

you dead
all

the rest end-
stopped

burned hopes flake
away , fall

ashes
fall

how poetry is possible afterwards
or history

yet somehow I hurry , fly east to catch
this newborn morning

dark shading faster & faster
away streaks

an unsullied sky
accelerated

to a white
smear

(my teacher said *you should write*
in the tighter meters

& about meters , Russians
are never wrong)

not that much further to
Ankara

Petersburg
Byzantium

pale promise mirrored in a daybreak
pure blue

like Easter mosques , light
escapes

washes color in waves
fading tint from the

remaining
night

what I was unprepared for :
iterations of nothing

you deliberately , sadistically died
left me half an unfinished

conversation : to accuse myself , gouge
indictments off an invisible wall

work with paleological
care : reconstruct

the plausible
arguments

you might have used , were you
alive to make them

I duel with cavities : address
the truant void

engage sheer inertial force
mindless as a beast

murdered at the spine
impetus continued

past severance : struggled
amygdala moves on

your profound non-
existence refuses

to give
then

*the emperor smiled & said
but my dear friend*

*you have been
beheaded*

fine , then : tell me
what I ought to do

with this brain , this other
womb : too tired to

sleep , an indefatigable ache
too hard to move

something bolted shut : unable to hold up
my hand , my hand unable to hold

up the truth of you . I work
from pain to pain , rest

in tight spaces between the
eyeteeth of infirmity

in what's left , live a life , of
sorts . the body does

what it can , still smart enough
to watch itself brought up

short , cut finer & finer , less
& less time , never all done

that could be : always letters lie
unwritten , incomplete , riven

by insufficiency . my eyes burn
over inaudible pages

*(I would rather be a ghost
condemned by your side*

*than enter heaven
without you)*

no one else will
ever read

if I cannot have you back
then I want you new

now : then :
changed :

I utterly faithless ache : to repeat
the same sensations

for the master of passions
to succumb himself

sudden silver buzz & purr
slow electric rastering

*when winds take forests
in their paws*

*the universe
is still :*

bolted when : trapped in
amber even now

fingers combing through my spine
hair rising to stand on end

into my body's avenue , thrown down
violently once again

woken long before the grey hour , brow
beaded with stupid effort

in undusk , such work to breathe
lie easily

in a bed of angry needles : hard labor
to keep from fight , from

think , from hold pain at length
just let it in

soft nestle next to , burrow even
under skin

at nineteen I wrote rhapsodic
to my friend

at thirty-six he replied
kind & amused

*how apt your first man
be named Adam*

furious , I didn't respond for years
first implied succession

I intended you should be the last
if you'd ever had the guts

to be my catfish
be my weed

with all it means , pesto & taxes , skewers
& thieves : *between grief*

*& nothing , I
will take*

grief

myself a soft brown inadequacy
gathering together my body

thinking flat on my back at one o'clock
the grinding afternoon

doorknob not turning , knuckles knocking
what I was prepared for

*but will you find me if
she makes me a tree*

you were not staggered in the least
assertive air conditioning

seemed lazy , pagan circle of sun
(I owned only one earring)

held me like a breath , establishing
my one good gift , that listening

(*up* is easy ; *down* is always
ever so much more interesting)

not what was really on its way :
Bathsheba Gabriel Pompeii

that wordless college proof you
made me , so precise & full

a corpse would smile :
I'd claimed Marvell ,

like him held parallel
lives would never

touch : but you sent a neat inked
drawing of a sphere , on

whose surface , it was
clear , two lines

like ours could not
but meet

I laughed & greeted you by name
when we next showed up for

Greek : this way you won
my praise, overwhelmed

virgin fear : by
geometry

triumphed
for a year

sometimes I wish you dead : but
you are dead , & it changes

nothing : I don't want you back
again : not any more

I do not want you
back now

I want you to go for good : I only
want you gone : for good

for years I made the bed
without you in it

rinsed your glass : waited
up for you : now I

am nodding off myself
your majesty , give me

*your beautiful
sword !*

time's point taps the steps sure as I
uncertain , gropingly descend

stars circle , move : pour velvet
wrinkles over eyes & hands

I pull that old scarf against the chinook
grown too cold for southern skin

sleep , love : please sleep

yes : I am talking to you

the soul divided does
stupid things

stands late in your doorway
smiles into the slam

meets you outside your office , buys
optimistic beers

laughs at your jokes , never takes its eyes
for an instant from your face

meanwhile the cleverer half
shakes its head at the bar

consults a wristwatch : recollects :
keeps perfect time

wonders how much longer
slings back memory

just in case you change your mind ,
the dim half gladly

abases itself , crawls
the distance

unzips the fly : dips
a grateful head

the quiet sober half counts cab fare
pays the tab

makes excuses for us both
when we wake up

thirsty & hoarse & cigarette-soaked
with all our shame

if not our soul
intact

almond in one hand & pen in
the other , & for an infant

moment I'm not sure
which one goes

in my mouth
the slant

or angle of a wrist
can send

me reeling backwards
cast off

the eye of a nameless storm
wrung out wet

atremble , lest deceptive
calm pass

& that screaming blast move
over me once more

when rain returns to
be thrust

again : into
desolation

as if no time had
intervened

as indeed perhaps
none has

four months in , the gastroen-
terologist says lack

of sleep results
in ulcers

she remembers intern shifts :
an hour stolen , maybe two

asprawl on a gurney : the guilty
linen closet

wakened to panic & a sear of acid
chemical burn-washed tongue

muted by a cracker
now all ready

to compound & solve
the next emergency

if I have to stay awake forever then that's
what I'll do

I won't risk
it again

I am sick of
forgetting

I am sick of forgetting
you

I walk high in the chapparal
California no longer yours

hike off-trail up into the burn , scattered
with blackened skeletons

salvias dust me with cinnamon : crushed
underfoot , adhesive stuff

a blue agave tall
as a woman

a crow's wingblows , a
helicopter chop

deer hoofprints ground into sand
shudders deep in the sagebrush

arterial blue : fritillaries , morphos ,
lazuli bunting , cedar waxwing ? no :

only scrub jays rasping to warn each other
beware the human

I have a mountain top where to sit
watch the sodium lamps come on

*mama , mama , don't throw
stones at me*

*I came freely to the table
none turned me away*

you supposedly the prime mover
I remain unmoved

doesn't she yet shiver in my dreams
ancient , terrified

clutch & beg
take me

home , we can live together
in my apartment (burnt

down now , if bricks
can burn)

her eye socket wreathed in
bruises where

she's lain on cold linoleum
un ange blessé

body an eleven-year-old
girl's , thin & uncertain

a cotton duster
her hands

wavering but clear in this one
saying : a kind of call :

Arkansas, cottonfields
ice tea, gospel

there are still too many
men in my brain

tied together with
delicate threats

I forget her fingers ,
cool & peaceful

she ended into this
battered ghost

slowed light takes what
our bodies become

no one can forgive
what I have done

remember mauve
broken under

a wet tundra
thunder

territory ended , left
continental shelf

delft at the edge of
strife

surf
silt

left to swim , hung between islands
reluctant jewels

some sweep of water beneath
holds up

us suspended by blue
plankton

where hide uncertain
punctured thighs

the palm of my
paused hand

a night moth's width
you couldn't

see it
lift

steeped in
lit shadow

the ceiling's smoky
candle , breathed

oolong tea , black
cut pekoe

your skin
yourself

my vanished fragrance
foolish stub

once-incense
tired , limp

aerial adroop in the sky
held up with twine

uncurtained windows , crisp
withered violet

lost sock , poor mateless
question with no

answer , keyless
rusted lock :

when I woke after six
or eight months

to find you still
a lack

nothing for it but to stick
fingers rigorous

into the still-hot candle from the
night before

a thing of
hours

turn to check you had
not come back

play hard & dirty with the
uncooled wax

a deliberate silent bees'
fur thick-tongued with honey

how to prickle & fold into
roses of wet rumpled velvet

without your fearless hand
knowing : weak with pleasure

the quiet burn : *an*
unforgettable house

no altruism in her crucible :
it comes too much to watch

lips at the base of my skull
spun loose into mazy numbness

dumb & happy to be dumb :
listening to (for once) the mind

an ache of fingers in the hair
comb from scalp to spark to end

remove all sense of time : of day
direction, distance, when or where

trembling patiently attuned
expectant deerlike poised :

