

ABSTRACT

CONDOLENCES TO ALL OF YOU: LATE EULOGIES OF A HALF-COMPLACENT
BIRTHDAY BOY

By

Anthony J. Urquidi

May 2015

Condolences to All of You assembles various poems whose creation spans the period between late 2011 and late 2014, with the vast majority formed during the latter half of that time. Included are conceptual poems of a visual or ideological nature, narrative poems exploring adolescence and ecology, and lyrical examinations of the crisis of mortality in the twenty-first century. Many of these darkly humorous poems obscure distinctions between elegy, eulogy, epitaph and celebration, while pleading for the imagination's affirmation in a human era of purported existential certainty. The essay preceding the poems debates their roles and merits among the flailing despair of twentieth-century literary criticism, and puts forth a guide to formal and content-driven motives for the mechanics of the poems themselves.

CONDOLENCES TO ALL OF YOU: LATE EULOGIES OF A HALF-COMPLACENT
BIRTHDAY BOY

A PROJECT REPORT

Presented to the Department of English
California State University, Long Beach

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Committee Members:

William Mohr, Ph.D. (Chair)
Patricia Seyburn-Little, Ph.D.
George Hart, Ph.D.

College Designee:

Amy Bippus, Ph.D.

By Anthony J. Urquidi

B.A., 2010, University of California, Los Angeles

May 2015

UMI Number: 1586523

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI 1586523

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This collection is dedicated to everyone we have lost, especially the subjects of these *Condolences* and forthcoming laments. While proofreading this project, I learned that an old friend elected to exit this plane of being; she now joins the realm of the elegized, to carry on this collection's sentiment. While I am still struggling to process her decision, it only underscores the seriousness of these poems and their humble intent to honor and remember. I am not sure what else can be done.

I am grateful to many for the completion of this step in my project's life: to Diana, my family, and Diana's family, for all the support and inspiration; to my thesis committee and trusted advisers, Dr. William Mohr, Dr. Patty Seyburn, and Dr. George Hart, and to Dr. Charles H. Webb, for shaping the methodology and a handful of these poems in their earlier stages; to my other Cal State Long Beach professors, who introduced incredible new texts to my brain; to Prof. Brian Kim Stefans at UCLA for helping ease the pain of leaving and returning to academic life; to Professors Stephen Yenser and Reed Wilson at UCLA for their creative molding of my early work; to my fellow creators of *American Mustard* journal, Marcus, David, and Olivier, as well as all the talented, insightful writers in the M.F.A. program with me these two years; and finally, to my society of UCLA poets, who continue to floor me with their brilliant ideas and brave invention, and to my New York comrades for their unending encouragement to keep writing for them, for myself and for the wonderfully uninitiated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. A NON-PRESCRIPTIVE RUBRIC FOR OUR POEMS.....	5
3. CONCLUSION.....	17
APPENDIX: CONDOLENCES TO ALL OF YOU: LATE EULOGIES OF A HALF-COMPLACENT BIRTHDAY BOY	18
WORKS CITED	79

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Permanent things, or things forever renewed, like the grass
and human passions, are the material for poetry; and
whoever speaks across the gap of a thousand years will
understand that he has to speak of permanent things, and
rather clearly too, or who would hear him?

— Robinson Jeffers

While Jeffers’s concern regarding writing millennia-lasting poems resonates just as heavily with my own sensibilities, I have convinced myself that this pseudo-immortality is not a goal I can actively, measurably pursue. I hope that the durable, ephemeral things that interest me will still sit well with an audience in the distant future, but I am too consumed with producing a prolific body of constantly outpouring work to stop and question whether the poetry I produce is good enough for all my descendants (besides when reflecting in this very sentence)—and these two foci appear to be mutually exclusive.

The proliferation of innumerable contemporary movements in poetry is a boon to the art, I find, rather than an indication of the impending collapse of the fabric of language’s aesthetic exploration; indeed, I am excited to continue the dialog with the great galaxy of artists drawn from Gioia, Mason, and Schoerke’s essay collection *Twentieth-Century American Poetics*. Within these pages Donald Hall complains about contemporary poets: “we play records all night and write unambitious poems” (301); Timothy Steele mourns the loss of traditionalism and lauds the unified formal voice of

pre-twentieth-century poets: “If poetry is to retain its vitality into the new millennium, poets will have to recover the metrical tradition and to restore the age-old dialectic between prosodic rule and individual expression” (431); and Mary Kinzie denounces our poetry’s reach for emotional climax, lamenting in her oversimplifying despair that “Contemporary poetry suffers from dryness, prosaism, and imaginative commonplace, but these are hardly its worst features” (387). These highfalutin warhawks, leading the charge against the progressive mitosis of poetic arts, fail to grasp a basic understanding of any period’s contemporary moment—a present moment instantly become past, which forges an ever-enlarging distance between the admirable masterpieces of antiquity and their relevance to future eras of expanded technical evolution.

A poet should not dwell on the achievements of the past, especially the achievements of others from five hundred years ago. Ezra Pound claims that “No good poetry is ever written in a manner twenty years old, for to write in such a manner shows conclusively that the writer thinks from books, convention and *cliché*, and not from life...” (68), though he goes on to paradoxically suggest reworking the classics as a means to personal poetic fulfillment. His first statement makes sense in its reproach of bogging oneself down in the already-done, but his apologetic reach for the mimetic reenactment of the obsolete can only lead to transcribed ennui, the danger of not saying anything worth saying. Canonized works should be read, understood, appreciated, and then separated from our modern inspiration. The only way to produce compelling and relevant contemporary works is to focus on the study of future works we have not yet created, which we uncover by gluttonously consuming all that has been written. The literature, geometry, spirituality, stiff-mannered rationalization and vain pride of

ethnocentric writing from the Neolithic Period to the 1890s are not corpses in need of revival; in fact, as Theodor Adorno famously proffered, these classics diagrammed a Western line of thinking that engendered the historical horrors of the twentieth century, with traces still radically influencing the ongoing conflicts of the twenty-first.

I believe that no self-valuing artists, including myself, should latch solely onto this marginalizing past, nor should artists intend to back themselves into the corner of a particular style, as categorization is a task reserved for intellectuals, essentialists, canonizers, and elitists. My own aesthetic embodies a heterogeneity of canonical vision—my goal is to adapt the *intentions* of as many different styles as possible, beginning chronologically with those of High Modernism through Conceptual Poetry, then splice them and extend them experimentally and appropriately, all while harnessing the afflatus that fueled their most prolific work.

Hart Crane suggests a poet must “have a sufficiently universal basis of experience to make his imagination selective and valuable” (125). In doing so, he presupposes a standard form of existence which he alone truly experiences on behalf of an ethnocentric mindset. In his belief that his poems (*The Bridge*, for example) of the “mystical synthesis of ‘America’” and his concocted mythologies speak on behalf of universal human experience, his glorification of the systematic cleansing of native inhabitants to build his idealized nation becomes complexly arrogant and problematic. My poems aim to combat this racist tunnel vision by being subtle in their egotistical arrogance, by embracing cosmopolitan dialogue as they thrive in American poetry’s lack of utilitarian applications.

To combat the trend of unchecked privilege of vision among the English language’s powerful white avant-garde poets, which even occurs in a handful of today’s

conceptual poetry, I propose in my work never to offer explicit preference to any worldview, but rather a collection of numerous angles. Barbara Guest, in "Radical Poetics and Conservative Poetry," notes the imagination's ability to disguise itself in challenged accessibility: "One of the implicit properties of imagination is that it resists clear and absolute meaning. If unrestricted[,] we are welcomed into an activity that guides us into the realm of the self, the oneself where creativity breathes" (16). I condition my poems in a manner that provides no easy direction to their meanings or technical intentions, while simultaneously critiquing their roles as egocentric artifacts of my holier-than-thou ideas (similar to the theories of the venerable Language Poets, though I hope my work can be slightly more accessible). My inherent mistrust of systems constructed by the hubris-laden human race, which includes a mistrust of poetic forms (my own and anyone else's) or at least a critical questioning of my poetry's aims, colors much of my recent work. At the same time, poetry should not force itself to forever play the noble figure questing for universal welfare and social justice, as more can be accomplished politically in the field than waningly on the poet's page (I have considered undertaking a devotion to thorough, physically engulfing activism but dread sacrificing the poetry at this time). Occasionally—and for many poets, most of the time—poems can merely exist as self-expressive or self-directed pleasures of their author's imagination, without seeking to become the greatest poem of our time. To merely transcribe the poet's internal moment is enough to bridge that connection with at least a few other interested readers.

CHAPTER 2

A NON-PRESCRIPTIVE RUBRIC FOR OUR POEMS

Most of the time, I write poems dependent entirely on imagination's greed, poems that I want to read but have not been able to discover written by anyone else: these poems either emerge from inspired visions that seem channeled from another plane to my hand, or as unapologetic constructs of pre- or post-production in which I have invested extended periods of time and exhaustive mental effort to polish. The rationalized arrangement of a poem can be just as creative as the wild imagination of the unchecked Surrealists—as Barbara Guest reassuringly puts it, “imagination has its orderly zones. It is not always the great tumultuous sea on which we view a small boat. It can lie behind hedges, hide in boxes, even suffer the touch of exile in a world subsisting on invention” (15). Order often governs my poetic imagination as an obsessive tic imposing constraints of arrangement, inventing visual and sonic positions to manage thought-chaos.

For the rest of the time, I write poems that I feel are important responses to historical/current events within my world, or that seek to cope with instances of injustice or suffering in some poetic form of understanding and grief (which in today's climate, admittedly, may not contribute much assistance on their own, other than by making me selfishly feel better).

