Not a Suicide Note

"A poem is not a song," he said.
Soft, I think, "You're wrong."

I know a Poem is neither a suicide note
nor a brilliant expose
of some well protected housewife's gift
for witty repartee.

A poem burns, of course.
A poem haunts, a poem sings,
a poem follows a gifted line
that any artist would mime.
(If he could)

Roses are sometimes red
and violets are sometimes blue
but a poem...
A poem is uncanny true.

Summer Night Watchman's Report

Bare bulb lamp sun
crashed west,
as if there'd been a fight
this long, hot, drunken day
and a bright flash marked night.
'Blaze of glory'
I think they call it.

I tip my head for better view but
the early stars don't sparkle,
or twinkle,
or spangle,
such pin pricks peer cautious,
peek through,
await and wonder.
I shine my flashlight upward
and imagine they see it,
knowing I am all the many thousand years dead.

Dead ?
Oh, that creeps up quick and
quiet as a damn cat,
who's hunted some creature defenseless,
stealthy in the dusk and dark,
in it's cruel mouth a gripped head.

I am oddly restless with the dimming sound,
now it is cooler and quieting.
This impatient, groaning chair
vantages horizon dome around,
where city light dusts the edges.
An occasional neighbour
curses a dog, slams a door,
flicks a porch light off then on.

Am I Alone?

In the dark behind my garden shed,
a small 'from somewhere' light glows.

Certain,

I imagine It to be a probe,
some ancient searching ship
that's landed there between
and uplit trees.

The silhouetted garden shed reminds
there will be work undone
if they are after me.

I ponder now
on space ships, God and dinosaurs,
all things imagined, possible.
The spoken of are sure.
Thunder in the distance, lots of fireflies.
Will I be afraid?

I go inside, to type my report.

Professor Beebe Undersea

I am driving slow toward darkness
while daylight drowns behind.
Vision leads me, best it can,
dim headlight from a timid bathysphere.

When we were young,
early spring covered this country road
with slippery frogs in plenty.
Imagination rode encapsulated,
searching the unknown,
on adventure, questing, trying to follow beamed light
and near sliding through the dark, croaking sea.

Remembering ice, we steered carefully,
not quite cursing the beasts we found.
As if almost gingerly lifting each wheel,
we threaded through,
saving some.

When America was Great
it wasn't possible to save all.
Casually leaden, otherwise innocent,
exploratory vehicles such as ours
crushed pleading voices small
in thousands.
It might have been then
most things began to disappear.

I ask myself, shadowed by time,
"Is it the ordinary process of life
that things slowly disappear
with each further, deepening year?"
I can see returning spring's reduced,
less sublime.

Few frogs are on the road tonight,
haunting white in dulled light.
I am behind the wheel, driving,
half listening to an old song
played loud,
sounding hollow on the radio.

It is a song I know well.
Once popular, this half forgotten hymn
about fishers of men
puts me in mind of drifting, wandering,
though undersea
and lead by inadequate light.

Often, men like me fumble,
hoping for and refusing to ask direction,
expecting ourselves to somehow know,
to have control. We are 'explorers'.
"I'll find it, if it's there.." we say, air
bubbling tremulous from our diverse lips.
"We'll have the joy of discovery!"

Through this fading spring, deepening dark evening,
I drive.
There are fewer and fewer frogs.

Fearing, hoping, I am desperate that
a bright, lighted destination can be found.
Eventually, somewhere around the bend,
a pleasant conclusion, a proper end?

On A Stone Spinning (2)

Equally unimportant,
ants and automobiles
travel in semi-tidy lines,
absorbed in moment,
focused on task and time.

A little research explains
that ants are evolved and quiet,
chemical creatures,
mostly minding their own business,
wending their natural way
on pheromone instruction.

The auto's a mechanical beast,
born in smoke and fire.
It's driven steel,
feeding on ancient rot,
delivering destruction
along every road that's got
one.

Here, high above,
across a hand hewn
wooden table, two ants progress.
They seek something sweet.
Their movements are nearly mechanical
and remind of some science fiction disaster movie's
giant ants.
I almost hear the high pitched screaming soundtrack.
My poisoned bait hasn't worked
and I decide to crush them.

Below and beyond my
lofty terrace,
autos climb a low hill,
at no purpose, seeking nothing, easily killing
by poisonous gas or crushing.
Each of those steel boxes has two eyes
but cannot see the road ahead.
From them, I hear real, not imagined buzzing
but I am not afraid
I lift my cup
wondering what this might mean.

Forgiving Green

At Grandfather's farm,
bits of sun and shadow
stretch across the centre of
an amorphous meadow,
almost as the checkerboard
squares we traveled, getting here.
There is green and less green
at random, a gentle heaven.

Thrown free
of yesterday's accident into a few hours of
cautious sleep,
I dreamt of this clearing,
where time leads the wandering.