poured into a single moment
the column in the footlights

mist curling around fragile ankles
no movement : widening nostrils

delicate hooves frost breath

all the universe hanging there

you flew to my side in a borrowed car
a mockery of savior

imperious : Steve's silver Volvo
sped us to midnight groceries

I'd sought a vision or typhoid fever , wanted
no water to confuse these things

rejected the refrigerator's voltage
thus with fasting did beseech

your impatient tin cup chattered
at my teeth

I didn't ask you to come unstick me , buy
hamburger meat , gourmet ice cream

scoff at my lunacy , irritated , glaring : then
strip down & quickly sodomize me

scream through Westgard Pass resentful
honk like a maniac , drive over ninety

against solid rock a car horn bells like a
hound dog's yelp reverberates

warning anyone on the bend's far end
to get the hell out of the way

in my cabin , water roaches scuffled for
parings & scraps in the garbage can

you stayed with me all afternoon : when you
finally left my craft began

as it got weirder I made new friends
your boss Dan : wired & dazzling

we'd leap into a car with strangers
we'll give you directions

if you give us a ride
his neckties

all handpainted : tangerine
fuschia & turquoise jungle

monkeys peering out of the tangle , bought
from a blind Dupont street vendor

he worked eighty-hour weeks at Treasury
to save the broken economies

(Mexico , Croatia) but still had time
to talk to me hours on the phone

offer me blithe & interest-free
a several hundred dollar loan

the other habit I took up was movies
\$2 matinees in the genteel

theater : shabby Jenifer, vinously
decorated with frescoes

cupids & doves : ribbons
& clouds

everyone's bleak
nativity

events accelerated
into a smear

I went by myself (*Thelma & Louise*)
somehow guessing you wouldn't

approve : when emerged into sunset
rumpled & blinking : doubted

everything I so far had done
suspected I couldn't return

they tell me presence isn't wrong
no absence can dignify the

nearness of yours
your face a

blur : that is to say as
clear as yesterday

when I had to have you described by total
strangers to recognize you

at all : *we feel as if we*
had to repair

a torn spider's web with
our fingertips

sometimes in October when nights
lengthen & air thins

I hear you hear me : I know
a watery smell

on the wind : I eye your
outline

that thick mark defines fore-
ground from back : stark

nimbus : the opposite of
aureole

of when I'd rise from the
damp concrete vent

up into a cup of white like
desert-bleached pelvic

bone : up through the faces of men
from deep & dazzling dark into

a ring of pure & endless
light : perfect circle

of the cleanest blue
I had ever seen

the crack between widened : includes
Sheol & Hades

how was it down there
how have you been

I thought it might spruce up the place
to fall in love with your best

friend : & so there I was , an aching
vessel thrown empty , shaken

down at three a.m. in jeans
onto my naked mattress

(all by myself I'd made an
Arkhangelsk , too white

a single bulb swung over
my heart-shaped box)

to long for endless night & day-
break all at once , for breakfast

to come & make him real , & for my
pale careful fantasy to still

perpetuate its presence .
downstairs he slept ,

foolish & lovely on the hideabed
no one would ever know

he was my hawk , my sword , my virgin lyre
my ambulance , my priest , my surgery

my girl , my book , my doctorate , my foal :
an infantry of coals upon my head

I bit the pillow , laughed aloud
an agony of patience

surged & wore
I waited

until I could bear no more
& then bore it

forgiveness smears my hands , lavender
ghost I'll never clutch

impossible to conjure on my own with
my own ravines getting in the way

I'll fill my pockets with little books
each doll's frontispiece

hair dull blonde in the mirror
fingers getting smaller

the safety's on
it's clear

I'll carry these back with me with
luck to the other side's flat

lack , past the soft green peaks : the real
things I miss so clearly now

(your stubble , smell , cracked
laugh , adroitness , mind ;

winter fog comes in from coastward
pushing back thin cocoa smog)

loss something so far gone from this
hatred animated by relief

struggling only obscures the peace : between

me & these dim redwood mornings

she lit the tip of
her cigarette

nothing extinguished it before
it reached her mouth

she pulls it puzzled out & stares
at its blinded dot

we draw comfort from the stale
leftover smell

she stubs the small fire out
as soon as it is relit

with a mournful look she thinks
no one sees

we both draw comfort : breathe
somehow reassured

chaotic wire of a
catheter wheel

smoking lends her a look
both worried and not

projecting adulthood , unconvinced
of anything

flickering TV screen , ashtray , brocade curtains , all
look less certain by the second

she can't see cars she strains to hear
eyes like an upheld hand

face averted , saying
clearly

*don't tell me , I can guess already
I don't even want to know*

love falls buttered
side down

why does she sit up at the slight-
est insignificant provocation?

because tonight he'll come home safely

because there's no one left to wait up for

some months in , I have to
laugh : in the mirror

I catch sight : poker face , gaunt &
haunted , a Lincoln death-mask

green smudged under heroin eyes
wisps of lilac other places

blonde downy vacuum , a joke , a ride
she's come to suck the goblin

juice : glassy-eyed , wizened
serpents for hair

surprise ,
surprise

forget that quattrecento mess , rude
charcoalings : but me , I shine

famished , undivided by sincere desire
pre-Raphaelite dead girl

abhorrent
vampire

abomination
experiment

I'm starving : & you have
nowhere to hide

we have a name for those
buried men

who hunger after
living

who disinter , rapacious glean
themselves from soil

it's rude work , ungraceful
to undo degradation

relineated
unkilling

to ascend to the surface
with a wormholed heart

to uproot grass grown
from moldy bones

to make yourself remanifest
again assume skin

to use the ravaged mind of one
who loved your flesh

to insinuate between her lips
your name , not her lover's

to operate from within your victim's
suffering , make sure

this time you get all
your wishes willed

we love best of all what we can't
reassemble

be careful what you wish for in the end
or with your nails you'll dig it up again

comes arduous to me this
telling , slow as nails

is omphaloskepsis wise ? it doesn't
exorcise you , doesn't mute

the echoes : no : instead engraves
an image some grain deeper

on the pixellated screen , wrong magnified
degree made aimless by decree , false

guide , wet gyp , this slipped sense of
having taken hold , a grip : I want to

end you ? then
I got

to stop , to give this
up , spit out , let

fly : old maelstrom, under-
god , you ruined scorecard

it would be better
if you went

without not even one
last try

can I please be done dragging around
dead timber , personal catalogue of

abandoned ships , this damned
cenotaph for every

man overboard who slipped & caught beneath the
prow : the waterlogged , the doomed , the

drowned ? boards crumble : spongy , rotted-out
worm trails turned in loamy wood

what pungence may an annelid dream
moved slow through planks

which box the spark (a star's
brunette velocity)

she might in her long pulsing cord
recount a brown encrypted house

its knots for doors , its sugar
stored , the dimpled pulp

balustrades
hallways

let's allow moth-eaten beams to earth
I've vagranted the ocean floor

brine lockers packed with
daughters & sons

your graveclothes wave
in cold salt gusts : all

dead in the water
becalmed , be-

numbed

titanic storms
dissolution

why wait for you to strike a blow
I'll throw the book

at my own head first
crush ego

like a shell around
myself , blind

smash &
stab

do violence if that's
what it takes

as dibbling letters taste a page
then shrink away

fortified by surety , your
large closed hands

*I will not be one
person again*

wrest open the plastic safety razor
sharpen your Swiss Army knife

(dull from cheese , its
castration blade)

some calling pounds outside my door
some woman in uniform breaking in

then needles thump narcotics
stop the shudders

then something for nausea caused
by the narcotics

then delirious , some vague attempt to throw
my hands away : then when

I wake up two days later
I still wonder

*if I
can*

I've been inscribing thumbnail notes
on leaves , creased HELP MEs

darker green on green , dropped over the
wall to Robin Hood

where's rescue from this boring cloister
please avocate me to a new hotel

one with ocarinas & bancha tea
& bottles wrapped in raffia

here stifled by the hush distractible
friars impose on rustling skirts

dull with animating drop caps in a manu-
script which'll never leave the clerestory

tired of basting swan-coats , sackcloth shirts
woven from pulsed graveyard nettles