Specifically, I have adhered to several devices for production of most of my poetic output:

1. The discovery of techniques in others' work transforms their methods into applications for my own superstructural aims—for example: moved by the musical repetition of Koch's "Sleeping with Women," I began to focus on minor experiments of musical refrain in my (far shorter) poetry, but without defining these poems merely by their repetitive gimmick (my recent unpublished/unfinished poem titled "Anti-Ode to Formative Cities" demonstrates this mythological refrain by repeating and rhyming the names of the two cities). Another case of my appropriating inspired techniques occurred while reading Charles Simic's *New & Selected Poems*, as my poems began to adopt a surreal, fable-like rhetorical tone which I understood to be emanating from a place near where Simic derives his own poetic voice (see my poems: "Keeper of the Lock," "Scene within the CPA's Window").

2. An awareness of, not a strict adherence to, established metrical feet—sometimes as meter creeps subconsciously into my poem (the double spondaic "chair, hair tips singed" in "The Offendant," the metrical rolling of "with two pressed firmly against five's back" in "Dear 2013"), it can be expounded upon or disrupted during further edits, always with an ear to the pulse of the sentence and the amount of breath I can hold while speaking a line (not very much breath since my bout with bronchitis a few years ago).

3. Enjambment is not an end-stop, and left alignment is a coffin nail—my poetry is built around white space, neither for measure as in William Carlos Williams's "Field of Action" nor for the projective timing devised by Charles Olson, but rather for aesthetic differentiation of phrases and isolation of interesting fragments from the rest of their line. The words must be presented as a visually engaging art. The end of my line continues in

the same breath on the next line if there are no punctuating caesurae. A poem exclusively hugging either margin, turned on its side, resembles flat earth over a recently covered grave—a poem is thus vivified by hopping back and forth across the page, with or without method to the spacing disturbance. If there is a method, it can usually be described as either a physical map imitating the course of spatial movement in the narrative of the poem (see poems: “The Hermitage, The Fixture,” “The Unit by Which I Measure My Numbing”), or metaphysically as the map of consciousness’s progression between and among its own spatial and lyric ideas (“Secure,” “A Way to Hear It”). Concrete poetry can exemplify this tenet, as well as CA Conrad’s more recent (Soma)tic Poetry Exercises and *The Book of Frank*.

4. Dreams are desirable material; the weirdest combinations of the weird purify poetry—originality stems from the production of any bizarre, refreshingly disorienting, previously unheard elements, and makes what could have been stale ideas into the most memorable and defamiliarizing features of a work. I trust random-sounding, imaginative linguistic combinations: Ginsberg’s “angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night” (“Howl”), or Simic’s tense explication of the claw-like “Fork.” The latter poet notes that “Grammar moves in time. Only figurative language can hope to grasp the simultaneity of experience” (346). I interpret this to mean the quasi-surreal and nonsensical are as equally ideal for a poem as a realist anecdote, since they all capture the effervescent logic and irrational embellishment of the brain’s expanding synapse-territorialization during any given subconscious thought stream.

For example, the full conceit of my poem, “Secure,” begins with a simple ethereal vision:

 this morning I stood
 on the balcony to watch
 a man walk his dog, a glowing
 man with a billion
 golden leashes
 emanating—

The visionary nature of the poem, the mythological image of a dog-walker’s leashes connecting every particle of existence to himself, his dog, a parrot, and the speaker, offers a calm-but-euphoric strangeness. Even if the unrealistic idea borders on Surrealism, it is fairly straightforward in its transformation of ecological interconnectedness into suburban sublimity, and just as refreshing. “The Poets Dream,” based on an actual dream I experienced the night after a poetry reading, recalls the eccentricity associated with logic and behavior in latent dreaming. As the poem’s manifest dream tries to piece itself together, a poet at the dream party exclaims about cookies, “What’s these really/are? Dainty Scorpios crumblin’!” in an act of legitimate ephemeral nonsense. The poem follows the adventures of the dreamed poets as they jump from balconies but fail to land, plummet into wells to build cottages within, and skip down the middle of the “fictionists’ freeway,” in a heroic manner that makes sense only through literary dream logic.

5. Rhyme acceptability varies with voice—obvious end rhymes in serious poems have been exhausted. To get away with rhymes in the 2000s they must be submerged internally within subtle vowel/consonant clusters or at least exist within parts of the line where they do not distract so much as at the line’s end (both distracting and subtle rhyme connections can be found throughout “The Waters Recede, the Gates Consumed by Fire”)—unless the poem is intentionally playful, satirical, overstating, or ironic (see

found poem: “Famous Last Words,” or Sonnet 12: “Every Creeping Thing that Creepeth upon the Earth”), in which case simple or ridiculous end rhymes can garnish the jokes of the poem.

6. Following the notions of step 5, humor is ideal—it is easy to write a poem about the terrible phenomena of human living, but cruel to the reader not to dilute overbearing tragedy with punch lines, non sequiturs, or at least childish wordplay. John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and Beat poets frequently stimulate intellectual pleasure centers using this device; I too have worked it into most of my poems (slapstick actions and “bumptious homunculus prick” name-calling in “Keeper of the Lock,” situational irony in the metapoetic event sequence of “The Poets Dream”), even the darker ones thematically (fallacious causality of “I guess I’ve been in love so long/it’s starting to stretch out my clothes” in “*How is your week?*,” pubescent observations and locker room Oedipal allusions in “Impurity of Sword and Scabbard”).

7. Recycling, recombining, erasing, and *repurposing* (with credit to the source) make something defunct or unpoetic new—as hip-hop and industrial musicians have built an art out of incorporating samples, so have conceptual poets for the last 200 years. My poem “Gods of Silver, Gods of Gold” recreates chance-selected Bible passages and recombines them with actual phrases from my kitchen’s food packages. I outlined a poetic device for documenting and rearranging every word on Chipotle restaurant products into wordplay poems reminiscent of E.E. Cummings’s well-known work. These games move a rearranging step beyond intentionally disinterested found poetry, so I dub mine *repurposing acts*: they render randomly discovered language into a newly perceivable and sometimes hilariously gelatinous language that calls attention to the lack

of boundaries defining the medium. They can be read as experiments of defamiliarized marketing language as well as pastiche/parodies of Language poetry.

Academic writing can be repurposed as well, as I have done (see poem: “I’ll eat my spare tire, rim and all”) by whiting out my classmate’s photocopied handout about the life of Raymond Chandler and his novel, *Farewell, My Lovely*. Another example: I compiled (“Famous Last Words”) some of my favorite phrases uttered by historical figures, philosophers, celebrities, gangsters, and death row inmates in their final throes—though they are not my words, the shifting enjambment and conjoined responses I have encoded into their arrangement create an ectoplasmic ether of feverish conversation, reaching forth from the literary afterlife. These tools of play form just a few ways to adapt Pound’s slogan, “make it new,” to our time.

8. The lengthier the poem, the more instances for sublimity—whether a longer poem (in this poetic climate, anything longer than two pages) consists of an extended narrative or a sequence of varying sections, it provides the reader with more opportunities to find moments of understanding, or multiple possible points of entry into the poem. Some of my repurposed poems (see: “Famous Last Words,” “Gods of Silver, Gods of Gold”) stretch on for three or four pages—which sounds like too much for the running gag/sublime truth to remain attention-grabbing, but I find that length to be perfect for exploring the subject exhaustively and to the maximum effect of its not-yet-cringeworthy factor. In the case of poems written in my own words—“Dobbins in October,” for example—the span of time taken to develop the setting, characters, tone, and action matches closely the dreamlike sense of time that my thoughts understood the events inspiring the poem.

Other long poems I have recently assembled stem from seven or eight one-page poems of a certain contemporaneous writing period of mine, all with a similar tone but not strong enough to stand on their own after a few years, stitched together into Roman numeral sections as a more complete, cubist look at my lyric mind during that time (“The Profiler’s Journal” in *American Mustard*, Second Volume). Some long poems I worship arrived to me via Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Koch, John Ashbery, Frank O’Hara, and even entire book-length sequences like those of Gertrude Stein, Barbara Guest, and Harryette Mullen.

9. The poem is a diplomat of the period that writes it—using vernacular trends and dramatic monologue, the imagination can reconfigure common language into an informal masterpiece. Robert Frost, whose poetic use of language is often clearly indicative of his interest in local dialect, potentially realizes Jeffers’s aim of timelessness while recreating a voice native to his region and historical moment, condensing themes of lasting relevance into a plainspoken construction that connects with any generation’s psyches. He notes the musicality of everyday speech: “The best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind a door that cuts off the words” (10). The melody of informal, regional and contemporarily periodized dialect known to the poet breeds exactly the metricality Tim Steele does not notice in our era’s poetry—it permeates revolutionary work in any movement, an immanence unfavorably indicted by Steele’s “Tradition and Revolution: The Modern Movement and Free Verse.” In my work, certain persona monologues aim to capture this plain-language metricality in voices that my peers and myself have actually used (“*How is your week?*,” “A Birthday Feeling,” “The Evolution of the Ethical Decision”).

Whiteout poems such as my own (“I’ll eat my spare tire, rim and all”) hearken back to Frost’s sensation of hearing the language’s musical cadences without the clear meaning of the words getting in the way—the absence of linking clauses and ideas in these erasures even tackles the representation of redaction in our C.I.A. cover-up atmosphere, the epoch of the paper shredder. With whistleblowers such as Edward Snowden detailing (or merely reminding us of) the amount of clandestine data exchange and government espionage that occurs beneath the skin of American life, it is hard not to view the erasure poem as characteristic of this dynamic—the eviscerated meaning we are presented with versus the complete structure of knowledge sheared away. The new confusing and tensile meaning is often more interesting merely in its camouflaging premise. Flarf—the search-engine-generated technique of allowing machines to write one’s poems, once hinted at by Jonathan Swift—as well as random word generators, repurposing acts, and digital poetics demonstrate similarly unique writing methods for our historical period, at least among the world’s current technologically progressive nations.