We, who are briefly earthbound,
always end by discovering where we are going.
It is one green, grassy patch or another.
In our travel, our game, each movement isn't always
forward on the diagonal.
Sometimes,
there's a willful slip sideways
or backwards onto darker shadowed shapes.
Certainly, sooner or later we'll break the rules,
have to wait another turn,
though rules, too,
are undefined as the meadow.
The wise allow each turn to forget the last.

I think that... yes,
it is as unencumbered,
it is as simple...
sometimes we make a little slip,
nothing more sinister than that.

Sleeping On The Ground

(a lullaby)

Be still,
aware of flowers growing.
Press your anxious ear to ground.
Hush all hurried hearts
and breathing,
darkness dies without a sound.

Sweet heaven knows,
nothing wicked wings.

Look up,
believe blue stars are glowing,
that whispered promises abound.
Stem the suffering, sharp,
repeating,
soulless cries that bray so loud.

Yes,
Death leaden flows
but
flowers somehow sing.

Tomorrow's sun must come around...
keep sleeping on the ground.

The Good Folks

the good folks have turned off what they can, are warm in bed.
love is turned down.
the cat's outside, tearing up Washington town.
a few remaining kitchen coals are careful banked.

the good folks are tired,
wearied of a dull, repetitive show.

we are all good folks, sometimes.

the bad folks play too loud and late, kick the can, disturb the peace.
cries for mercy get ignored.
open mouthed, it's only God who snores.
loose paper is too near the fireplace.

the bad folks are careless, drunk,
slurring their humble lines slow.

we are all bad folks, sometimes.

Tectonic

In a frozen marriage,
one stands at the sink,
washing dishes carefully.
Echoes of something grunt reply,
looking up from black and white newspaper
only occasionally.

There is no or slow
motion.

The kitchen window view
is of water and sun,
smiling neighbours whose
cheerful boats crest each wave
proudly
and seem close. (you could almost reach out).

Underwater, plates move,
reminding of earth a time ago.
Future slides under past.
“Mhm.”

Was there then a shaking?
A quiet rumble?
or not?
all the birds are stone quiet.

...must have been a faulted memory.

Outside, somewhere else,
a gentle slap-slapping
and floating away.

Facebook

With fire on every side,
even ordinary day might witness smoke.
This is night,
frightened air sees nothing clear,
can only choke.

Safe passage, at best, is lost.

Tall flameouts burst along each line
of crunching forward forest paths,
blinding night with ugly orange day,
shining brief, in swaths.

Sure footed centre's somewhere under ash and dust.

To make of modern Babel's spire?
What is there to learn?
That light derives of smoke and fire?
That love, as darkest passion burns?

Round

Breathe deep.

World is and was always
round.

Regardless that Columbus
might have found it true,
there never was/will be
beginning or end in view.

Our betrothal symbol, life,
appears a length of something precious
welded sound,
maybe beginning/ending in the same place,
round.

So, out of earth by seed,
back to earth we're bound.
By means of bared feet,
stand up and walk on solid ground.

The Wicked At Rest

Today,
I have sweet luxury as mine.
Rising, having a bit to eat
with a cup of tea
is sublime.

After a brief look around,
with the day ahead stretched,
pressed and folded on itself,
like bread I'll go
back in the bowl
for a second rising.

The Back Beat

An outdoor marquee,
illuminated three words,
'whither goest thou?'

When Sun Finds Your Window

Get up when the sun finds your window,
there is cooking
and cleaning
and building
and tearing down
and growing
and shrinking
and loving
and loneliness.

Get up, get at it.
Time,
as they say,
is wasting.

Somewhere Bright

A Yellow cab rolls up,
wheels crunching loose stone.
I've been waiting,
watching,
pacing slow alone--
now the front door opens.

Yesterday is held in a mother's arms,
clinging at the neck it's always known.
There's comfort, safety,
warmth of sorts inside the shabbiest of homes--
now the front door opens.

With knees and heart both shaking,
I step out lightly on the slippery stones,
lifting my leaden legs up
by force of will alone.

I'll not stay here longer.

Now, a glowing door held open,
the driver asks, "Where to?"
Adventure shines two eyes,
that clear and blue,
anticipate surprise.

"Can I just go somewhere bright?
Would that be alright?"

Writing Through A Cold Day

This kind of frozen has sharp teeth!
Seen through a clear pane of glazed eye,
dead wind captures the snow plateau,
pins it down,
waits for complete surrender's word -
'uncle'.

Eager sun shines in contradiction, promising
warmth and motion.
I am teased by light
but nothing of any sense moves.
My words are huddled birds, puffed up.
Fearing there might be damage done
that wouldn't be seen 'til spring,
I tried leaving the faucet running.
They say a tiny drip, drip
keeps the main pipe open.
Others have baled late summer hay,
placed it at their foundations,
frost thus to abate,
but I wasn't yet home here until late
and could not prepare.