(the witch swore flax restores
a wing into a boy ;

this I'll believe when I see)
meantime illuminate

their sacred thing , ink-wasting toy
scratch my *m'aidez* on the trees

inside a cellar door among the jams
a duchess sleeps beneath

sometimes we hear her pointed hat
scrape the floorboards , rake

along as she walks confused
trails her spider-whisk of veil

God , when this coffin , this piano lid's
raised up : when the merry men

get here : let me tell you , I am going
to buy a pink lipstick

take in the Orient , gild the lily
broadcast acedia

neglect the forest , invest
in a macaque

& never think of
Mary any more

curse the manacles
beleaguered slave

their hammer-beaten brand
rung out through bones

cast-iron on the anvil
hot red sizzle

wrought things steam
when hit : with wet :

clear black clang a
stamp of envy

two halves of an obstinate mold come clean :
metal prints the same , the same , *the same*

there's nothing I'd care to
pack along

from mills , mines , fire-pits : but will I take
any steel rails , mules or coal-fuelled train

to get the hell out of here , miles away
from God's green image

recirculating
reforged

machine-tooled evil
your devil name

anniversary : is
flawed

as if a year could burn us
through

I only have to get through today
if only that were

true : there is the day
after that as well

& plenty of story to pull
us forward

direction becomes equivocal
repeat play

saturated in minutae
what do I do

with all the little
things I knew :

your pride in barbecue
your favorite pens

(extra-fine-point black
Uniballs)

the time you ate a chicken bare-
handed in the moonlit

manicured suburban backyard
the quotations that seemed

to satisfy you : geno
ios esse maqwn

your *Nietzsche Werke*
your new-car rule

why should I gild
what's coming

fuel

fullness : you gone means
more time to flay

scoop out proud bones with both
hands : hollow palmsful of

clay groped contours : slap down
wetly back onto the block

red slip dug too deep between
nail & soft bed

practice that absence which cardinal
assumes the build of art

texture always flawing
in tone : never even

embellishments irrelevant
furbelows picked to bits

specks of quartz in graphite shred
grains grate the paper : punch

ragged holes in lines : slits through
which a body could fall

strive to carve
render an

object : meet your appraisals
gain a species of approval

slave to reveal virgin form : flesh
independent of accidents

not quite imperfectly understanding
it was those guillements

you (should have)
loved most of all

a kind of vespers : sung
at four in the morning

all I want in this empty
world : more

even than the priceless round
stone known as sleep

is to know for sure that somewhere
you are crying

out my name involuntarily
or at least

that I have just done so
for the last time

no: I don't want this : I've decided :
don't want to feel

the metallic salt-sweet
taste of poetry

run between
my lips &

under piercing teeth : I don't
want the ocean : I

don't want words
I want *him*

I have decided to fall in
love again

an encore : freezing all night on Greyhound
trying to put together why

I'm leaving where there's golden
heat , a garden's

gift : Tassajara , hot mineral
springs from stone

glaciers in the Eastern Sierras
the five old maids

I cackling ride to town with , drink cold
Galisteo lemonade , recycle the bottle

buy Prang watercolors eight to a box
(leave white untouched)

rent my first cabin , powerless
burn prosody for watts

find my afternoon-warmed rock
set myself to bake

where the reservation librarian
loans me a manual typewriter

& she gives me her hand-
made dreamcatcher

(chicken feathers , rabbit fur ,
cowhide , turquoise-dyed)

I hang it over my cot , picture
coral beads & snow : why go

with you ? taller in your first real suit ,
proud in new credit debt , broad

with shouldered hope for everything : I follow
you to see

where our nation's air-
conditioned heart

(crack , concrete , bullets , paper , faxes)
still beats : DC . DC . DC .

in a summer of wars you worked
for the Pentagon

my housemates encircled it
drummed & prayed

you lifted weights in an underground
gym , got haircuts

at the military barber shop right next
to your Metro stop

just four styles to choose from : I took
your word

never made the trip to see your desk buried
in Art Deco mazes , pink & mint

the five-pointed minotaur
they tried to levitate

you came home later & later each weekday
I read his lent book under my breath

your fingernails pale almond stones
pacing like a jaguar in the street

when the lion crushed Livingston's
chest in its jaws

the hot breath of a puma on
a mountain in Quitratue

he claimed he felt an odd
tranquillity

in that public city were museums of women & men
both were free

climate-controlled oblivion
cool marble realities

there I saw with my own new eyes
a girl-deer pierced & weeping

poppies the size of planets , grown
veins outside their painted frame

smooth wooden obelisks , sanded painstaking
polished & varnished a giddy spring green

demented doll's faces , hyperreal : a mother
rinsing her child's warm feet

a maid pouring milk in detailed restraint
down to the bread's fermented grain

elongated apostles , raving , marrying : stormy
constellations pitched above vivid gray

an aggression of wall-full water lilies
iridescent flattened farmhouses

slabs of shimmering vibrant canvas
who told him he could do that ? !

& these halls where you would never go : *he's like*
my first husband the painter said

who sat on the steps outside the Rijksmuseum
waited for me , drank impatient coffee

she spoke , & tied her hair up with a ribbon
underneath her arms

grew fringes of soft strawberry blonde
then I knew beauty

outside drowning again in August , held
& pondered these things in my heart

turning over her colors : ruby emerald sapphire
topaz turquoise amethyst aventurin

she painted her studio floor dusty hot pink
she named her home the Jewel of Ballard

you with the newspaper folded & waiting
me with a lacquered gem

clasped in my eye

my straw hat got run over
by a produce truck

it was only a three-month internship
neither of us knew that then

half-bemused yourself by the marbled floors
the glamour of starting at G-10

sometimes they call it *Potomac fever*
this is how they lure you in

*a secret boundary hidden
in the waving grasses*

no more predatory than that state
seeking fresh young guildsmen

love warriors who shed moccasins
for new margins & Armani

waiting at five p.m. outside Treasury
I could not get past the guards

where you could pull out a twenty , point out
your office window to your friends

pathetic in seersucker & a humble
smile : hard to remember it

now : how every day you did not
approve , gave no pleased kiss

left a feeling I'd been here
before already

bricks rough beneath my espadrilles
the curb burning through

thin canvas soles roped
round with jute

sitting down limp on Pennsylvania Avenue
a funny kind of *déjà vu*

we found that city racked
concrete marl

heat seeped through , sapped
nerve-wilted bones

a sapless frame you could not feed (*but*
why should I set my heart on Africa)

unconscious aimless watercolors
held up to an oscillating fan

dehumidifier emptied
twice a day

by chance I found
a sanity

housesitting for ambassadors
fattened lawns

a green release to
uncoil the hose

rake clippings , clumps
in steaming rows

hedge sidewalks with our host's
nail scissors

(he's in Israel, he won't care)
weed carefully , cull

someone trying to
get through

when the jute wore out
I bought some Keds

always leave just a few
dandelions

their dusty intransigent
yellow heads

your Crystal City grew underground
with my gay landscaping

team I pruned (thumb tucked safe
under from Felco) federal land :

museums , arboreta : cut back vinca
uprooted dodder , waxy & red

planted five hundred
baby lariope

taught the Burmese gardener swear words
drove around in the red pickup truck

ate homemade noodles from a waxy carton
listened to the helium-voiced woman

it kept me awake in my farmhouse room
Long Island iced tea & curaçao

union & rebel funeral urns : the
civil war reached that far north

flirting all over Chevy Chase
eating crabcakes in a bar

I swayed at a packed 9:30 Club
stood up to hear Kristen Hirsh

while you stayed home reading Leo Strauss
it wasn't only Atlanta that got burnt

I feel calm when I'm sitting or with
both hands full :