10. Childhood, landscape, and ecology, in my case, are instantly inspiring subjects (not to mention their relationships to death, my most investigated topic)—because of their innocent distance from societal ego constructs and from the matured, writing human mind that can never actually comprehend the workings of these subjects, their global relevance presents an unsolvable riddle for inconclusive and constructive examination by any follower of Keats’s “negative capability.” Some poems depicting childhood or an adolescent mindset include my abecedarian “We Don’t Go to Ravenholm...”—which transforms video game imagery into an analysis of teenage

romantic failings—and “Oracular Persecution,” which details a boy’s rise from bullied brother to backyard litter prophet. Writing in a child’s voice can be deeply affecting, as we have all had a chance to experience emotions processed through developing child-minds.

My ecological poems explore different levels of interspecies grief and togetherness—from the uncaring banana slug landscapes witnessing “the human-named tragedy of afternoon” (“Their Vigil”) to the mass poisoning of Utah livestock by the U.S. government (“Six thousand sleeping children sprinkle the desert/like Sinai”—“For the Farmers of Dugway Sheep Kill”) to the interconnectedness of every single being “from his immortal skin/to every proton in the universe” (“Secure”), these pieces hint at humanity’s complicated relationship with its interchangeable subatomic particles. Poems such as “The Evolution of the Ethical Decision” forgo my usual flowery language for a vocalized construction of several personas (almost childlike in their impaired sense of responsibility) as they lean toward various levels of inaction—“I didn’t cause it so I don’t have to fix it. I’ll grow used to it over time”—even in the face of blatant evidence indicating immediate peril and catastrophic climate change.

11. The poet is in charge of memorializing the specifics otherwise unknown to the world—whether they are obscure streets and schoolyards of adolescence (see poem: “The Proliferation of Norms”), the brand of a favorite gas station drink (“Dobbins in October”), or the names and adventures of forgotten friends (“The Unit by Which I Measure My Numbing,” “Dear 2013,” “A Birthday Feeling”), the poem exists for the author to develop and remember these relics, giving them the credit or punishment their interaction with the poet’s life deserves—no matter whether the content is fictional or

hyperbolic. Pound commands the poet to “Go in fear of abstractions” (64), though without wholly condemning their presence. Abstraction should be earned through understanding; the reader should find it smothering beneath pillows of specificity.

12. Juxtaposition kills boredom—alienated, humorous, dissociated and morbid tones can arise from pairing dissimilar lines and voices, ideally provoking an intense collage of thought if the reader consents. If content appears dry upon editing, a carefully considered fruitful juxtaposition can instantly revive the dying poem. To achieve these combinations I sometimes translate a poem from an unfamiliar language; by finding the nearest English homophones for non-English words, every other word takes quite a jarring twist. Beat, New York School, and surrealist poets subscribe to the mantra of juxtaposition.

13. (or 12 Part B.) A single word or phrase is as heavy as a sentence—I sometimes work in a *phrase matrix* which isolates in columns anything from pairs of words to blocks of deadpan phrases, forcing the reader to make connections between unclear ideas without forced meaning. Whiting out other texts (see my Raymond Chandler handout poem, “I’ll eat my spare tire, rim and all”) can produce this sort of delinked abnormal phrasing. Clichés and unnecessary blabbering in one’s own obsolete, underdeveloped poem (or even in someone else’s poems) can be excised to a set number of usable words per line, and arranged into one of these matrices. The unintelligible nature of the results produces an almost *zazen*-like trance and even unintended literary *satori*, as in my personal experience with many strange works by Clark Coolidge, such as *The So or Polaroid*.

14. Efficiency derives from challenging the audience—if a reader can immediately glean exactly what the poet intends, then, in many cases, they have both failed. When I have been able to create, after much time and analysis, plausible meanings from difficult, elliptical poems by Wallace Stevens, Barbara Guest, or Ashbery, I bore witness to sensations of earned psychological triumph and fulfillment. When I develop seemingly inaccessible puzzles within my own work (see poems: “The Offendant,” “Late Eulogy for Uncle Jimbo,” “Scene within the CPA’s Window”), the riddles guarantee that the committed consumer will feel wiser and more accomplished than their poet at the moment they find the exact code to unlock the written.

15. Above all, let imagination write the poem—imagination observes the squirrels in the square, the unconscious recalls interactions with the old man at Burger King, the id seizes and reassembles the poetry on the side of a cereal box. Chance poetry is determined readable by its assembler’s imagination, the same as any words transcribed from the back of the mind for writing on a page—Charles Simic reminds us of this in his essay “Negative Capability and Its Children.” Barbara Guest cautions against allowing chance-conceived words to flail about without the handprint of one’s imagination to cement them: “There is no substitute for imagination. Words deprived of their stability—that is if not fed by the imagination—rush around attempting to attach themselves to a surface. They have no stabilized vocation; they become furtive, ready to sell themselves” (16). The chance-fueled imagination placed the gnome inside my deadbolt (see poem: “Keeper of the Lock”), the pantyhose-masked man in my hot air balloon (“*How is your week?*”) and the poet’s cottage in my dream’s well (“The Poets Dream”). Stream-of-consciousness and automatic writing showcase extreme feats of

imagination, though many of these exercises would benefit from cautious post-production torquing.

Examples of non-imagination include any poems that give the reader a gut feeling of inauthenticity, by not attempting any risks that might potentially characterize the author's presence in the world. Non-imagination can describe found poems with no sense of play, or with no personality attached to the gimmick's arrangement. Unimaginatively constructed poetry can also be homemade, if it is obvious, mediocre, and unnerving, with the errors' detection difficult to explain. These heartless constructions are recognizable when encountered but their falseness appears simultaneously formulaic and irreproducible for an innocent writer of decent conviction.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

These guidelines outline my style, but do not command their rule as superior before any neighboring contemporary manifesto. The poetic expansion of our time is inspirational because so many possible directions are available for consumption, while infinitely more await discovery by our generation and the next. I find it most helpful in writing to constantly consider my position in exploring the aesthetics, musically and metaphysically, of language, while reminding myself that spending the time to craft these poems means lending my toil to a self-centered art(ifice). Each time I take that into account, I liberate myself to try any new technique or conceit within a poem, without forgetting the text's connection to the real world that truly forms the basis for its subjects and imaginary playgrounds.

APPENDIX

CONDOLENCES TO ALL OF YOU: LATE EULOGIES OF A HALF-COMPLACENT
BIRTHDAY BOY

But is the earth as full as life was full, of them?

—Frank O’Hara

APPENDIX CONTENTS

	Page
Famous Last Words	20
The Unit by Which I Measure My Numbing.....	23
Their Vigil	25
The Offendant	26
Old Cabin of Summers.....	27
“How is your week?”	28
Trikeratos	30
The Waters Recede, the Gates Consumed with Fire.....	31
Keeper of the Lock.....	35
Impurity of Sword and Scabbard	36
A Birthday Feeling.....	38
For The Farmers Of Dugway Sheep Kill.....	39
Oracular Persecution.....	40
The Proliferation of Norms.....	41
Sonnet 12: <i>Every Creeping Thing That Creepeth Upon The Earth</i>	42
“We Don’t Go to Ravenholm...”	43
“I’ll eat my spare tire, rim and all”	44
a clean, well-lighted tropic.....	46
Gods of Silver, Gods of Gold	48
The Poets Dream	52
The Evolution of the Ethical Decision.....	54
Dobbins in October	56
Late Eulogy for Uncle Jimbo.....	60
condolences to all of you	63
A Way to Hear It (February 26, 2014-)	65
Healed Hawks	67
The Hermitage, the Fixture.....	69
The Projections	70
Eulogy for a Local Poet	71
Scene within the CPA’s Window	72
Dear 2013,	73
None will vanish. Many will appear.....	75
Secure	76

Famous Last Words

—*Appropriated from the recently dead*

Only the sky and the green grass
go on forever, and today
is a good day to die. *As the ocean*

*always returns to itself, love always
returns to itself. So does consciousness,
always returns to itself. And I do so*

*with love on my lips. Help! God
damn you! Monks! Monks!
Monks! Water. More milk. Try LSD,*

*100 mm intramuscular. Van Halen!
Now we can cross the Shifting
Sands. And I'm giving you the simple*

answer. Yes. Yes. Yes. I never intended
to die in here. *I don't want to die. Please
don't let me die.* Do not disturb my circles.