Five Inches Of Rum

It was a full on Saturday night
in the middle of Wednesday morning
and he drowned there
in five inches of rum.

I cannot know what drove him
or parked him on the porch swing,
zipper down and bleeding
from five inches of rum.

If he could sing, he'd tell you
that it wasn't alone bright sun
to help him drown astounded,
minus five inches of rum.

The final chair soft swinging,
pushed light by summer air.
One hell of a mess met passersby
who laughed and stared, some snorting,
"He doesn't have a care!"
Five inches of rum ran dry.

Blink Away the Night

Rise and be delivered
of the long dark dream.
Grip in one a steaming coffee
(brimming cream or lies)
while the other hand rubs eyes
that don't quick see

whether flickering new skies
are blue or grey.
Clear vision takes
time and concentration
while you stumble up from clay.

There is work to do,
gather more than two,
help roll the stone away.

The Moon Is Half Full

(from a photograph of Oklahomans circa 1930)

Relentless dust has choked sweet tongue
and laughter from the virtued young,
whose cheerful chorus won't be sung.

Child of time, late green shoot tender,
whose own birth-date is scarce remembered
presents for view a dying ember's

grey visage, a weathered map
where vigor, drained as if by tap,
now wastes away down sewer's trap.

Her stare fixed firm on end of run,
this once bright moon erodes, becomes
empty under withering sun.

Of dust they came, the dust returned,
their dream a hard and bitter churn
'til no more living was left to earn.

A photographic black and white
reveals one day gone dark midnight
which swallowed each and all in sight.

The Aerialist

Have you stood upon some precipice,
only noticing the view,

with your eyes and heart sweeping end to start?
Far below - a darkened valley
and above, light wisp on blue.

It's a sudden thing,
knowing safety nets won't catch you.

Uncurtained Windows, Askew

Wind, water and time
round the sharp corners of a tiny house,
situated near a street
named Askew.

Four simple windows
offer little of interior view,
beyond glimpses.
Such witness is misunderstood
by two solemn trees, shaking incredibly
where they stand,
caught beneath a thousand sunsets, sunrises
that speed in looped repeat
ever faster.
Is this a light show movie?
Has everything been planned?

Many people have, by now,
been in and gone out.

Within the tiny house,
there ghosts a blur of
cooking, cleaning,
flying fur and
bitter tear crying.
Often, over time,
someone who was at first angry
collapsed laughing,
drunk.
Later, the bedroom squeaked delightedly.

Finally,
silent for maybe a brief while,
maybe not,
the tiny, yet further rounded house
is undefeated.
Tired? it weakly offers, "Next..."
In ennui's voice.
There remains a spark of expectation,
on we go.

For Whom Swims in Delight

Midnight's shine on the skinny dipper
defines purity's line, offering a dream to view.
Too curious,
any wandering stranger traveling a nearby dirt path route
would stand indignant witness, struck mute,
excepting that lilac surrounds and
pungent summer's timely circumstance
protects from status 'in flagrante
delecto',
the casual swimmer after hours.

For some blessed reason, God knows why,
you and I
can see the wet one
shy his trousers.

Breathing our gifted vision in
makes a certain sharpness catch.
It's an opiate odor from hope's fragile bower,
a frame that beauty's bird has built. Gathered,
twisted branches and bound flowers
well conceal
from prying, prurient interest
what naked, careless moon would otherwise reveal.

I adore that dullness might be made to cower
outside, blinded by a complex of often purple blooms
that shower with scented excitement
one perfect hour spent
at the edge of heaven's room.

Felix Avenue in Summer

A bird stood on Felix Avenue
pecking at something dark,
peeling a scab off the Avenue,
where it passes St. Dymphna Park.

I am the clear glass window, watching.

Dried scabs, once gone, start fresh bleeding
while wires overhead hum a song,
out of tune, flattened, grieving.

There is enough suffering,
for each and long.

I am the dull glass window, waiting...
dreaming of youth's errant baseball.

Oakwood, Ohio

I never saw her cleaning
that immaculate house,
where curtains from the five and dime
hung ruler straight, flawless
and sun shone beams of colour
across the floor.

Many Sundays we visited there,
always fresh scrubbed and sitting up straight,
hands folded in our laps.

I never saw her leave for work
or return
but she often spoke about the doctor
whose house she cleaned as fill-in job,
topping up her pension.

The doctor was benevolent, kind,
his peculiarities amusing.
She spoke almost as if he were
an immaculate lover.

I never met the doctor.

I met Alan, her second husband,
who smoked fragrant pipes slowly,
relaxing in the new reclining chair
with no shoes on, clean socks, legs up
while she, and the pot belly stove,
provided earthly heaven.
He was always smiling,
she smiled, too.