walking down the street , climbing
stairs , anytime my head is vacant

or my heart free
then

that clear incessant noble
treble note starts up

again : & I stagger underneath
melt as I curse

*why is it that whenever I hear
music I think I'm a bride*

a young strength jerks my head up
to listen & laugh out to myself

wish like a salmon for only
one place , like a heron

for one mate , like myself unique in all this
city to which I have come

back only for you , for one , for
you my only : one

craving the sybilline line
I fill my pen

more loops of consonance marked
to fail rhythm

*your lustrous hair : black
star , black pear*

differentiate sensation : or else be lost
among the slack & swell

would another *deo illuminatio mea*
serve just as well

your mouth bridled me , indicated
why : directed , guide

when I fluttered fearful & overcome
to be gripped & held fast

*black lotus
black sun*

all we want tonight , as we sit
here , quietly enough

(I write , she reads , our
grandmothers sewed)

is some vestigial ferocity
a surrogate lace

as cross-legged Scheherezade , frantic
& smooth

storied the brief filament
above abyss

*in the gloaming , oh my darling
when the lights are soft & low*

a neon grief should blaze , a steady rush
all night outside in the front hedge

not these vague fireflies , their idle
intervals an irritant

as they : with no particular duration
or place of residence

in mind :
alight

I slid uphill to the top of the scramble
streaked with silvery ash & soot

startled by a man's severed foot
white marble

outside : inside
voices

from the garden , camomile seat & the stone
steps go down

sounds don't stay , summer
berries linger

sonnets fled before their turn
just go ahead & close

escape the wind beneath the door : no
breath on me , miraculous bread :

she knelt with her hair held back , bent bend &
drank from a cistern

her small foot danced
a deep red dress

can I please call you my Beatrice
wild , millennial

flushed black
eyes

when *resist* withers , when *commit*
blunders opposite

the mystery expected
night on night

how could I not need ?
& how *could* you

my fine one , simple ellipse
ripe rosehips' elide :

I keep only three sacred fires
& one is never in your room

slipped depths
strange bride

sliced & lying in cold white cream
we lost wholeness

peaches , apricots , nectarines
endure some melding

then rend : separation requires
a gentle tug , be torn in two

as our mouths clung together seamlessly
two full halves of a soft-fleshed

fruit : I doubted
such sweetness

could come
again

freestone or cling
nuzzled throat

delicate soft fuzz thickened
towards your belly

warm tissue quickened
beneath my hand

a body ripe when it yields to pressure
touch becomes act

the cut unplanned

the last year of your father's empire
dullness came back in vogue

misery dilated the city center : all the
dance clubs & the gay bars closed

the men slung lynched by their
red silk neckties

white hearts of the monuments
deserted & bland

still the tourists all came
for the Fourth of July

when you and I fought on the teeming mall
our own individual Kurdistan

blinded & frightened I stalked away
hoping you were right behind

but had to not turn , descend
slow into the Metro

a pillar of salt at the mouth
of the underworld

then a long ride
back alone

you came in quietly well after ten
oddly cheerful & not a bit mad

the Wall Street Journal under your arm
the fireworks were great

but the crowds on the train :
you wouldn't have liked

that a bit you assured me , & kissed
the top of my head

I stopped taking your shirts to the
dry cleaners

our washer caught on fire
I ironed for you

scorched cuffs
& bleached

the mark away along with half a sleeve
eaten ragged to the elbow

starched with a spray-can
sparsely , grim

astride my broken
pride you cut

a fine figure
I tried

to rummage for the spring : but you
were everywhere

Chopin through our basement walls
undulating : moiré

visions of candleflame
the pianist next door

liked to touch me politely
I wouldn't play

though you poked me , hissed
he's just being friendly

derided my finicky niceness
I hear him brim into

liquid arcs with no regret
linger just long enough

to swell my pericardium like rice
soaked in milk : pierce

my chest : so skillfully controlled
in its duration , time

plastic : our friction for
a moment

embrocated

this will be your disclaimer
your Vivienne

the asylum otherwise known as home
what are you thinking ? what what

*what ? and whatever shall we do
then ? and then ?*

you lived in a world of restless glass
unstable, dominating mistresses

each night you came home
to a fresh retraction

another massacre planned , a seige
or intervention : in your defense

you never knew who
you'd find in bed

a house become a compound
a Waco where I hid

there was a brief freeze once
punctuating our cold war

you stopped expecting me
I stopped expending more

we wadded up like an opera
flagrant & berouged

tangled & bit in our
great anger

*skin more a checkpoint between
us than a visa in*

at first you quelled the
coloratura

now I see how unmet needs like
tympani grow monstrous

I knew a mathematician who padded
his basement with eggcrate foam

wore a motorcycle helmet so
he could hear equations

the witch was neither yours nor mine
you did what you thought was right

I'd burn shocking holes
in the carpet , dear

leave water rings white & flagrant
scorching coffee tables

defy bed hours , operating
manuals , dental floss

take two newspapers , screen all
my calls , neglect

birthdays , rent checks , hostess
gifts , forget to strip

the sheets or rinse hairs from
the basin , leave the weeds

lying in damp green heaps
where I've pulled them

walk when the little
man says don't

jump turnstiles , dodge fares
leap through chiming doors

I'd even tear these pages out
pass them to everyone

facing backwards on the train
ask them to read aloud

your words (printed
in bright red)

if I thought transgression could tear
your gaze away from virtue for a

commuted instant , if for a second I
let myself imagine

that you might lift your
eyes : that out of pure

interest you might look my way

you are sick : I heard
you step away

ginger with disgust , glass
crunch between shoe

& linoleum , & then
from your study

upstairs the sound of trumpets
announcing news

& I have lived picking
myself up , othered

off that floor for over
two terms of office

why not let it end :
because

if I don't at least I have
something : because

at least nothing pervades my skin
like something would

if it were here to hold

speak Tagalog to me , so I won't
understand a word you say

speak Tamil, Diné, Magyar
anything else

but not this sick news , reverse-
dolly-zoom , my head

reduced to a stupid pin , coals stabbed
out on the best linen , shrunken

furl : the hydra's tucked me under her
arm , running to the Grendel-hole

me still wearing pantyhose & maquillage
so there must be no cause for alarm

did you make love to her : half-
yelp , half-plea

a sob becomes a retch , to my surprise
well, this isn't a very good idea

irrelevantly , my mother crocheted
her way through a thousand

prayer meetings : afghans , sock hats
pulled quiet on her loosening skein

of yarn : if there's such a thing as to unravel
I will remember none of this

in the morning , when I wake & dream
ordinary : pert , isocetes :

as baffled on the TV glaze , a housefly
compounds his vision of the air

walks on a pixillated face
perplexed if what he

thinks he sees
is nothing

that is really there

my past-life therapist predated this
half-lives hint nothing

no room inside your belt
for what was to come

screaming at your mother on the phone
the constant drama of the ATM

your plastic sucking in
my twenties flying out

I didn't know I had a choice
(diplomacy , maturity :

so much gorilla dust thrown up through
the muffled air I could hardly see

the lustrous blue-limbed lord within
who sibilant could yield

allow sentience of
elegant bijoutry)

there wasn't time to be mature
I changed the number

didn't tell you my
brand-new PIN

*everyone has a secret name
written on a white stone*

& so enraged all of
righteous you

I cowered , bore it , glad deserved
to take the blame

that was 1992 : in all this time
my mystic number hasn't

changed

when people get drunk enough
they may swear

*it's wasn't me , I wouldn't have
was I that pissed ?*

don't believe the weave , the
falter : know better :

when they let you undress them &
unhook their new brassiere

when their mouth attached to yours
after weeks of abstinence

when you tasted there the prickly bittersweet
cigarette smoke & beer

they knew exactly who
it was they kissed

& so did you
my dear

so this is what it's come to, then :
the phone :

the :
nothing to say

the nervous doodles : spirals ,
cubes , a bird

the hesitation : the
wait : hello

I fasten upon emptiness
nest in its open

risibility : sink claws into : curl
around the gash

as the oyster must cover an
oval itch with a pearl

arrange my mouth around
the void : live there :

throat soaked in peat
smoke : a column of

air : phosphorescent beaches where
I held your hand & hoped : you

still & blinded : me half
a martyr : it came

to nothing .
then

racrocher : then
decrocher

then : dial
tone

the final thing you stole
my sketchbook

one last thing not
to forgive you for

packed in the side of your big suitcase
tweed safety

there's nothing I can't remember
perfectly :