I want to be left in peace. I have long had
the taste of death on my tongue, I smell
death, and who will stand by my Constanze,

*if you do not stay? I am not the least afraid
of death; remember what a good wife you have
been to me. Tell all my children to remember*

how good they have been to me...
for her life will be so much happier
without me. I LOVE YOU. I LOVE YOU

...love one another. I ran my race.
There's no more left in me. *If you don't
like it, you can fuck off!* After Russia

I loved you more than anything else
in the world. Serve Russia. *Don't shoot.
What did I do to you? Shoot me in the chest!*

*I'm an African warrior, born to breathe,
and born to die. You can be a king
or a street sweeper, but everybody dances*

*with the Grim Reaper. We're not here
for a social event, we're here for a killing.
It's very beautiful over there. I can't see*

*a damn thing. Oh, Lord, my God, is there
no help for the widow's son? Hell no.
I came here to die, not to make a speech.*

*That was a great game of golf, fellas.
I'm bored with it all. This dying is boring.
Jakie, is it my birthday or am I dying?*

*Pardon me sir, I meant not to do it. I pardon
those who have occasioned my death;
and I pray to God that the blood you are*

*going to shed may never be visited on France.
That guy's gotta stop, he'll see us. Pity, pity!
Too late! I have a terrific headache. God's*

*wounds! The villain hath killed me.
This is my end. This is the last of Earth.
I am content. The nourishment is palatable.*

*Come on, open the soap duckets. The chimney
sweeps. Talk to the sword. Shut up, you got
a big mouth! French-Canadian bean soup.*

*I want to pay. Let them leave me alone. Nothing
more than a change of mind, my dear.
I always talk better lying down. I think*

*I'll be more comfortable. I hope to meet you
all in Heaven. Be good children, all of you,
and strive to be ready when the change comes.*

*Yes, I am. Yes. I have the right to do what
I want. We're powerless now! To Jesus Christ
I commend my soul; Lord Jesu receive my soul.*

I bear witness that there is no god but God
and I testify that Mohammed... *kick the tires
and light the fire. I'm going home to see my son*

*and my mom. Go home, have fun, smile. I'm happy.
Why should I lie now? I have no anger. I have no fear.
I'm ready to be released. Release me. It is better*

to perish here than to kill all these poor beans.
*Don't worry, they usually don't swim backwards.
That's good. Go on. Read some more. Let's do it.*

Farewell my friends, the truths I taught hold fast.
*We didn't commit suicide, we committed an act
of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions*

*of an inhumane world. One last drink, please.
Surprise me. It doesn't really matter. Ben,
make sure you play 'Take My Hand, Precious*

*Lord' in the meeting tonight. Play it real pretty.
Relax—this won't hurt. At this very moment,
I wish I were dead. I just can't cope anymore.*

I am a broken piece of machinery. When the machine
is broken, I am ready. *Please put out the light.* Please
tell the media, I did not get my Spaghetti-O's, I got

spaghetti. I want the press to know. *My last words
will be, 'Hoka hey, it's a good day to die.'*
Thank you very much. I love you all. Goodbye.

The Unit by Which I Measure My Numbing

I had known Adam for a mere year
and a half when I bought that 95
Chevy conversion van, condensed
into it my Brooklyn single unit
and memorized the map
of my return to California.

He said “I’m having trouble picturing
this pitiful city without you in it.”
“Pretend I was never here,”
the way it always should have been.

On a Saturday afternoon my tires
started to carve the continent
while he and his band tossed pies at work—
no exchange of handshake or hug
or grunt of profound parting.

The summer of “Somebody
That I Used to Know”—inescapable—
the pizza hipsters couldn’t help
but squeeze me into the bleating chorus.

Add one year, one half—I put
my best friend to sleep, found homes
for my words, learned
that girls refuse to touch
the seat when they pee. Two-thirds
of a pigeon pools on my sidewalk

like the one I found in Brooklyn
and I wonder if it could’ve predicted
its fate a year and a half back. The chapel
clock strikes tomorrow as I jog
Highway One past a moped
overturned—its tire treads

shank me with midnight squint below
a blue-clad duo of bloodied EMTs
who wear the pale expressions
of “still in training.” They scrape
adrenalized neurons from the right

turn lane, inscribe their moment
via clipboard, lock the door
of an ambulance in no hurry to cross
the street to the hospital and cross their fingers
they'll grow used to the cleanup

after a spell. Marriages begin
and regimes retract—mother's
heirloom necklace disappears
through the smashed bedroom window—
famous poets exhaust their supplies

of sunset metaphors. In one point five
years I might find a female's toenail
clipping incidentally wedged
in my notebook binding.
In one point five years I might fly
to New York to visit Adam and the band

while hauling the baggage of an age
I urged them to forget. Maybe
I'll wake in a sinkhole wearing
my apartment for a blanket—maybe

flipping through the old folders arbitrarily,
I'll be struck again to think another
five eighty two suns have made
whoopie with the far side of the Pacific

O and how like a vigorous, decrepit
van across the bayou, the plains,
the red Southern Rockies my heart
keeps pressing westward—
moving forward—moving on—

Their Vigil

The soil-mist afternoon of an unclear trail
in Henry Cowell State Park
marks a moist mosaic floor
of redwood needles and leaves of eucalyptus.

Long yellow crescents caught in fibers
of midair dew swing at chest-level,
marionette smiles, frowns.

Down in the riparian ravine, a circle

of children in parkas gather on the shore
around their chaperone's still body,
which moments before was a body
locomotive with laughing students

on the elevated trail. Long yellow crescents
sink on their strings and they are not eucalyptus
leaves but iridescent candles in a sylvan vigil,
and they are not candles but concerned slug

citizens lowering slime ropes to view the human-
named tragedy of afternoon, and they are not
concerned but equable human-named banana
slugs suspended from redwoods who would

regardless of any presence of humans
descend from these redwoods on fibers of dew.

The Offendant

Fleas tucked the offender
 into his bunk. They dared
not drink for his skin
 was immortal. On the final
morning he unstrapped
 himself from the electric
chair, hair tips singed.

 Brass knobs in proximity
crackled. A skylight's half
 moon cared not what he'd done,
though its path-tracing glow
 was not quite forgiveness.
He stalked the green hallways
 and gutted "the lot of 'em."

His nascent sects would later say
 he did what he had to, though
glow of recounted attention does
 not quite equal forgiveness.
Photon receptors of his aching
 deeds detect the reading
of these words about them.

 Behold the mad's contradiction!
unfixable by human weakness.
 He's building a history's
nest in the ritual hills
 of resurgent discussion.
These very words hate that
 they've kept him alive.

Old Cabin Of Summers

Elongate webs descend
 from umbrella hem to glass
 garden table edge and you
 subtly desire to climb them

 shrunk, to summon by wire
 their delicate host. The woven
shirt spiked by screws and splinters
 squints white flecks beneath time's crust

 of mud, jostling in timberline wind
an oak-iron chair. Just last August
 you perched here, abandoned

 the rag in sight of parched hills
 blessed with thieves sufficient
to discipline in tatters.

“How is your week?”

well, so far
my week has shimmered like a glass shard
stuck stabbing the surface
of a Swedish ice lake

some old man
waved from a hot air balloon and I thought
he was wearing my face like pantyhose

my girl and I carried a couch upstairs and broke
it in, not the naughty way
you're thinking of, then ate pizza
and peppers till bile trickled from nostrils and no one
cared in the wine-tinged dust of a thin-curtained sundown

what did she say to me
on Tuesday, something like “should
we always be these little kids?”

but isn't that the best place to be?
when I examine the circuitry of adulthood
I throw my notes on the floor and storm
outside to kick a fencepost

if we don't think of our parents' pained
aging we can focus on the elated
destitution of our own naïve humanism

if we don't think about my step-cousin's
metastasized lymph nodes at twenty-eight
we don't have to think about the things
we don't think about until they happen
or children who'll grow up with a lone aching father

no, I want to be positive so I won't
drift to that, anyway Zurich published my book,
the electricity was only seven dollars
this month and I cut hubris from my diet
so my gastrobutterfly condition has never felt better

I guess I've been in love for so long
it's starting to stretch out my clothes

some girl on the bus carried a violet
binder with a cover painting of two speckled whale
sharks floating in blue ether with smaller fish
suspended from their big white bellies,
which didn't seem to affect the sharks
one way or another
and that's how I feel this week, obese and in love,
endorphins buzzing, so nice of you to ask

Trikeratos

All the time now she desires
to be alone, her smile's fist
sharpened heartward: an icicle
forming on Triceratops'
beak.

When meteors descend
across the daybreak bed,
craters' brick mantels lie bruised
below the charred and mounted

horns of her monastic forehead,
three Prussian sabers to express
the swelling danger of being
resurrected and forgotten.

⁶ *Speak for yourself* v. “*The God of heaven,
he will prosper us; therefore we
his servants will arise and build*” 1991.^{ix}

⁷ Treasure map
subterranean trunk^x
Sierra Lode Trail
forty paces west
six-mile mark^{xi}
Robinson Canyon Road

ⁱ We sped past McDonald's that night
while lightning struck the road ahead.
The children feared the car would
turn conductor, but Mother drove
on calmly into the thundercloud,
through death-crackle, safely home.