I never saw the light, direct,
though I say it play
and by ordinary, given sense knew
some inner lamp shadowed every move
in Oakwood, Ohio, U.S.A.

The Effect of Pills

I take a white pill and
sit down to breakfast.
He is there, reading the newspaper.

When I finish my early routine,
he puts on my lightest jacket
and we go for a walk.

I know the sun is shining, know the birds are singing
but feel
that song and shine are a monochrome silent movie.
The beautiful day is a 'separate' thing.
It is a bright object and I am it's shadow.

I stop to chat with a neighbour.
The neighbour is two dimensional,
plastic and quite excited about something.
I wonder at this.
I wonder at excitement.

Pleasantries exchange and the walk continues.
The one wearing my jacket and I,
two of us,
are not going anywhere.
A sound or smell might exist a moment,
causing me to turn my head.
If I am thus distracted, he pulls out the journal-book,
making a mark.
He has both sharp pencil and memory.

By myself, I cannot remember everything, exactly.
I become white for a time and continue.
There might be another casual meeting.
I don't seek to be left alone anymore,
that much is different.

Comfort

"I may look woe begotten,"
he said,
"but I am dog. I accept this.

I stand with my face to the wind,
it is what is. I accept this."

(Or kindness
or cruelty
or mercy
or not.)

"It is you needs shelter
and I would offer your thin skin
comfort."

A Ride On Earth

One given, solitary point
on the surface of earth,
at it's equator,
is moving at approximately 1000 miles per hour
because of spin
(so says science).
Yet, I am standing here feeling
nothing
save sun rays (which are vibrations,
only felt because the sun is unobstructed),
light breeze (which is air moving around me,
touching my skin, lifting my hair, sounding in my ear),
and, in the case of this quiet day,
my own heart beating (which is muscle squeezing/releasing).

Earth moves sideways through space,
orbiting the sun in an elliptical path at
about 67,000 miles per hour,
speeding up when it is closer
and slowing down further away. Earth and the sun
and the planets and all the other things
fly forward through space at yet another
determinable rate.
That's what I hear.

Earth and Sun and stars
and stuff
fly away,
through vastness I can't see but know of,
because I read about it yesterday.
It's a flying I cannot feel.

I am given the knowledge
that what looks like sky
appears blue

because light (from the sun, in vibrations)
is scattered by air molecules
(which I can feel as breeze on skin)
and that those are not the clouds of dream puffing by
but gathered groups of water bits in a vapour.

That news doesn't give alarm.
It is good to know these sorts of things and
I feel calm,
standing up this little hill,
basking in my illusion still,
of blue sky, heartbeat, cloud
and timelessness,
if you will.

Time is another thing I cannot feel,
it is likely eternal, likely real
though I'm not sure.
Science gets confusing on this point,
the only cure being religion,
or superstition or pure
imagination..

I stand now, imagining
a whip of wind
at the rate of earth's spin,
a strobe light sun illuminating
each human,
flying through space
toward whatever place
all of this ends,
all this begins....

God,
I feel dizzy.

My Chatty Letter

(about the Righteous sailor)

I was typing at random, trying to find The Book,
hoping a dead plastic computer screen
would be a good place to look.

I mistook the back light for imbued light,
as if it were gold trimmed paper my words arrived on
and thought myself toward rightness bound
when I glanced out toward a troubled lake
that stretched beyond horizon.

At flatness' far edge, where each care filled day begins,
a simple ship eased into view
borne on wave, driven by winds.

First in my vision small,
then taller, the ship moved oddly gentle, intent
as if sweet breeze were pushing,
not torment,
and continued growing greater
through each passing moment.

With, at last,
the ship's true humble stature evident,
an earlier wisp of caution I eschewed,
and knew,
there was no one aboard on plunder bent.

With closer view, full clear through
my moderate, constant, searching haze,
I saw twelve sated fishermen.
Swarthy souls, bedecked of rod and reel,
were leaning eager forward at the bow,
delivered safe by balanced keel,
lifted on the prow.

I felt sure they laughed, gasping in relief,

that sheltering harbour's pier, with a sly wink,
disproved their every restless fear, shattering unbelief.
A promised link to home and comfort
was secure.

I daydreamed then, it could have been
one righteous sailor stepped out sure,
walked upon the water towards them,
said to none particular,
"Howse it goin', Chief?"

Not once before occurred to me
such fanciful scenes as true.
Today, by witness of my own mind's eye,
that showed me something new,
I can say,
I believe,
I do.

I spoke bold to myself,
metaphor holds real wealth
and lies in a book there on the shelf,
to open,
when you need or want,
clear view.

I looked back down,
noticed I'd been typing a letter to you.
I had written,
"A certain,
seeming wholly human soul within
my laboured sight
might derogate the laws of physics,
it could happen...
Dear God! They're right!"

I'll consider this a bit,
then sign and send what's just a chatty letter
about a thing I swear I saw.