*a vase of chrysanthymums
her fleeing heel*

*stalking in my chamber : I have seen
them gentle : I have seen danger*

*my child afoot on an edge
of spectral cliff*

*hope gathered at the northern coast
mother iceplants grown turgid*

*plump & crisp, her
purple smile*

*an evanescent curve of turning surf: & now
busily sekeing*

*with a continual change : all of which meant I
hoped for more*

what you left burned or gone or in an attic
my remnant thrown out , factless , plain

somebody's nonsense
neglected , junked

it was your last chance
to save my trash

not toss me out with
some other stuff

feel panic ? I need to draw it out
rest in the tangle

before ripping into it : unravel
in wreckage , tie

each line to the rat's nest of
weave , umbilical

(my professor , thoughtful chalk in hand
describes how a rich mind thinks ,

drawing , *first it starts here, then goes
over there for a while , then this way ,*

*then back, but slightly
to the side)*

pencilling in the web , ink in
all its shadows , omit

none : write , writhe , ten white hairs
for every convoluted fear

a missing face becomes
metonymy

anatomy of absence the broken light
switch we keep flipping

on & off , freshly irritated each
time , or the lost grey

cat we see repeated on the bed
(an empty sweater)

we hew what is called for : siren
craftily crafted song or

chanson, to enchant : snare
lines drag down doomed

ensorcelled strands
you feed the net

see salt elegance of lies : a single tear
you'd told him I would fib ,

followed me here : I hid
in anger behind

my hair , claimed
I'm no liar

& couldn't eat his sweet pad
thai , spilled beer

through the wrought iron
railings , sea's

muscular pull heard but
not visible

*I could say a million things about you
& never get that silence*

I sealed my mouth shut with his , hoping
if I couldn't talk , I wouldn't

think : neither of us
lying then

the ocean burning
vos grâces brûlantes

de divins amours : an
uneaten skirmish , your

divinity's fire

slant-eyed & wild : if we had a pip
I'd raise up our lone love child

(I'm braceleted , ravishing ,
a drama queen)

dash out its brains
sing it to sleep :

*sleep , constellated baby , a little sleep
beset by diamonds : immortal dear*

you're the one who brought me here
to Greece : to wreck or tame

you'd have only yourself to blame
but hatred bores me

so I don't have poison for her
wedding dress Dior / d'or

no liquid fire : or I'd
dragon her limbs

curettage the inside from within
a real woman's revenge

but I've no distemper to wither corpus luteum
seal off her cervix : then again

what's the difference between coriander
& cilantro : it's the theatre

of west & east : will you please get the
fuck out of here

your goddamned helmet's
scaring the kids

spiteful darling , married now : you know
you could've come on home

never mind the mess you'd made : we
would've cleaned it up somehow

I wouldn't ask you to confess :
you never left me on my own

stanzas cut up time like rooms : like
months make parcels of a year

& years make packages of gaps : my
spiteful one : you could come home

our last summer was your sprung trap
I knew : I never could go

back : but then , no one had
asked me to

darling , you could still
come back home

pretend there's nothing to confess
you didn't leave us on our own

my mothers call me : bells atone
how was my dinner

am I alone : I tell
such fables

you'd be impressed
I scrape the plate

I clean the
mess

there's no good reason not to try : so
spiteful darling, please come home

there it is again : *did*
you hear that?

you could have come on back by now
& never left me on my own

is that warmth only real which touches
where it touches : the end

of December , darkest part beckons around
the bend , two more months winter

racking cough , chest pains : language rots
bit-into underfrost

we made a little love , but not enough
because it was so easily set aside

I catch sight through a sudden
doorframe : it's clear

how badly I need to see her head bent
over papers , tirelessly grading a road

never run smooth : rutted with craters
blasted : crisped ice filled up

with slush , thin crust my shoes punch
through to filthy water , broken

liquid tongues : *I think I've said*
everything I can't

say anyway , she told me
laughing : *we're just*

one inability to run
into another

forgetting is a crueller kind of loss
in class

we unravel humanity
nightly repaired

tonight too warm to sleep : clothes , covers
aggravate skin

how can there still be snow aground when
the moon's open so wide

do you know Carolina
where the biscuit's

soft & sweet : ma poule ,
ma femme :

who thaws our bodies from the cold
which never quite releases bones ?

who pushes us out into
the snow again ?

cross-country four times to San Jose
what was I thinking when I took

the bus : even swallows know when
they're not wanted

the Pacific Coast highway : your mom's black dualie
my head out the window like a dog

artichoke , lettuce , garlic fields
t-shirt weather every day

trying to make these blurs
unwaste

along Hwy 1 , coming to meet you
later being hurt inside

cold tile floor : a shower stall, an
open door

crying on the toilet , you asleep next
to where I should be

a morning fog can still unsettle me
where's winter when I need him

old women in tie-die : redwoods
namaste : dry rosé wine

wandering on the blacktop
a monastery below

foothills in February soft
green : you there left

behind

they threw me down like you'd
strike a lucifer , spun off

& cast wide with a practiced
thumb : slow-mo helix

I twist & come , burnt crucifixes
rain down on my head : some

thing still could break my fall
but it better be quick

leather-bound Bibles
zippered , thick

the jeering drained up
on the wall : wet

wet wine pools beside my head : some
burst skin : some brimming well

I seem to remember a
prophet's scorn : dim

prognostications of wingless flight
his hand shook when he

walled his eyes : couldn't stand
our pagan dance

cedar & purple , my
sweet gay boys

now something's broken in between :
can't feel to get it right again

someone should take a
photograph

before the looters come
to pick it clean , laugh

at a princess smeared
into the ground

(*Prophet Unsurprised ;
Drag Queens Grieve*)

a gentle muzzle breathes on me
some soft forgiving tongue

licks salt & dust from my
upturned slack palm

I feel fallen
callen

calm

when the last one dumps me
for a guy named Birch

I collapse into bad Patsy Cline : a few
months later , I look around :

*look what you've gone &
made me do now*

pragmatic
I decide

I don't need to find
myself : reckon I

already found way more than I know
what to do with : more'n you

can shake a stick at : more than I
quite know how to get rid of

can distichs unclench a clot
thin out a vein

unclump a gutter
I took pictures

*because I didn't know
what else to do*

if I strew these freaked morceaux
over the mess will it be

absorbed : cat litter
my mother knelt

beside me on the bed
after I'd finished

& apologized , her two cupped hands
brimful of vomit , & said shaky

*I'm just wondering what
I should do with it*

when I next materialize I find
myself in France

le cinquième arrondissement
a two-room flat

I'm crashed in her
Victorian bed

& wake from a sweaty jet-lagged nap
thirsty & turned around

the flap : an unexpected
papillon

churrs ragged at her shutters
& , let outside

flops low over October's
late green gazon

(a lawn each morning cleared by a phalanx
of gardeners armed with rakes

& plush by sunset with thick rose-
flavored leaves)

drunken with cold
or with escape

dawn in Paris brings me to these fires
what a condensation

silhouetted on the Île de la Cité
a man swallows torches

*I had union with my hand & embraced
my shadow in a love embrace*

two faces en profile by the Seine
one north, one south

two matching fashionable black wool coats
two girls : I still sought you

even those mornings in her room : louvres ,
cold bells , *tisanes* , wide bowls

of chocolate : *abricotiers*
round orange aureoles

dreaming her sunspot under a musty
silver duvet cover

recall Fr. Nagy in Sansabelt slacks
Mme Vaget's tight leather pants

you taught me to conjugate *être*
you cannot take it back

can a lustre restore to the unshaped
after enough flux , solder , rouge

can wounds held above a blue gas flame
become repairs , burnished , annealed

can a seam come , retribution
spat into the breach

inscrutable in the gizzard , retched
out into scraps , a dangerous

angel's howl above the Adriatic's
ignored winter beach

tempered , raged : can edges close
and be a newly polished whole

that is what I mean by darkness :
the place where I kiss

your mouth , where nothing bad
has happened

all dross disgorged , plunged healed
into a water bath

hammered , filed down
polished & sealed

French pulled from the roots of my
tongue : she taught me how

to order : hot crêpes spread
with noisette , marron

glacé : the cheapest lunch
(basilico crushed into

a wet panino) : I relearned
from her carte d'orange ,

hebdomadaire , billets verts pour
le Métro : watch for bombs ! et

*ne mets pas tes mains sur la porte : tu risques
de te faire pincer très fort ; aussi*