ⁱⁱ A burley fellow with Polynesian
walking stick, I've seen his golf cart
before—by the lake in midsummer.
He waves hello with a soft voice
melting snow over branches, points
to the crunching doe across the ridge.^Z

ⁱⁱⁱ As history is rather large and partial
the Norton Anthology compiles most
extra-contextual important fragments.
We were assigned *The Fairie Queen*
and *Oroonoko*; I can't recall a dot
of plot for I was the king's cupbearer.^S

^{iv} A poisoned child, shores of Ohio,
poisoned the kiddies of Pontchartrain.
Poisoning children on banks of the Nile
to poison the child of the Mediterrain.
A poisoned child whose mother will cry, *oh!*
another aloft for His Kingdom to gain!^Q

^v The horse legs buckle under high
pressure air cartridge to the temple.
Two lamb rows drain blood from throat
slits, then lop heads and skin. Pigs
grumble into the gas showers. Barfing
teens champion veganism for a week.^M

- vi Neither positive nor negative, rather,
mere color of paper, but connotation:
construct of black fear, spotless white.
The valley day passes, night same, and in
between. Each duration of sky ill-suits
compartments, surges in place in time.^L
- vii How could a father withhold respect
from one child, favor the gifts of the other?
When the baby is born, the elder desires
to squash it in bathwater. This occurs
globally, though not to squirrels, snakes,
fish, or finches, the justified in fear.^J
- viii We sped past Goleta that night
as CHP blocked the highway ahead.
The children feared the tunnel would
collapse. Trapdoor spiders. I drove
on calmly northbound into the earth-
quake, through fake stone, sanely home.
- ix The Towers intercept mothership signals:
remember bottles shattered in gutters,
overturned cruisers, temporarily inconvenienced
Korean convenience stores. Role model update.
Every ten minutes the train stops in Watts
where burrowed disquiet shatters, shatters.
- x Since the adolescence of an uncle died
the chest sat sealed by wooded bedside.
Inside might have been Han Solo,
Millenium Falcon, R2 and Greedo,
or Garfield plush with plastic eyes,
sealed by the mother in spring '85.^H
- xi The distance from city limit to city
limit, six miles, from one edge
of the village to the wall of the next.
The childhood homestead view
of vultures in eucalyptus, viewed
by voyeurs in the shower afternoon.^D

Z grizzly bear/turtle hole/fire road/bridge
S ruined home/Nehemiah/self-addressed/prayer⁺
Q Mother Goose/apocrypha/diary/stain
M carnival/slaughterhouse/ribosome/chic
L discipline/marginal/metalworks/rhyme
J Jupiter/paradise/son of a/tear
H medical/Spanish Bay/calico/writhe
D butternut/Monterey/octopus/strewn

⁺ The Fires
Recede, the Gates
Consumed with Water

Keeper of the Lock

I've come to detest
the gnome in the deadbolt,
grown bored with my intrusive
hole-fiddling. He wants

my lover inside the room
to himself. *Bring me new*
teeth or you will never see her
suckling face again. He severs

the key at its central tendon.
"I'll return with the locksmith!
You won't like what I let
him do to your home!"

But at that the gnome laughs,
fastens one more clasp and spits
brass shavings in my prying
eye, the bumptious homunculus prick.

Impurity of Sword and Scabbard

insecurity climbed the rope
to the roof of the gym

I gripped it as though
it were the abdomen
of the world's stiffest centipede

Rex squeezed Jason's nipple
to procure a slow discharge,
after that I questioned everything
I learned about a body

the showers grew in black-lined
and pubic-hooked to fill out the room
of voice-sized lockers

Rex said he'd thought about killing
his mom, and as he spoke a spear
flamed under his zipper

on the walk home from Fridays
I saw cars with no drivers, but in hindsight
I recall the front seats' upholstered
heads in one another's crotch
while the stick shift
throbbled between them

Jason punted endocrine volleyballs
over the music hall into the staff
parking lot, fully populating

Coach's convertible

Coach, red-faced Mauna Loa,
burst a lobe slamming our throats
in lockers, balding instantly
when his cherished son's
photo fell from his short-shorts' pocket
into a wet jock strap

I ran to the ladies' side
for safety but was verbally ejected
and felt charges pressing
their warmth against my inner thigh

on the walk home from Fridays
girls congealed eight-wide
into clusters, making sure to stay
four homes behind me

I could hear them giggle
about Scary Spice and binary
fission and when I hid
in my front doorway I was sure
they were discussing the unlikelihood
of my possessing fertile sperm

the living room carpet and the dog
were always sticky and I couldn't
remember if I was responsible

spring break my obsessive
neighbor with plastic house
scrubbed her walls too hard
and licked bleach from her fingers
while her husband was away

I heard organ tissue bubbling so I peeked
through her window, watched her
dissolve into a spotless tile floor,
suspended in sparkling poison

from that day forth
inspired by her deathbed sheen,
I resolved to die
of keeping my life too clean

A Birthday Feeling

Though the sky cries today
I have fallen
in love with every person in New York

Subtly elegant lonely girl in a sock hat
I want to find out
where you live
and stage an evening life vigil

I buy myself a cake
and bring it to my co-workers
on my own birthday

I leave unreasonably
generous tips To the old woman I release
my subway seat
Later to the middle-aged
woman, the same

Lazily I hold the pole and listen
to a businessman's teen girl
pop songs and I am happy for him,
and for Kyle too,
who is finding himself
in the optimal city

Somehow we survived
another America year and that is cause
for a citywide holiday
The postmen lost my package
but there's no sense fussing over such things

In my dream Nathan opened a McClain Institute
of Poetry which I advocate whole-
heartedly Subtly elegant lovely girl
in a sock hat I set down my falafel for you
so I can appear at my best

I want to find out where you live
but if that proves futile, I'll be just fine
There's no sense fussing on a day like this

For The Farmers Of Dugway Sheep Kill

When I found the lambs collapsed beside their mothers
on the hillside overlooking Goodyear Road I buckled

beneath their insoluble calm. Not a panicked
expression among six thousand reposed, six thousand

puffs sprinkling the valley like a teddy bear
caught in the lawnmower of the desert's dawn

unraveling. I knelt beside the nearest unknowing
ewe and clamped my hand on her snout to steady

the teeth, still chattering, behind a mind sweetly frozen
in some ambivalent paradise of swaying meadows,

rivers of downy frost. What sublime shepherd
led this flock into dreaming? What insufferable thief

snatched so many white woolen ghosts in the witnessless
night? Six thousand sleeping children sprinkle the desert

like Sinai—I want to believe they slipped with peace
into exodus but will none ever need to again?

On the mount I couldn't steady my teeth, still chattering,
behind a mind aware that it could have been us,

it should have been us. It should have been us.

** Allegedly, U.S. military accidentally released VX nerve gas at Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, 1968, killing and incapacitating around 6,000 privately-owned livestock. The surviving contaminated were euthanized.*

Oracular Persecution

As I ran from my brother in a game
of tag, I clambered over the backyard
fence to the unpaved alley, passing
a shimmer of blue and thinking nothing

of it. Then a sunray shone through
the neighbor's cable lines back to that sapphire
spot, and I resolved to look closer. A paper
splayed flat across the fence without

nails, no wind or adhesive, at eye level
suspended. Framed in a blue the blue
of the deepest ultraviolet Pacific, streaked
with silver like wounds of angels and beaded

glimmers of an amber liquid, the streaming blood
from those seraphic gashes. And the two glorious
words, transcribed in my language
because the Being needed me to understand:

Bud Light. At this moment I knew He had crowned
me a prepubescent Moses, tacked my golden plates
to the rotted wood. He had shown me the power
of his guiding *Light*, offering to be a *Bud*

to any who followed this light to the friendship
of their savior. And I was his prophet, ready
to spread His word on the corners of streets!
As my brother landed on the ground behind me,

I told him the story of the message of my Bud.
And he punched me on the arm and said
You're it, and you're not fooling anyone.

The Proliferation Of Norms

Michael Furey perished for Gretta in the dead of festive winter, not a moment of remembrance for Gabriel Conroy. Next door England hoards bank holidays, presumably to commemorate the banks. I've never understood Boxing Day—to spar with compatriots must be great for blowing off Christmas steam. Some have more to celebrate than others. We have a day to memorialize veterans, a day to venerate memorial. A day to observe labor, which I do firsthand when my employer refuses to give me the day off. We have a day to celebrate the explorer who excised indigenous tongues in exchange for golden silence. I suppose we honor the ambition, foundation of American values. Mexico parties for each saint, for each time Jesus avoided a cockroach with his sandals. The only calendar square that comes constant to my cortex marks my birth, as is the case with many. I suppose we honor the self, foundation of American values. As we get older we spend more of these days alone.

*** *** *** *** *** *** *** *** *** *** ***

The committee sits in a circle and votes on the values of culture. Whoever doesn't practice them is insane. Batman made a career of apprehending the insane. He deposited them in Arkham, so named for Lovecraft's humble horror homestead. Perhaps the correctional program is dysfunctional, for asylum recovery is rare, outpatients plagued by fits of violent ambition and memorials of the self. The dart-eyed bus rider fogs his goggles, recounting his time as a vendor of chandeliers in the store owned by Elvis and Dorian Gray—it's been ten years since he missed his stop. In the normal world our women disavow domestic servitude and explore the interiors of lit ovens. Our men desire men and take a short walk off the *Orizaba*. The belief of Septimus—the planet conducts its own soft symphony. “All taken together meant the birth of a new religion—” The committee update rejects values of obsolete culture. Whoever practiced old ways is insane. Disagreement means disability. Sanity no longer dons a bat mask and leaps from towers. The bespectacled man on the Venice Blvd bus wearing fifteen jackets, bloviating alone, may dribble something important if we are crazy enough to listen.

Sonnet 12: *Every Creeping Thing That Creepeth Upon The Earth*

Forgive me,
 spider crawling
 on the kitchen
 sink last night
 while I was
washing dishes—
too quickly
 I'd invoked
 the faucet's deluge
 to retract it,
 watched you
clutch at any item
firmly fastened
 to the basin,
 refuge
 nowhere to be
 taken. Well,
goodbye then,
I pray
 submerged you
 think me less officious
 than the followers
 of Zecharia
Sitchin:
replacers
 of creation
 with intransigent
 makeshift myths
 that knock more
questions loose.
But who am I
 to recant age-
 old reason
 absent my own
 answers? Contrite
I've sluiced
your spotless
 soul into the sub-
 surface prison—
 immersion,
 like existence,
footling accident.

“We Don’t Go to Ravenholm...”