Should Man Fly?

Balance, in a bird is born.
A simple scale weighs life and death,
of body weight and feather light
allowing flight
or not.

My salvation wings, by hand are welded
to airboats hale
of length and breadth.
Trusting fate and feeling right,
I'll climb to height
or fail
sailing on superfluous invention.

I don't ask of birds why,
but should man fly?

Will It Be Tutankhamun?

Finally revealed to light,
the last room piled with tired, gilded things.
Careless clutter's din concealed
that history dried within,
by chance,
each humbled object's fragile skin.
Surreal and dimly lit by a lucky candle glance;
there,
once shone a gold-toothed serpent's grin
next a wondrous beast with darkened wings.

Arm outstretched toward where
all shifting shadow begins,
I am Howard Carter at the precipice,
aware of storied, ancient sin,
a man of vice
to whom great glory's revelation
is uncertain.

Curious, my tiny trembling eager orange
flame,
tipped with canary yellow,
tames.
Eased into still air, where anticipation rings,
caged precaution is quiet
but sings.

There is a Trick to It

What can sun do
to brick
that has not already been done?

The eager mud and straw of a patted and shaped heart,
for longevity's promise,
leapt head last toward the nearest oven.
Was it love?

When I say 'love',
I mean a bird's wing

or:
a spider's web revealed in dew

or:
two geese, sudden, loud and low
over the backyard

or:
spring
that seems to happen one day
between the hours of 7 and 11 am

or a dear one
who anticipates bad news
and to whom the absolute only
thing you can stupidly say is,
"It'll be okay."

The trick,

oh my dear friends,

the trick is to remain porous
though hard, insoluble
and

let those eternal, gentle breezes
(which carry the softest sand)
only slowly erode you to dust again.

Biting The Church

A doctor I know,
(fake? faux? being not that kind of doctor)
says, "Take two of these...
one in the morning and one each night.
The result will be mystery, magical, bright.
Trust my chemistry."

"How much money do you have?"
"...not enough."

Claiming authority, then was said,
to explicate effect on soul of bread,
"None can afford to buy such cocaine."
It's true, this and plain,
unable to afford a purchased bliss,
we'll come back weekly, over again
renting it instead.

"Take a moment, count your money,
there must certainly be just less than enough?"

Lease, half-steal, borrow, intent
to leave not a sou unspent
toward the temporarily magnificent.
Hand over your cheerful decorated bills,
empty the bottle of colourful pills,
consume as prescribed, if you will.

Repeat soft spoken advice, trust and follow.

When it is wafer, not capsule, how great the dose?
And what sort of flavour, dry, sweet....gross?
embellishes rooms that overflow,
embroidered by shadowed, exotic belief?
What swallowed there offers steady relief?

Summer's End

More than passing fancy
swept toward autumn's way.
Shadow, uninvited, warns
of winter.

We lie in the
ghosted hour of midnight's
crisp and rustling sheets
while sorrow, unabated, wells
within.

The
Greatest Elm is gone,
there's
much work left undone,
as if we'd
waited long for someone.

We linger there
for one again
to whisper,
to gentle the hard, still air.

Soon enough all rest,
knowing
none will long await
the last icy puff,
the squeaking, rusty garden gate,
a cautious landed tread on stair,

a sheltered sigh that settles
into feathered fair
bed.

The bridge and the birds

I am tired, I am tired
and the rotten old rusty bridge stands higher
than I dreamed or imagined,
higher than the heart feared.

The rotten old rusty bridge stands muted
in fog. Swirled illusion
obscures the long, dark minutes, hours, days
of struggle upward...
Both to build this bridge and to climb it.

The rotten old rusty bridge casts shadow
over the landscape,
it sways for the shifting wind,
stands as a mammoth structure,
ghosted
by bare bulbs struggling
to find the edges, the end,
and warn.

I discover that
intimate contact with
indifferent, immense pillars
vacuums breath away,
the cold, damp steel resisting warm flesh,
turning blind away from a bruised knee.

The rotten old rusty bridge sweeps a
view that is narrow and broad
in the same moment.
At this daunting height,
there is a steady wind
floated full with airy, light birds who
dive in curious, close.
They are wondering,
“What is that thing doing here?”

I think that birds just know 'here'
they probably don't know
tomorrow, yesterday, 'up', 'down'
and 'there'.
They likely call every creature
except worms, 'thing'
not knowing of nouns.
In the same way,
birds don't have adjectives
like 'good' worm
or 'bad' worm.
It is just worm and worm is 'here'
or it is just thing and thing is 'here'.

To birds,
it is only this moment, this place,
this time.

I can see one of them,
long, skinny toes wrapped
around some sort of wire
and, like me, looking out from this
tenuous vantage,
possibly also wondering what a 'future' is.

Funny, odd,
incongruous in think
a bird might contemplate
much more than a meal
or a mate.