*en cas d'affluence ne pas
utiliser les strapontins*

which still sounds like *in case*
you suddenly get rich

but we were desperate poor : assembled
our midnight feast on the wooden floor

an orange , four rounds of toast , a small piece
each of chocolat & cheese, & a tin cup

full of water : when the kitten , hungry
& smelling pleasure , leapt

into the middle of our picnic & spilled
all , soggy & hysterical

she leapt up cursing
scandalized

as I laughed &
laughed

do you remember : in your ear
I whispered

not the words themselves : but breath
& prickle, tongue's buzz

leaning into each circled curve
stumbling along your brain

do you not remember : in your ear
I besought you

you shuddered & agreed : but not
without turning on me

hissing into my spiralled mind
what you needed in return

now the empty drum falls
flat : silenced

a piece of blank &
missing time

we skate in that
pieced geometry

her in flats , me in
hiking boots

across the frozen
goldfish pond

placental
clouded

(what happens to the koi
trapped till spring ?)

*and something is cracking : I
don't know where*

her cigarette lit
prions grip

crystallizing in
my brain : I

feel like a gyro-
scope's inner

wheel , & no one's
counting

even if as wildly as we can we
dance: *with a shiver*

*in my bones just thinking
about the weather*

I know I can't be
shaken loose

the voltage of desire
the ways we moved

we notched our Dr Martens
for each quai crossed

the world's best falafel found
in the Marais

red cabbage pickle
yoghurt sauce

Alice & Gertrude with a big
brown poodle

which one am I? which one am I?
what a steep hike

to the white white chapel
where pink signs shone

LESBIAN SEXY HOT HOT HOT
& the windmill sulphurs &

the sore girls groan : was it
ridiculous not to envy her

her long wool overcoat
her elegant stoles

was it foolish not to marry her : not
to insist she choose me alone

*oh the moon shines tonight
on pretty Redwing*

was it duality not to kiss her
a laryngitis false not hoarse

*I was the third who walked
always behind you*

wrapped in the tongue of the youngest party
I fell amiably upon her sword

she'd say *what's wrong* & I'd
look at her dumbly

*I can shape my psalms like
daggers of jade*

her body white fire in the sun : much more
interested in the octagonal hottub

slow limbs heavying with reluctance
my nymph , my Palestine ,

my glade : I dried her with a distant towel
skin glowing even in the SPF shade

she left me as she moved my arms
damp with lust to contemplate

the noon miraged with carrion
where never is heard

*a discouraging word
& the skies are not*

cloudy all day

how could I solve a riddle
for an angel

I dream I held her as a lover
who completes : my half

locked with hers, we suffered
our perfection

moan together : whenever
she closes over our

wounds with her soft hands , tiny violet
needles fly out of the pain

I submit to this new future
no escape from deep

permit pinching discopulation
it is difficult becoming one

unsevered : a complement resealed
I sense a female : breather

feel some disturbing
chocolate pleasure

in this uncom-
fortable sum

could I blame her for unknit
vertebrae

untendoned
nerveless

after that soft acid rinsed through
left my sockets empty of flesh :

dry & died : she didn't know from
bonelessness

but to buy tequila
laugh & try

to take me down to the coffee place she worked
park me in the chair with a full cool green

bottle of beer to wait for midnight
& the end of her shift

to turn the contingent skin inside
out : thus left to my own device

what a poet I will flay myself
into : what a poet I will flay

the howl of Marsyas
a single A

worse then when it becomes
B : then Z

what is lyric next to a
body : next to the

absence of a body : & what
when faced with

the absence of
an absence

*& I am always amazed
words can fill up*

*a page : pages fill up the days
between him & me*

I'd thought that night would be the worst
then she got off work early

smelling of jasmine , anodyne
took me to the bar

& (jacaranda)
made me sing

I lie here tonight , love , enclosed
in the arms of her who does not

notice my existence , much less worry
about her own & I cannot tell you

what a relief this is
there is a niche

in the compass : where we lie down without
awareness : where chaos eases

narrative : here in the inviolate
chamber of this box of

now I keep you
safe & suffer

no one to awaken my love
until she please

when old lackluster questions
idle through me , her touch

dispels them , unfamiliar finger-
tips , insidious soft footfalls

some nights I lock her out
so I can weep

from the crook of her arm
I watch her room

strange alien windows hold
the light & let

it pass on through
she is so new

in a new succession
I learn again to

lie : quietly : it was
different with you

another unfamiliar room
fills in for the first one

another substitute
another food

another one to mourn when
she packs & moves

pin oak , post oak , scrub oak
white oak , red oak , black or

live oak : it does not matter what
your name is

when in windlessness you have been torn
up from the roots

to fall , groaning & rushed , along the path
where birds' eggs smashed

analytics make no answers
abstractions spoke :

pianissimo
nests

yes . it matters .
broken . yes .

figpeckers' rich gold yolk accompanied
birds sealed hot in pastry tombs

we tried to feast on an ideal : took up
heavy heirloom pewter spoons

essayed jests as if to celebrate : the soup
I made too weak & thin

nice faces studied down : regarded
the pattern on the china bowl

flat cream unbound to chicken broth
recently poured liquid from a can

little shrimp embryos pink & feeble
afloat on the sea-floor of the pan

what does it mean to be a sybarite
without a slave

no steam-baths , oils , or rose-petals
no candied violets , lemon towels

we said *zucchini* for *courgette* : named
eggplant , ignorant of *aubergine*

and I would never learn to cook
until there was

a full salt ocean
in between

spirals can describe
unhappiness

this unfounded , unfillable
keen which needs

more bodies , more hands
to hold , more

skin in whose tropic to warm
before we're pushed away

some gold when we curl in
bed & make the sun

& spirals can depict
journey , a search

& an eye in the end , round joy , a single
point : inexplicable which has no part

so now I'll ask you : did that final kindled
hour happen : was who really

there in the eggshell glow , safe
candled hole , nascent & found

your mouth : you: or someone else
under mine :

& if you don't remember being here
what ancient one had come

to join me for a final
labyrinthine ride

I should go : I should not lie
here staring

I should go : she would not
notice if I did

I should go : if only on
principle : but I have

forgotten , I have no more
principles now

my grandfather's criticism of me as a
bonfire :

tangled hair , spitting , ablaze .
and drenched .