Atop Bellagio Road summit with serrated radio tuned 500 kHz
below the American bottom frequency,

cankorous hiss as when a far-sighted archaeopteryx
diagnosed the incoming ball of fuzz-warm glow,

even a humble guy like I imbibes slight Raskolnikov
feelings. Concerto crackle injects my smog with thoughts of you.

Gordon Freeman crowbarred his heart, I guess, or must
have at least rolled some unrequited grenades

into his mute vocal vent shafts under
jurisdiction of aching-for-Alyx lungs. Now Susie Q,

karaoke quality, triggers flashbacks of my teenage trip,
lobby of Las Vegas with my folks at another Bellagio,

most unmemorable Strip hotel sans pirate and clown.

Not a lot for a wholesome minor in American Sodom

on lookout for a fellow family-tortured teen boy or girl.

Perhaps to push my mind from make-up homework

quietly I rehearse for the return to school: “I, AJ,

reluctantly inform you...that I think you are...hot stuff. I...

should have said I was crushing on you a month,

two months ago, but...my mouth has a brain for a gag.”

Urquidi guts came through later that week, then fucked off

Valentine’s Day pining with miscommunication through June.

Why shouldn’t I kick anxiety’s ass? Do-over with a capital D:

Xerox my love poems, wedge ‘em in your locker? Manic

youth yet again forced me on a gnat-whacking Bel Air climb;

zygotes’ll just stay zygotes till we work out this romance idea.

“I’ll eat my spare tire, rim and all”

—*Erasure from Jennifer Aguilar’s Raymond Chandler handout*

Lovely
background
Born
to writing age loss oil Depression.
addition short
He hardboiled
Many composed
cared
development
points
his fit
a woman
died long
died constantly
drunk
neglected
her ashes storage
death depressed and
end life
He died of right to tell called to do 1959.
Failing *Lovely*
swell soaked took
money sorry
brains under bush.
right And supposed
men supposed touch
photographers and prints.
long liable hours.
having a fake to look
some
Why not City

“A trouble straighten minute, care
 still softly, city know
 city very, very my western
 cleaner mention
 hull on just the limit
 honest to matter this
 country chiseled out
 play dirty or don’t

a clean, well-lighted tropic

coatimundis are regulars
in the screen-walled barroom at the mouth
of Aktun Chen, and when one
of these cenote jesters
scaled our folding table
my enabling grandfather
slipped him Dos Equis in a bottle cap

the snout dipped,
chugged,
then like some cartoon hiccupping trope
the belt-nosed dunce fell on his back
and rolled off the table—
I swear I could hear
the yellow whistling stars and yapping
spider monkeys levitating in circles
around his lengthy, dazed face

I wonder if he still shows up there,
climbs a tourist's lap to swipe
a swig and swap tales
of the Nine-Weeks Capuchin War, bark
“bring me the hair
of the xoloitzcuintle that bit me”

I wonder if his women and children
left for Cobá after he came home late
too many times
squealing unintelligibly
smashing the lamp in the canopy nest

I wonder if he's been fired
from his photo-posing job
for showing up hammered, lifting
gum from gringa purses

I wonder how his liver is holding up,
if he can keep down a tarantula
mango julep like he could
back in college

Gods of Silver, Gods of Gold

—Appropriated from King James Bible and assorted household packages

i. Quality ingredients, it's why taste is king:

Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and topped with crisp, fresh ingredients, nothing beats the classic flavor of the sandwich that started it all.

ii. We've all been there, upon the rocks of the wild goats. That desperate search for those last crumbs at the bottom of the bag.

The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: so delicious, so hard to reach, but oh so worth it. A lotta bit of yum but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

iii. Flavorful. Refreshing. Guaranteed. If you're not fully satisfied, just return into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and we'll replace it or give you your money back.

Great quality. Great price. Guaranteed the wall of the city shall fall down flat. Take up the ark of the covenant, made with Niagara Grapes.

iv. Serving suggestion: for they were uncircumcised, shake well.

And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they serve chilled or over ice.

v. Color swirls are a natural occurrence. For he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land, pasteurized for premium quality.

And they said, recommend use by date on container or cap,

and he said unto his daughters, refrigerate before serving, shake well before opening.

And God heard their groaning, No lo compre a menos que la tapa y la banda protectora.

vi. Our stone gargoyle wards off modern day evil spirits such as chemical preservatives, additives & adjuncts, and the king of Babylon smote them.

One taste of the one pillar was eighteen cubits and the chapter upon it was brass, and you can tell he does his job very well.

vii. Our vendors follow good manufacturing practices to segregate ingredients to avoid cross contact with allergens,

and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground made on equipment shared with milk, eggs, tree nuts & fish.

And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered: facility processes peanuts.

viii. Oats have been cultivated for thousands of years, and I have also established my covenant with them, but it's the ancient Greeks who deserve the credit for making the first "porridge" out of oats.

Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: after all, it's not every day you find ready-to-heat-and-eat oatmeal in the freezer, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land!

ix. Award winning taste! Ye shall utterly destroy all the delicious creamy strawberry swirls in our rich, award winning ice cream.

And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their real California milk.

x. Due to possible risk of fire, all this evil has come upon us. As it is written in the law of Moses, never leave your toasting appliance or microwave unattended.

If pastry is overheated, we have sinned and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and frosting/filling can become extremely hot and could cause burns.

xi. Cuidado para niños: I am he that liveth, and was dead.

While popcorn is a delicious snacking choice, it is never recommended to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.

And the great dragon was cast out, for infants or toddlers overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death, as the popped kernels can pose a choking threat to their safety.

xii. Wholesome and nutritious by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. We set out to create a lower cost, great tasting cereal that competes with more expensive brands for we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves.

For though we walk in the flesh, we save by limiting packaging and advertising costs, and focusing on quality; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.

For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, we pass those savings on to you!

xiii. Quality first. Thou shalt not sacrifice any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness.

Our extra virgin is distinguished by a rich, robust flavor, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God.

If oil catches fire, turn off heat and cover until cooled, do not use water, and all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

xiv. People with medical concerns should suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, check with their physician before using this or any dietary supplement.

Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall keep out of the reach of children.

xv. No need to stir! She shall touch no hallowed thing, natural creamy.

She shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, good source of Vitamin E. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female, proudly made in Arkansas.

xvi. And the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying, turn a balanced breakfast into a tasty one, the height thereof thirty cubits.

Spread my judgments on multigrain toast, then will I perform my word with thee, and I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will add a glass of milk and a serving of fruit.

Do not refrigerate or microwave the ark of the covenant of the Lord. Questions?

And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, Like us on Facebook.

xvii. Ingredients: a land flowing with milk and honey.

Do not feed to infants under one year of age and I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians.

And Moses answered and said, quality guaranteed or your money back.

The Poets Dream

 Their tongs were seizing ice
 cubes that melted partway to tumblers.
 Some poets in burlap
 bags thumped across the roof
 while those below assured one
another the racket was only a film
 of tornadoes. A poet baked black-
 sugared party cookies, another
 slurred, "What's these really
are? Dainty Scorpions crumblin!"

 From the couch a poet raised
 his glass to retort, "Worth taking
 note of, boss, that was truly
poetic." He drowned in his cushion
 as sooty, soiled poets broke
 through the woodwork and poured
 from the fireplace. The moon
remained idle throughout afternoon
as poet bears shook trees for honeyed
 idioms. On a wooded mound
 in the Dakotas, one arrogant poet
insisting, "No, Colorado," a poets' retreat
 hugged a modernist lodge balcony.

Another poet leapt to her death but grew
 so transfixed by the slope's gray
shape and irregular dotting of dry-brown
 bushes that her body refused
 to land. A poet expedition
formed to pioneer the gravel valley,
backpack poets tiptoeing deer
 trails. A poet read selections
from her small press anthology
 beside the well in a purple
clearing; another dozed off
 while listening, dropped

into its depths. Poets squirted
down ropes and cranked buckets
to visit him, the well water
he'd begun to call home.
They lobbed in bricks to construct
his cottage. A stationary poet in the pantry
burped, "Men this because women
don't that." A poet in passing
reprimanded him, "Remember,
boy, there are no binaries. I'm both

correct and dead wrong on that,"
at which the burper sobbed
in self-reassessment. The café
poets created a sleek religion
so as to publicly hate it. No one
was writing and none lifting
the eerie state of the world,
which on the humph side
did not worsen. The moon
held in a single spot above
the poets forever as they sang

and skipped arm in arm in the carpool
lane of the busiest fictionists'
freeway, half the poets castrati
like in the good old days, a quarter rich,
no rights to complain, the rest just wasting
exquisite words on friends
who'd no intention to steal them.

The Evolution of the Ethical Decision

*"It's over there—in some fundamental way, it's not my concern."
...All the reasons in the world aren't reason enough,
from a certain point of view. —Timothy Morton*

{That old lady collapsed
outside the café window...what should I do?
Those young men are running out
to assist her. I don't know how
to resuscitate, I would
just get in their way. Why should I
be expected to help? The ambulance
has arrived. I can pretend
I never noticed.}

{Who is throwing around
a screaming woman
next door? Should I talk to him?
Call someone? One of my neighbors
will stop him. Bet he would kick
my ass. Maybe
this is normal? They do this all
the time. I didn't cause it
so I don't have to fix it.
I'll grow used to it over time.}

{Whoa! That boy slipped
on the causeway, he's flailing
in the canal! Does he not know how
to swim? Should've learned.
Well, it's not my fault...nobody's
forcing me to intervene.
The water looks dangerous! No one else
has noticed? Oh, a golden retriever has
jumped in, it's pulling him
to the stairs. My help wasn't
needed after all.}

{It's midnight, what is that
backyard commotion? The neighbor's dachshund
is under attack by a bobcat,
I hope my neighbor hurries
and sees this happening. If it were
my dog, I'd sure take responsibility.
The little leg is bleeding,
now the beast heads
for the throat. I won't let it
ruin my night. I'll run inside,
tighten the shutters, explain how I never
knew this was going on.}

{Everyone on TV
is panicked about the ocean
swallowing the seaboard...
how strange. But if it's happening
that makes it natural. At any rate I'm not
to blame, and I live in the hills
so there's no reason to worry
for my family.