This bird,
the one I am seeing,
is only lightly clinging to the wire,
here.

Perhaps one last

strong puff of the wind
will set him off to a desperate flailing
of wings.

Or not, maybe he
decides to hold the wings
tight to his fragile body, toes letting go,
allowing gravity or wind to make the decision.

As though in sync with the curious birds,
thought says, "Indeed, Thing,
why are you here?"
The rotten old rusty bridge sighs quiet
having heard this conversation before.

Moment pauses,
Wind picks up.

More birds swoop near,
cocked heads thinking,
"The 'thing' looks out of place,
unusual here, different."

While the birds are noisily making
discovery, there is time for reflection...
there is still time for cure,
time enough a 'thing' might climb back
to it's own 'here', to endure.

There is time, sure...
but
I am tired. I am tired.

The Tomato Ripens, Then Rots

Drying, warm, glowing,
last night's slight twinkle was a far star
exploding bright.

Subdued, muted light from long ago
dimmed and dusted the life and land
as I tried to understand.

All day and almost nearby, a similar source of dying
greens and fades what I see.

The tomato ripens,
then rots
to grow again next season.
From seed that needs remain,
insatiable at times, we're fed.
The tomato feeds, too.
There exist so many miracles
we have evidence enough,
don't you think?

Have another 'love apple', friend,
there are plenty being found,
full rich, red, round,
here at perfection's brink.

Delilah and The Desert Wind

I have closed cool evening's windows,
drawn my drapes,
hoping to keep what chill
I had awhile.

Been warned
and learned.
It's gonna be a hot one
today.

I will hide heart's cooling shadows,
from display,
needing to keep yet still
a little smile.

Long worn
locks shorn.
It's gonna be a hot one
today.

An Incident with God

Back in my precious time I felt odd,
when shaken belief quickly abandoned Santa Claus,
precipitating an incident with God.

One day, I knew and imagined that between
a now suspect fictional two, said to be real,
there existed a parallel, they were both unseen.

I've never since nor once ever met God
but back then, I did meet Santa Claus
and discovered him a fraud.

Santa Claus was Uncle Carl, I'd 've known him anywhere,
I didn't have to pull on his beard,
to know it was'nt real hair.

Tenuous, then as innocence escaped from me,
at the knowledge of Santa as Carl
I set out to see what else might or not be.

I made a bargain with God.

If he caused me to win a rodeo's raffled pony,
I promised to believe in Him
and not think Him just a bunch of built up baloney.

My tiny ticket, of course didn't win,
but it wasn't proof enough He existed not.
Chagrined, I worried I'd committed some horrible sin.

How dared I to test Him?

That's where we stand, these years hence,
God may or not be (yet no proof by science)
and I still worry where I stand, balanced on the fence.

New Shoes

I want a most beautiful new pair of shoes
but fine leather doesn't wear well, it's too soft.
I know this and sigh, resigned.
Form follows the function for a practical man.

Earth spins and stars vibrate, until
everything ends as a blink of eye
that began with an eye twinkle.
What is born spontaneous has death innate,
like shoes do.

For every lost love there can be found
wretched agony, with most of life spent
repeating the walk up street and down.
Footgear proving easily broken or bent,
I will seek what is solid.

The salesman wears familiar cloth, leans in to say,
"A better fit can be arranged if you bend a knee."
I pray for malleable shape that suits changes,
in something the colour of iron,
a sturdy design to try on.

A Night Out

Fresh day struggles into view,
last night remaining only as dry lips and tongue,
sticky eyelids.

Rising from bed was to rise from a ring's defeated canvas.
The Palooka remained but he was missing things.
A tooth, a bit of blood gone, memory of the last few punches
(and the keys...
Where are his keys?)

Punchers Chance scattered
jigsawed dark moon sky pieces of battle.
(He's Shopworn)
Here, on Queer Street,
nothing matches squared, completed borders,
(Were they dancing in the Clinch?)
nothing quite fits.
(Why brightness in the room?)
Nothing witnesses the ropes that caught him,
undressed him,
sent him flat to the canvas.

Each gathering moment of waking
builds slow dawn realization.
Fragmented evening becomes
bells,
screams from beyond the apron,
referee whistles,
bobbing and weaving,
pawing and parrying

until a timid cornerman's cautious head
pokes into shadow.

"Will he live, doc?"

Things to Wonder About

(1) Love

...And love?

Does everyone need a thing they know
so little of?

Applied on grief,
will the lightest, brushing touch show
slumped shoulder enough cool pain relief
for a moment both honest and brief?

Applied like a poultice of joy,
does patted back and exuberant hearty shove,
turn what could be heaviness to a bright toy,
in the same way cold steel and warm cloud alloy?
Is love more?
Really?

(2) Why Get Up In The Morning

When I was new they told me
how forbidden fruit grew,
that the first two tested God's temper
as children are wont to do.