and staked to the bone .
the sexual intercourse

*of angels is a conflagration
of the whole being*

her sweet body
decanted

but as such more than a sum
of repeated parts

so much more than
exponential

iterations of her name
flower , strange

imprimatur like
a stamp or

strange attractor on
my tongue

swooning in Manhattan galleries
she held up me

no bread but brod , fermented brick
earth-brown & wheaty

in Soho , rose and black lace bustiers
pierced with chicken wire

uptown , white sheets & towering slabs
old ivory , yellow , granite pink

Chinatown noodles break
a fast of days

my head inside-out from MSG (an old
woman lifts raw soy curd

gelatinous . her plastic bucket
& bamboo tongs)

if I die I said , my hand on hers
please burn my journal

she bought long charcoal sticks & paper
I put my head between my knees

looked out at the city from underneath
stunned by hems & roots of trees

she slipped behind ladies tenderly
to stroke sleek fur coats : gone

before they noticed they'd
been touched

her eyes , innocent of agate
nothing but blue

gone the wrong way on a gravel road
there's no food left

but hay : my father helped himself
to his side of my plate

we had one box of macaroni & cheese
best by a long-since vanished date

I get out of the pickup truck, unlock
the galvanized steel cattle gate

Christ have mercy on me , a sinner
wet-haired & sneezing in the rain

she mourned & drooped , a cut wildflower
gave all my pianos away today

if my grandmother had ever guessed
in her cocaine dress of poppy-red

I chased a nymph round my parents' bed
oblivious , half-fainting from desire

*as long as your horses
keep perfectly still*

the hymnals blazing
in contempt

sketching spirals by a paraffin fire
drinking iced cranberry tea

church pews rattle , the ribs of him : no time
for the blood of the lamb , confess

high heels caught as I backed away
snagged in layers of carpet shag

laid cold to rest in her pencil tin : if I
burnt in hell would she pee on me

fingers that've delved in Darwin & labia
have no place in exogamy

brown parcel paper
charcoal washes

what was I thinking
reptiles & angels

no one should ever come
home with me

later on , things weren't so stable
she stumbled down

the steps of the chapel
me right behind

to grab her elbow & as usual
save her :

predatory tears , breath hot with
vodka , gentle blue

eyes aswim with rage she
wailed in the tiled

bathroom for a full two
hours : *you got*

*summa & I got
shit*

I let her maul me to
distract herself

& when I stolidly calmed her
to go to sleep

& I finally left : my
knees were weak

rain-white roses drop down on the
stone wall like law :

she was here a
year ago

since then , time gave birth again
& again, & with complete

contentment produced nothing
but itself

it couldn't help
it : enclosed

is still an easier way : some recursive gene
or simulated fruit for most of us is

preferable to the Kalahari :
hybrids to aridity

does she remember that wet assault
being struck at the back

thick base of the skull with some
blunt object, lightning's thud

Apollo's pestilence-bearing arrows
a gun, an erotic end

a sudden stun : a
detonation

extremity forces me to thief
steal all her best lines

*(but am I am I a liar because I can't
say who I am I am in a word ?)*

what accents I acquired , what flat pitched
tones I picked up from her tongue

I drop like bruises now , numb
unmeaning stones

but return to the back garden
in the dew to collect them

when I find her
flown

let the Indians wife leape into the fire
is it better to marry , or to burn ?

earth took a pyrotechnic turn : we danced
without sleeping , she and I

she'd draw her long black hair out tight
fiddle sister music on its strings

I must've made a mess of things
she left & never said goodbye

chose soy cheese , & men who cry , &
object-oriented programming

in that city with its thin scarlet bridge
they like to call *golden* : by a wire

it hangs while software queens & kings
buy futomaki rolls & edge

sidewise into serial monogamy : our
current gasoline-stoked pyre

the difference , she said , *is spreading*
I realize you & I

are almost finished :
may I exult ?

there's future to dissolve this prairie
whose outline matches yours

what did I say to you : *please*
betray me ? but I don't

lie as much now , & don't need
a convent or : a gurney

the back of my neck's
bejeweled

she gave me the keys to
the pantry

I don't need to know her name
your beautiful Muriel

let her tenant the bedclothes
grow round in your car

you born without a navel
unattached to pasts

was I that weightless
to replace

the beauty of it
is (as *poetry's*

another word for dreaming with
the lights on) if

I'm so crystalline , then I
guess I've escaped :

erased , belittled
unembedded

free :
let

the lark sing after he
is lost in air

more is unconcerned

let me loose one song in this cento of lament
for the one I am

who is me back
improbable

& oscuro as anything looked for
the evidence of phase space

we can't see
but crave

love comes again in a
different raincoat

I'd reel comparisons (champagne energy, blue-
sky research , orchid corsage , laminar

opal , strangest
attractor) if

they even drew close to that
delicate algorithm

you radiate : the pentecostal fire of
you : seed crystal dissolved in

burgundy : *here & now reverse in convex
reflection , abidable, on the outside of*

your eyes : for look what
you make happen:

along a filthy bitter curve
of ruined oosphere

seeps a faint soft
genesis

a wash of life ignites where
you have touched

& more is coming

trying to vanish , I applaud her
diminishing Parisiennes

their tiny flair , their cigarettes
the way she holds his hand

when I walk behind them & pretend
I am her small friend

glass thighs & see-through
wrists & fingertips

aesthetics fatally appliquéd
less diameter of flesh

instead of squares of text
reduced : contained :

mince , maigre ; dwindled , dwarfed
please , stunt my growth

buy me a martini , eat my olive
deux cafés : sans lait, s'il te plait

a shallow , pretty , pretty sin
I never meant to step into

it's a flaw in distribution
not scarcity

her catwalk friends
unmodel me

invisibility hit me hard
I didn't mean to pinch

or break , but wanted to control the pangs
subtracted , leaving *one* from *two*

to wither from , pull away , become
the attenuation of plurality

to lose my center
to constrict

to be disoriented until I quit
or abandoned the concept

altogether : to shave away
the perhapsed whether

I never meant
to be unmade

to say goodbye we sat beside the Seine
her lover , she , & I

night bunched behind his shoulders
tourists , flowers , kisses

she ran her fingers through
his long rain-colored hair

at twelve years old I accidentally
bandsawed into my own thigh

in the kitchen I focused on tetrologies
while on the floor in another room

they slept curled in one sleeping bag
all her Sancerre extravagances

(chocolates sprinkled with gold dust
cold & with an ashen bloom

stale rolls to dunk in milk
a wheel of Brie

her musty floral stale perfume : datura ,
burnt brown sugar , hibiscus tea)

they whispered sweet as ashes
not to disturb me

we'd a brief confusion of Christian name
nous nous appelons le même

she told the waiter in disbelief , before
he brought our creme brulée

in blue night , we were both the same
since then I've learned

to print retractions , point the way
with a chewed radish

ring around a severed tree
burn my mother's poetry

concentrate on bridling meter
be a kind of facile chattel

ignore what's right
in front of me

I pined for you that day
the way a widow

mourns : nursing the marks
of teeth set in

skin though you'd forgotten
making them by then

concealed the plums blossoming on
my breast : covered even

from myself : I chose to savor
only the deep

sweetness remaining & to disregard
the spider's bite

what lies outside this
I decided

does not tell
the rest

& I dreamt of her , paused at wrought iron
to hold the gate for you : go on in

in a graveyard it is always winter : she pulls
her black veil shut behind

unhelpful Virgils , the undead point
in one direction only : down

when the time series dissolves , their
twiggy phalanges

snap & they crumble , rent with groans
homeless :

gone forever : from the
house of things

extol my name to the daughters of men
the only brave one

here: contused

& at the limin

yellow moon rising on unburnt
cornstalk stubble

that night was too purple
you touched my breast

without waking
divisions

between continents shrivel
compared to what

I can't tell you anymore
can scarcely correspond

my tongue curls up so cleft
language indiscriminates

*on the wild nights , who
can call you home ?*

the chalk-white cliffs look the same
from either side of the ferry

it is January of this new year & I have
already been to three countries &

it is already not enough : old
woman , what I have seen

for you : these are cities
glittering in the fallen

hours , prodded painfully awake
by insistent light

one accumulates not expertise
but uncertainties , as in

*I was doing well enough until
you kicked my stone over*

*& out I came, all
moss & eyes*

O
l

off
on

one state not un-
like another

car lights
slice

squares move , shift through walls &
planes , an invisible knife

poised above my secret
ancient rites :

this malediction : pricked
nib , spinster

sealed up in a blasted vault : for
this loss of a loss

a sociopath could easily
understand : oh step-

mother , this little
Terezin

is I fear all
your fault

I would rather never have had to sleep
with anyone but you

but we find our bodies
thrown on hard times

forage desperate
learn to climb

almost any shard will do
buzzards chuckle

in the rock : it's not particularly fictive
when

your nictitating membrane's
been removed : they

look no different
nickles & dimes

trim your fingernails : watch the clock
steal a paperclip or two

*the girl emptied the
stiffened mould*

*into my hand and I devoured
it ravenously*

talk about your reality checks
almost anyone will do

I have an instant photo from before
we lost you to the credit cards

shooting Wendell's retirement gift
a handgun : Ruger : your idea

firing into the Mojave , your filthy Carharts
ranch hands looking on longingly

(a proof : the villagers never
did like you)

who did you aim at , in the sand ? what
did you think that debt would prove ?