There are so many voices, groveling for help
with problems I don't even see.
Why don't these voices
ever mention something relevant to me?
They inhabit a fantasy world.
Absolutely irrelevant. At this point
I'm better off to disconnect
from their world and fall back asleep.}

Dobbins in October

too many roads from the last city hall
 this shade of two rows of empty trailers

swimming pool full of yellow jackets
 and life vests like candy corn soup

 pine needles on a lava carpet
 first night a biker builds his camp

 a solo tent at the hill site
 lament of chainsaws on the mountainside

 Dad steals all the silver spoons
 from the card table and Johnnie's hand

 oasis of tungsten light forms a bubble
 above the cabin's front window

 no moon for the black pine canopy
 an island of trees at the water's center

 paddling a drying brown lake at lunch
 driving over the dam of boulders

 an island unreachable through shipwrecks
 of capsized trunks and drowned bough spears

 flailing branch splashes in waves
 balanced by the anchor of a resting sparrow

 campground sewage feeds the swimming water
 hollow squealing from the water's center

 stutter of chainsaws near the shore's cusp
 second night the biker's tent still empty

 wicked gloaming consumes the camp
 Johnnie and I are scared to cross

 the outline of a visible driveway
 to the distant planet of the lamplit bathroom

 Dad says there are bears along the path
 so we have to run with wings on our ankles

parents' bed is a brick slab with springs
whining like a bacon farm on collection day

Mom adjusts her spine and Johnnie's unconscious
I nudge him to wake when I sense the earth

crawling on my bunk and huddle against the wall
Dad yells at everyone Stop Fucking Moving

my congested nose whistles till midnight
Dad yells at everyone Quit Breathing So Loud

we tread sewage after breakfast
and wander through sagebrush meadows

a no-head crow in the middle of the path
with spirals drawn at its feet in the dirt

territorial growl of chainsaws down the fire road
biker's tent flapping open in the wind without him

final night a shadow crawls across the bulb
that flashes a darkness into our sanctuary

green sticks ascend the outer walls
fly entranced into the fire pit

kneel on the back of my elbow praying
hundreds of mantises blanket the hubcaps

we retreat indoors and the outer light
streaming through the windows drips

with the shade of the praying masses
Johnnie jumps on the wall switch

the light presumably bursts off outside
Dad ignites the bedside lamp

the cabin creaks as another swarm
pounces on the portside windows

green streams through cracks between wall logs
brittle creatures soak into pajamas

I imagine the biker stumbling back
from lost days trapped in rocky gulches

only to be ambushed by mantis clouds
I imagine them coating his beard

his boots and his every follicle
sticking to the glaze of his eyes

as wings sputter and lift him
through the ponderosa ceiling

my sweat pools on the wooden floor
washing viridescence from my flesh

it suddenly feels like this has happened
to me before here and always will

we fall asleep with prayers
burrowing in our ears and throats

wake to a morning of insects deserted
moon hangs late through the pines' blue hole

we pack the car and check out a day early
the biker's site is clean and empty

except for a tire tread in the duff
apology of chainsaws breaks brush behind

the manager's Winnebago as the flannelled cutter
removes his earmuffs to wave goodbye

for miles we see none of our species to love
Johnnie plays digital mind games as usual

Dad disturbed won't speak of last night
Mom is still shaking at the wheel

I keep picturing what our cabin must have
looked like to the bears guarding the showers:

humans screaming and retching
a yellow pulse in surrounding black

emerald fog condensing the glow
and fueling the euphoric campfire

our childish uncanny must have
been beautiful to witness

as the road kicked up dust behind our car
everything of horror transcendent that happens

happens and that makes it physically perfect
everything of horror innocent complicates

the car idles at the last city hall
we flew past three days past

inside the lobby I wait for Dad to pee
jostle some quarters in my pocket

a mantis scales the vending machine
I grab my Sprite without fear

Late Eulogy for Uncle Jimbo

I.

he bounced into the naked
 river at an age
when dying old was a foreign concept

each Thanksgiving he also youthful
greeted with noogies the uncle
 now accidental dust—
noogies resonating in a dream arc, no
 a grinding rhombus
at the center of this permanent fake human
 arm in office shirt
 sleeve and dust-covered vampiress

he drove grandkids to the surgeon
 after they swallowed
 steel dandelions

 a macaw became
 a bearded dragon
 a python became
 lacerating Siamese became
a document of underdeveloped identity
no sexual companion
 detected no pink
 no magenta

on the couch with cones and strings
constricting heads blonde face
 and armful of infant Stoics

the hospital removed the seeds
from their throats
 inverted worms
 with spurs
 stuck in ribbed skin

his password was spoiled sometimes
 spoilt with a T
 that privacy ingrained
how can a man be known
 to so many people
 in so many ways

III.

what had uncle said in the crusted
hot tub on his birthday
as grandma hairs congregated
in the filter clump—

we can be like the hibiscus
a creature of dual intentions go
the way of the shaded garden
to inhale and sit for death
or put out a hand and exist
forever by way of the hummingbird

in silence the grandkids hoped
to understand so intensely
he gazed into their open faces
and for a beat
sneered knowingly
then let fart a stream of silver
molten bubbles

he threw the steam at their giggling
maws and leapt from the water
to hide again behind
the repulsed Victorian moon

condolences to all of you

when I snapped out of it

I was sprawled across the bathtub
the shower curtain ripped around me
its mildew creeping
from vinyl to toenail

my eyes must have gone swimming recently
oh right—

the next door neighbor's dog had screamed
and I'd thought of the day we murdered Rosco
almost two years now

the veterinary interns younger
than myself had carried him
behind the wheeled steel elephant doors
and he never broke my gaze

the incinerator firing pets
into the hillside behind him
and what made me disgusted
with the world's dishonest practices
and myself was how he looked
like the one apologizing

then I remembered Michael Jackson
dying at my school with strangers
on the street holding signs
and embracing in convulsions
it had made me wonder
why they were sad for a stranger
though I felt it too

or the kaleidoscopic lizard I spotted
on a Mexican sidewalk that I spotted
a decade later in an American film
elegizing extinction and I felt it there too

or the man in a sleeping bag
outside the shake shop dumpster at 1 AM
with flies buzzing in his nose and I was fuming
on clouds of breath in permanent air
but why wasn't anything steaming from his lips
and I felt it there too but kept walking

and walked out of the tub
slipped on my shorts
skipped into the street to shake
the Etch-a-sketch portrait of Rosco
in my mental gallery and the sunlight
cut me like unsolicited charity
and I started choking

since now it was May and the poplar
trees were fucking my lungs
and I tripped over something

the neighbor's dog's brains and his body
seeping into an open Hades manhole

I had to bend over
tickle his tire-marked belly
place carefully my two lucky Milk-bones
on his lids for peaceful passage

some jogger said "is that your dog?
my condolences" and I said
"it's everyone's dog
condolences to you too"

that quivering that hit me then
was the quivering that hits
every so often out of nowhere
on the subway at the car wash
the quinceñera the dog park
that's not out of nowhere
it's another friend's absence piercing
his way into newborn mythology

and we hurt because to share
the same permanent air
to swallow the same poplar ejaculate
and know that he was here
like us and gone like us
that's friendship enough for an absence to stab

A Way to Hear It (February 26, 2014-)

if you lower your internal systems
to the minimum level of required
input and study the buzzing
in your calming room you
can pick up traces of the dog
inhaling next door

you can faintly hear
the airstrip emancipating jets

the whistle of carbon dioxide
through the bougainvillea's mud flaps

the chain on a bicycle

cowards in love
laughing at their radio

you can hear from the foot
of the driveway a brother's
heroic holler and the crash
of his sword on his sister's
cardboard shield

a branch cracks
and the bicycle brakes

fighting finches quiet as a hawk
descends on their bush

an engine sputters
behind continuous trickles of a hose
filling the landlord's navy
blue pool you remember
the one with scrappy-eyed
starfish and glistening pink tridents

you can hear a slither
in the nearest wall and the ominous
whisper of stateside termites regrouping

one lover clears
his throat and slams
a door which fades into squawk
of an inscrutable alien tongue

you can hear an assault
on drums without accompaniment

if you power down even more
barely to register
your commitment to the scene
on any measuring chart you
can pick up traces of the Pacific
down the hill forcing
itself into further sands
with claws dragging and tearing

you can hear murmurs
of a heart in the lover's
womb and the boots of sister
and brother both cultivated
to resist the pressure
of concluding climbing
down the corrugated stairwell
to another distant unspoken-of war

Healed Hawks

A procession of piano waves
swept the highlands highway.

Over the tor you careened
through the crystalline signal

tower without the slightest
perceptible twitching of feathers.

Stiffly your wingtips
tamed the currents, repealed

your direction unseen
at each drum's beating, brushed

the steel bars as though
you pulled the smallest thread

through the amplest eye
of needle to stitch the wild

hillocks together.

My double swung

up in the beams,
reaching to catch you

whenever you
swooped between and beyond

his gummy arms.
I met you once before

on a fencepost
above the breathing pebble

tides of Asilomar
and Spanish Bay; you did

not flinch then
when I approached

to marvel, forever
the salt-blown mirror

to eyelash-curling
rivulets of Carmel-by-the-Sea.