His lid blew, they walked away free
half concealed by green leaves askew,
toward someplace else they scampered,
wearing whatever they had to.

Well...

that's how my sun gift joy was encumbered?
by knowledge of sin filled days finite,
numbered?

What Is For Dinner?

I sing on battery power,
an almost imperceptible red light
tries warning of approaching still.

Of life and living it is true,
no matter under whose rule,
a certain percentage to each remains,
by the soul's hand incalculable.

No matter your master,
whether wise, whether fool,
gracious kind or horribly cruel,
or whether time is measured, recorded, clocked,
until the mainspring bends, tick and tock
continue.

So?

That is nothing new.

A thousand pens have cried that ink
into the cauldron kitchen sink.

Alike as whom the hours have earlier found,

I'm sturdy to the hands of future bound.

Until I'm not, I'll be around.

What's for dinner?

Grief is a Tall Word

Grief is a tall word,
tall words a boundary wall,
boundary walls confine,
infinite as prison cells.

I live in the small room,
where limited view drains vision
down any window's well.

They say,

someday will dawn golden,
at last we'll grow green.
A small, still light will find,
bless us with dream.

And yet,
when it comes,
relief soon yawns old hand.

Relief, bored, glows serene awhile
until blind life
repossesses the scene.

All circles complete,
each of the ends meet.
At last and someday,
echo, repeat.

Time doesn't heal anything
it is round.

Dark Roast

I am sitting in a coffee shop,
reading a sign that appears to be
handwritten with cheerful coloured chalk
on blackboard.

It is not handwritten in chalk
on a blackboard
and offers little cheer.

This sign,
advertising some exotic coffee concoction,
is printed on plastic by machine,
probably somewhere foreign to me,
perhaps in China.
The machine is being cranked,
probably by hand, probably by a low wage slave
in deadly circumstances.

A major multinational corporation
has decided to give me the illusion
of a handcrafted, personal coffee experience
and overcharge for that.

Well, thanks, but
I am not fooled by this.
The too wide smiling, underpaid barista
is wearing a company logo on a company t-shirt,
probably is wearing strategically padded,
company underwear.

I get up, put my stylish sunglasses back on
and drive away from here, knowing
time is running out.

I Buy Another 12-pack After Visiting The Doctor

Each soul has blisters that leak and bleed,
is born into borrowed time,
...nothing new babycakes,
Boo
hoo...

The forward path is
but crumbling sidewalk,
where uneven gait
is best masked by
more beer.

Who says a sudden,
impulsed shout of,
“Woo! Hoo!”
doesn't silence fear?

Watching Pterodactyls

West, at the ocean near eventide,
Pelicans swooped to catch dinner.
Not a cloud threatening overhead,
each bird rose heavenward, winner.

Playing with words, you renamed the birds,
rising up, diving down, fishing,
calling them winged pterodactyls,
reptiles whose lives have gone missing.

Pelicans are Pterodactyl-like,
armed to attack swimming fishes,
fired from a cross-bow of scattered cloud,
not needing silver or dishes.

I sat beside you, relaxing, and
watched those peculiar creatures,
cresting wave after each cresting wave
bringing them limitless treasure.

Breezes from India wandered by,
lifting, caressing and healing.
Were we adrift at the oceanside?
Under a fading blue ceiling?

That night, a thin slice of crescent shaped,
bright light reminded La Mer blue,
moonshine at midnight spills shadows from
places forgotten that are true.

Day Which? of Captivity

Eternal grey appears to be sky. This grey Rome saw in our early days. Grey is an indefinite thing, parked above. It is waiting. Through my small window, I can see that all colour leaches out until a matching shade with what masquerades as sky. It's not real sky I see. It's not a dream. It's phony. The sky is not sky. Real sky is limitless and the phony sky has boundaries. The grey I see is a prison wall. I am deciding I cannot breathe. I know this place, I know the masquerade.

To bang on the wall with whatever is at hand will prove fruitless and dangerous effort. To call for the warden only dries your throat. I know this place, I have experience. I have tried in the past to break through skin of grey, metallic. I was not freed by the banging then, just as I will not be freed now. I sang as sweetly as I could, as much in pleading as possible but the warden never showed a spark of care. As I was injured then by the banging and calling out, I am injured now. I see my fists have become bloodied and the delicate bones of finger are cracked. It is new blood and the sticks of finger are cracked in other places.

I knew better. I know better. My voice is scratched whisper again. I had not much useful left and I dashed it against the grey anyway, now everything is broken. I am numb, bleeding, I cannot speak. There is little to do but wait. The walls, in masquerade as sky, are waiting, too.

Betrayal

What betrays us?
Is it love?
That very thing
we can only fall out of?

I am not certain.

Maybe a glow,
once it's applied,
reveals the soul,
long denied.

I study my mirror.
I
don't
know.