allied & throbbing with power
you used it

hoarded Nordstrom's business suits
buttoned-down shirts : doe-eyed

for me : attempt to transform a nixe into
someone healthy , normal & strong

a sturdy pocket Venus , willing & able
to come to orgasm underneath

but that was all before your fall : we have
had since no yeast like this

I dream your funeral regularly : theme
& variations , gunfire salute

trail behind the motorcade , weep behind
sunglasses when they bow & lay

a triangled flag between my thighs
take back your fucking suicide

this will be the last time
" you " means *you*

a decade later I walk along
Connecticut Avenue

that long diagonal toward the Capitol
litmus-paper pink &

blue double hydrangeas line the bricks
beauty back then invisible

nothing but madeleines did I eat
once for an entire month of June

you are sick : you told me
shaking

& I suspected that
was true

footsore at sunset , I walk back
up Wisconsin Avenue

still stuck at your leaving me here mid-spit
hung ouijiless midst a vicious

argument : no one to abandon
or offend : nobody to duck

the half-thrown glass now never to break
but it always has just left my hand

if you were just plain dead it wouldn't be so bad
but I can still find you on the Internet

these streets an askew
parallel

two kinds of time conjoin
& split : the indolent

fireflies . one by
one are lit

I drew my spear & shield
but was too late

the suitors beat me to it : got there first
Penelope moved on from the lurch

the sepulchral train left right on time
me jostling to get in line

I hung around the bus station
hopeful in a backpack

listened to the loudspeaker's
cold Dorian mode

tonight I think I won't
wait any longer

roads black : an invisible slick
treacherous to cross

apple trees drip ice thawed
by false warm rain

trunk twisted & crippled
torn by snowstorms

fruits glazed crisp with
sugared death

new grass underfoot
sharp & seeping

Ithaca's not for
the likes of me

houses were never ours , thronged
with continents

I cleaned & could not understand
sat on the closet floor

fingered her sari , black-gold & green
leave it alone

rooms cool on hot days
brass with vases

puppets & framed photographs
a dancer & her diplomat

a white woman frozen
Javanese poses

jungle landscapes kept
dust-free

their twenty-year-old cat had been
on more Pacific islands than me

I bought the milk & Cheerios
dry-cleaned the suits

animal skins thrown everywhere
zebra hides & lion pelts

their glassy murderous eyes
you took me from behind

my ignorant deficient snatch : she
didn't care for what she should

the one time I said no , I covered them
with sheets : wishing for burial

prongs of antelope & wildebeest
night-alarming staircases

a bed swathed in mosquito net : smudged
orange interurban streets

two senators lived on our block
cop cars patrolling up & down

I lived in the basement with my
watercolors : blue , pea green

& (running out of paint) a funny
ugly rusty purple-brown

it was not us
but this :

we learned new names
said *fuck* for *God* :

closer , but still standing in
for something else , some

inexpressible text with vowels
knocked out strategically

some faint corrupted
hush , a grace

that lifted up its gaze so we
fell briefly beneath

its shadows : single center
our good fortune

past import or intensity
yes : a convergence

we were permitted something there
which has called me on full ahead

these unsheltered
intervening years

neither transparent nor opaque
just : translucent

the daughter of pearls

or perhaps of tears

not much longer left now , anyway
the end of nature , not history

a man with the same name back in office
God forbid we should have to think

or change , or give up paper towels : or
the cars a potentate deserves

we'd keep our capacitors , our
Christmas lights , our

canyon
dams

the fossil fuels that English
earns

I suspect she is coming soon
inching along the rim , the

curve , her vast celestial scale
amiss (an ice

ice age each hundred
thousand years

but someone's punctured
firmament)

we imagine our kind without a peer
but yield to planarian demands

mitochondrial
inhabitants

in what's left of fierce
it's easy to forget

the integument unsealed
by our foolish hand

we can't begin to conster
the pinions' flow

the goddess of turbulence will return
even the rain now has a brand

the years I spent editing in the basement
hibernate in my left leg

grad school lodges a cinderblock
high between shoulderblades

where in my body have I hid
a decade of you ?

or has a whole huge piece of history
been denied

each time I let myself think *you* : synaptic
path between neurons thickens

deepens the groove cut into
cerebral quick

so if I now choose never
to refer

to any of these movie stills or scripts
warehoused in my head

if I never take another
drink again

will I be cured
will I begin

to live with the one
awaiting love

of me : with two lives
brim in each

full eye : good-
bye

I think I'd
rather

be :

when I now close
my own

eyes : run my own
hand down my

own thigh : I
feel

bone : planed
papery skin

you must have felt
becoming there

warmth melted down
each meted layer

sacrificed
articulate

to body forth an
armament

skeletal wire : that
singing gear

steel mechanical
springs of bare

resilient strength : I
hungered more

for you than
you were

ever there

how can I bear it : manage
to walk so normally

with bent head &
clean pockets

no one left to make much over
my freshly grown-out hair

admire its fetching swing
down over cheekbone

as I dream of you every night to my
contention : pointless

times I slip underneath the cool pavement
& your apparition on the escalator

looks awkwardly away , re-resolves itself
into a pleasant startled stranger

who wonders why this girl in baggy pants
stares at him : her hair hung

in her face limp & humid : like the
drowning man gave up , let

go & left her wet
& searching

I drip further under
your shade rises

his puzzled silhouette
motionless

moving steps slide him up
blackened : midday sun

oh let me not begrudged
an arc of water glasses

shot into air , propelled by a
single hurtled sneaker

sprayed me on my knees , linoleum
whispering to Nevada

I cast you out in the name of Jesus
demons rode on the ceiling fan

got no idea what made me scream
if I don't move then no one can

pinioned in a corrigible neoteny
the policy wonk & a seelie girl

Judas hung by his yellow necktie
how could you not have known

the Gulf War fit on an eight-inch screen
how could you not have known

I dreamt of the silk of a woman's thigh
how could you not have known

*I will not let you go except
you bless me*

*but then I will
let you go*

my skin's infinity
to you grew

ugly : its ruinous
topography

but every swollen cell
every hole

each bump & pock : each
scratch welled up with

red : every pore
& each poor

damaged
detail

is now adored
& held

it's now a decade later
I want a different *you*

crave a threat : spoil for a fight
identify with feists & terriers

who jump dogs five times bigger
I want to sharpen

claws , shred bark , shed clothes : want
my earrings & red scarf ripped off

someone to bark *ha ! I shall keep* : want
that wash of breathless heat

to run its careless hands over me
want to be hit

with a ton of red bricks
feel their rough edge

with all my length : want my
boredom thrown straight

back at me : someone intelligent enough
to be cruel , who knows me well enough

to be a little mean
someone's skin

in which to dig , spit
damn you : gasp

what did you just say ? ! want
those singing flames

that break jet engines
I want a waste

Sahara glaciers , ice among
the conflagration

violence hid amid
the din

but the devil visits me & whispers
through the lock

*you can only hear the clock tick
in silence*

I sing to the beloved
deaf or dead

when I can't think
what else to do

*for the heart doesn't die : when
one thinks it should*

sing in the soot to that carved-
out absence : volume exact

when my hand graves
space that isn't there

precise : contours crushed without
its dazzling lack of weight

sing when my larynx complains a name
now counted angel

numbered unspeakable
become a column

sing until spirit
shines eidetic

then
run

through the pre-war city
half-pale , half-grey

insides of brain
interstices

& alleyways where paired
articulated lines

stalk : twoness makes one
implicit : limp

through morning streets
beat out unbidden

an accentual syllabic stride
cracked dualistic iamb

love
dies

*I've lost their tracks
the loved ones*

*perhaps my singing
will bring them*

it's important to keep
moving , that is why

even when no one hears , it's not
a bad idea to warble on

*by the rivers of Babylon
we lay down & wept*

because who knows : because
our song may find

him ? no : because thus we have
become more than our years

some presence larger than the enunciation
of emptiness

not just umber
not just born

something more than
just : alone