Years, miles away, you
reversed, swung, swung

and reversed over the tor.
The accompaniment waned

and you disappeared
behind the rocks to tell me

that you were yourself
just then, as I too was meant to be—

at the same time you were
Jeffers, though you'd never admit it.

limits of my sight.
 as it breached the childish
 each sphere disappearing
 to a ceiling of invisible lights,
 rising bubbles, carried upstairs
 the landing filled with eternally
 and of course the hypnotic fixture above
 sewn by distant mothers of mothers,
 laughter of brothers in sweaters
 soft cerulean fibers on shins, softer
 only the hermitage of stairs,
 of my unexplored blood; we knew
 was waiting: checklist of sharers
 brother, we knew not what
 started banging. A boy and his
 confines before the kitchen bell
 they'd all inhabit the same material
 back-slapping, the last night
 I loved had departed, all joking,
 this image was the last night no one
 yet ready to ascend. Perhaps
 to the reserved floor. We were not
 halfway through dinner, climbed past us
 My father's late grandparents entered
 and laugh of my now-dead uncle.
 upper restroom doors squeak open, burp
 in stairs. From the landing I could hear
 through tablecloths seeking sanctuary
 away from Dad's introductions, crawled
 beside my ward of a brother, I turned
 cousins with healthy new lovers. A boy
 aunts and grandpas, mothers, second
 as the 90th, and all were there: great-
 celebrating a 92nd birthday as surprising
 broke bread on the topmost floor,
 to mingle with the gathering. My family
 upstairs—we could not bring ourselves
 rushed water trays and teapots to the bustle
 where buttoned busboys and pressed maître d's
 racing model Ferraris down furry waterfalls
 satisfaction? As a boy beside my brother,
 wrack my skull in hours of somewhat
 restaurant, what incites steps to return,
 Carpeted blue staircase of a seafood

The Hermitage, the Fixture

The Projections

another washboard ribbing
outside as the machete
scraped the apartment's siding

his ears stiffened like tremulous
hairs on the neck of one
whose ears have stiffened

each clunk of blade
a terrorizer poem
of the manifest dream

her ocular bulges
a termite tent tightly
stretched over lit lamps

nothing out there—checked
again—nothing the wringer
of sponges of sweat

he thinks perhaps the tension
projection from within
a thought within a poem
within an unremembered dream

the unremembered dream
both of them shared
before births perhaps

the tensions uncanny
—the clunk and strings
from puppeteer to hairs
to neck—were within the seams
of siding itself

lovers projections from within
a thought within a poem
within the shadow
box of a puppeteer's collection

their shaking strings tangled
with rustled curtains disarming
the window-shopper who finds
rare fear not for sale

Eulogy for a Local Poet

The city's troughs spill dry without your voice—
so would we

if not for the whiplash splash of your lingering
water dripping to startle

our parched skulls, plinks personal and direct,
clenched and released by branches

in the dizzy aftermath of victory's rain

Dear 2013,

I'm thinking about authenticating my birthday in a poem
since I haven't been this self-indulgent in two Roman years.
Last one was when I was a free agent in New York,
shitty so I can't even use it anymore. Now I'm in California

where Manhattan geography comes from Subway sandwich wallpaper
and waiting for "my man." (I am through trying now—big relief.)

25 looks solid.

25 one-fourth of the way there and in the right Poe-esque font

with two pressed firmly against five's back forms a cartoon whale spouting
cloudy dishwater at a low-flying hieroglyph Aztec-angles helicopter
that surveys a cocoa canopy for ziggurat vibrations. All week
I've been surveying headlines that report a decade since Elliott Smith

whimpered onto a knife, so his girlfriend says, he's standing there clutching
his chest in my mind in his mind finally reached that spider bite
in the small of his back he's been aiming for since his childhood
tap-danced off the end of Venice Pier and washed up **25** years earlier

in Redondo Beach. Bursting from a decade of departures we commemorate
the morbid. (I've been looking for you-who-who—are you gone? Gone?)
Adam says Why commemorate the morbid? Says a friend near Echo Park
tended bar in 03 and in shuffles Elliott seating himself at the eunuch end

to space out and clutch a cluttered lunch pail full of china white and reek
of last week's urine and track mark tissue in his baggy underpass jacket
like every other dude in Silver Lake. Nobody talks to him just like in his songs.
(I'll stay down where nobody's gonna gimme grief.) He's writing new lyrics

in his mind glistening with Johnny Walker Red lines to serenade himself
later in satin. What the hell happened to Adam? Since he tossed his landline
off Chelsea Pier and smoked his Rolodex feeling dirty, sick,
perhaps more dead than alive he hasn't spoken to any friends. A year on edge

started shaking since they proved to him he was a scoundrel
a grotesque virile drunk
and a Singapore genius of an Arkansas cracker. Last night at the Chinatown
reading I dedicated a poem to him as if he would ever hear about it.

I like to think he's feeling good, that he'll work it on out. I never write
about my Kansas cousin of the same name who in two months
will also go **25** two cobras back to back unsure which direction
to head and achieving more tangle as each moment dies.

His furious parents corrected him with a belt until he corrected them
from his Rolodex. He's searching for a job where he can handle serpents
which also resemble furious belts. I'm no psychoanalyst but I'd have to say
"Your lungs don't have asthma, your mind does." But Eddie Kaspbrak's mind

didn't eat him, IT ate him the monster under Derry that wanted to be
with children and be children like Elliott wanted to be lonely with contentment
and lonely be contentment. Walking home from the parking spot two minutes before
I'm 25 I'm below a Long Beach PD helicopter and each street lamp

quickly hides when I need it the most. I'm below a satellite relaying news
ten years since the Internet killed Elliott and I'm below a jet headed to La Guardia
a 747 like the one that crashes in my dream three hours later and there are body parts
scattered easter eggs in shrubs. Investigators cover them with tarps and won't let me
in

my apartment where the black box fell where I'm at the same time asleep
on the floor and three hours later eight crows on the balcony bicker interrupting "Out—
out are the lights—out all!" and in Long Beach I wake up but near La Guardia
Lou Reed doesn't and I look like cheap orange juice I give a good shake

but can't distribute the pulp. It's Lou Reed Jake made an arugula lemon juice salad for
during the Super Bowl 'twas I who scraped his sticky arugula into the trash
and ran his glass fork plate through the dishwasher and business was dead
except for Lou who cancelled his March show in Monterey with liver issues

and I'd see him if he rescheduled if not when it's my birthday
it's Lou Elliott fictional Eddie and for all I know Adam my cousin Jake a bartender
an airplane—how am I 25 shark-bitten humpback guts voice spark
from a phone underwater multinational conspiracy child of nightmare prosperity
and half-complacent birthday boy not supposed to feel somehow responsible?

None will vanish. Many will appear.

after two weeks the phallogentric
 nap of youth concluded
every herb garden sprouted
 an oil well

digging a foxhole in the crawlspace
 below the living room
the child found a missing jawbone
 of a movie starlet extra
 from *North by Northwest*
tale articulators swarmed
 the carnal suburb

 until one night they stampeded
the alley to the topiary plot behind
 the tattoo clinic where a live
oak's thirty-second highest branch
 curled into the silhouette of La Virgen
 de Guadalupe

in the latitudinal township across
 the peninsula uninterested
oil dragons reared their iron skulls
 returned to their feeding
then looked slowly again at each
 falling palm frond

 until one night when the child
passed in blooming ruckus
 the motionless motors
 no longer sighed
 just crouched
dead beasts into themselves

Secure

this morning I stood
on the balcony to watch
a man walk his dog, a glowing
man with a billion
golden leashes
emanating—from his arm
to the dog, from his shirt
to the grass, from his shoe
to a cloud, from his immortal skin
to every proton in the universe, a leash
older than that very universe,
from his ear to my mouth
as I said “You have a beautiful dog,
sir!”—and when he smiled and waved, it
yanked the leash from his fingertips
to my eyes and my eyes
pulled a leash from the street
ahead of the next house that hauled him
out of view so the leash
from my eyes
tangled with the leashes
from my ears to a parrot
on the power lines
and the billion leashes tethered from the world to my heart

WORKS CITED

WORKS CITED

- Crane, Hart. "General Aims and Theories." *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke. Boston: McGraw, 2004. 124-127. Print.
- Frost, Robert. "The Sound of Sense." *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke. Boston: McGraw, 2004. 9-10. Print.
- Ginsberg, Allen. "Howl, Parts 1 and 2." *Poets.org*. Academy of American Poets, n.d. Web. 05 Mar. 2015.
- Guest, Barbara. *Forces of Imagination: Writing on Writing*. Berkeley: Kelsey St., 2003. Print.
- Hall, Donald. "Poetry and Ambition." *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke. Boston: McGraw, 2004. 298-309. Print.
- Jeffers, Robinson. "Poetry, Gongorism and a Thousand Years." *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke. Boston: McGraw, 2004. 86-89. Print.
- Kinzie, Mary. "The Rhapsodic Fallacy." *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke. Boston: McGraw, 2004. 387-398. Print.
- Pound, Ezra. "A Retrospect." *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke. Boston: McGraw, 2004. 63-71. Print.
- Simic, Charles. "Negative Capability and Its Children." *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke. Boston: McGraw, 2004. 343-348. Print.
- Steele, Timothy. "Tradition and Revolution: The Modern Movement and Free Verse." *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. Ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke. Boston: McGraw, 2004. 415-31. Print.