Swipe Left or Swipe Right

A raggedy looking
older gent,
for matrimony and shared rent,
sought one kindred companion.

He
swiped left
then he swiped right,
wide awake, desperate,
finger wiggling as moth wing might,
fluttering,
the whole of night.

Hope's glow, like a smart phone dulled
predictable, against the brighter light
of morning on reckoning's day.

Then crept forth a crowd,
with plenty to murmur,
amongst themselves,
stage whisper loud,

"Hey,
ain't it just like a freakin' maudlin play?
and somehow, ya just knew,
things would go this way?"

The Day My Bones Started to Disappear

A man died of asphyxiation by regurgitating, then aspirating some of his stomach contents. He didn't wake up in time to cough or safely expell the debris because he had taken too many depressants and was numb all over. Now, he is permanently numb. In a little while the flesh will fall away and his bones will start to appear.

A newspaper served the small town where this man had been alive and there was an article on it's front page about his accident. When he was being carried out of his house, neighbours and friends were all talking. They discussed the depressants the man took and why he had taken them. He had either been having too much illicit fun or was trying to kill some kind of pain. The pills were, after all, 'pain-killers'. Folks said, "I should have noticed he was in pain. I should have kept an eye on him."

Now, his bones are beginning to appear and there is no easy answer to why or whose fault it was.

There was more information about other things in the newspaper that same day. In the food section, there was an article about chocolate and how it is a natural pain-killer. Cherry pie has the same effect. They both have a mild analgesic effect on arthritis pain, for example. After that article came an article about obesity, with pictures of fat people making unfortunate clothing choices and discussion of will power, diets, life style. Next, there was a brief paragraph or two about dog licensing.

The discussion of fat people was pretty interesting. A person had nearly died because of overeating. It was like an overdose of pain-killer that almost killed. The picture showed him

being carried out of the house by about six men. Everyone who saw the pictures knew the overdose was not an accident like what happened to the man on the front page. None of the neighbours and friends said, "I should have noticed there was pain". Folks said, "It was his own damn fault. Look at that! Disgusting!" and they shook their heads.

Some folks thought, "That's amusing...his bones are staring to disappear."

Dimming Eyesight

For several weeks,
something black's been lurking
near the fence line.
A shape has crouched there,
daily,
seeming not to move.

Over time,
after I first noticed it,
I became convinced the indefinite black
was not,
as I imagined it to be,
a cat with a hunting habit,
a ritual, a routine.

"It's just an errant garbage bag
I'm seeing,
a plastic shroud, either binding waste
or blown astray empty,
cast aside careless by our wonton way.
It's a symbol of death or an omen,"
I thought.

Being uncertain
what I could or should do about it,
I chose to ignore the still shape.
Each day I noticed the darkness
with a start,
then remembered to ignore it.
Each day it lay there,
plainly visible.

Today,
there was also black shape
closer to me.

I paid better attention
until it cautious moved.
Aha!
This time, it WAS, a cat!

and so...

This
day I witness a stealthy cat.
Tomorrow,
I know there will be darkness again
to lurk along the fence line
and startle
that I will have to not see.
All of this shit
keeps me really busy.

Norman Rockwell's 'Hamburger And A Coke'

(a memoir)

This hot dog
and that piece of apple pie
both rest precarious
on the promise of stability
offered by a paper plate,
it's flimsy flutes bleached white
or sometimes printed in a pattern of
red, white and blue.

It is barbecue season
in the northern hemisphere
and eager, the family gathers.
Practiced, unisoned pairs
of hands bear
ordinary dishes
toward the fold-up table.
Sister's potato salad returns.

Stepping aside a moment,
Aunt Molly tries to photograph
one of the rare seen, roaring silver giants.
She only manages a captured few
white puffs on blue,
blurry sky.

In the backyard,
playing, half-hearted, at being unseen,
strong uncles sample home brew.
What they are drinking,
and how much, is probably not news
to Grandma.
It's unspoken, understood,
how not one rouged or reddened
face should show
of surreptitious goings on.

"If 'Ma' doesn't know,
she won't have to disapprove."

On this day off, away
from manufacturing's desert,
away from Dwight D. Eisenhower,
away from the post war boom,
away from Senator Joe McCarthy - Wisc.
away from the swelling television
(that almost bursts with forboding
future),
the simpler folk gather.
One afternoon's glorious
timelessness stretches out
it's forever with breathless,
liberated laughter
arpeggiating the while.

When day's full fading sunlight
does draw a final angle,
the bored dog stretches.
He turns about,
plops down,
snorts a little cloud of dust up
and evening repossesses
all bright things.

Anticipating stealthy shadow,
earnest wheedling begins.
A bargaining plea, a wily wrangle
coaxes well rehearsed
and tangled
tales from Grandpa,
who,
with one last fearless shout,
at last brings his accordion out
to blow against tomorrow.