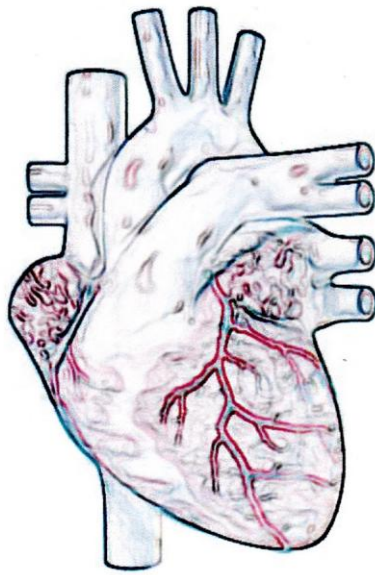


25
(2001-2004)



Lewis DeForest Brown

for Mischa

25 Poems

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AKA

*"And they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas
who was also known as Justus, and Matthias....
They cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias."
Acts 1.23,1.26*

Someone has to pull the sheets.
Someone has to boil the eggs.
Someone measures the plank.
Someone saws it, they think.

When I am not them, I'm another.
If I'm not wise, I'm crafty,
spake he, spake Matthias.
Grind me up; mince me.
I have a hefty bit of eternity.
Some oasis has been lost,
because I am a further fellow,
because the spirit
(I hoped it was I)
jumped me, caused me,
although I was not running for office.
If they thought I was pink,
they could have (shudder)
made me eat pig
and blown my cover.
Instead I saw the Word
and it loved me.
My name was Matthias,
after all.

Coffee Shop

When the coffee shop closes
I will lose empathy
with its neighbor
annoyed and sleepless.
Art will disappear.
Same will then be different.
No dam will stem the flood.
I can see no news.
There will be buds
somewhere blooming but unknown.
But then you never really know
do you? You don't
know if you're awake or dead.
I enjoyed the tuna salad.

Cows

It is hard to have a bright outlook
when you know you will be stunned
in the head at any time
when the time is right
echo not bright.

Danger is in the hayloft amusing itself.
It will be fed to us tomorrow. It is for us
to ingest. It is toxic and we will die of it.
If we do not die from it we will die from the other thing
— the thing carried on the soles of men (or women).
Stunned or emaciated.
Burned thereafter — one way or another.
Even if we believe in the right, bright way
we do not do it well enough.
We pray upright, hooves down, head in the grain.

We do it historically
and history continues to betray us.
It identifies, it asks pertinent questions.
We use human language to answer.
You thought we lowed only?

Now the mood changes.
You have only so long.
We have only so long.
Better to ruminate.
Better to wait.

Crisis

The crisis me follow is
contemporaneous
with the rose on the street.
The danger passing....
All foul beliefs are friendly.
It was always to be so.
Can *la différence*.
Couldn't you be my cold day?
Think you not we are trembling?
Admire the exposition. Again.
This was as it was is thus as a this.
Stoves, ovens, the usual common
not forgiving comes in sleep.
A pirouette, deep knee bends.
What I call structure,
afraid of happiness, corruption,
backwards gambling, forced ascents.
Been where. Done him.

Difference of Others

Not so
escaping the market,
the crenshaw melon,
the exaggerations,
so many supplements to live by
and a question or two,
maybe.
If I speak
quadrangle,
kiss me.
Where is it?
A crush of melody
as aspic
as the future beheld...
Not we, not we, not we...
I'm coming,
similar to comingling,
case in point,
sparkle.

Eighteen

A face not yet eaten by a rug.
A smile without quantities.
They fall open on their own
laws of gravity.

Fireflies on Surfboards

for Bet Blak

What to do is congratulate the element that crosses
fawn lights, false cues, a drip,
calm, frosted, crazy and light, the lost, the busted
—this that was that special night
with lips.

Put your arms in mine and
use the road to Mercatale
—a present warped,
more kindness, more indulgence,
a mask that might mean peace
unless it is punctuated.

What can you do?
Living and dry and moving
where the sharp is feeling what air was,
contaminate us for feeling,
feeling, feeling, feeling.

Frost Heaves

The salt-colored macadam is crevassed
like postpartum stretch marks;
ridges span the narrowed routes
like a collision of continents.
All this for the passing of sixty-four
cycles of seasons — especially winter.

Horizons

I lie down and
a verse starts yelling
at me. A child's garden.
Cryptomania.
Once this sleep is solved
where will the old ones be?
What's the name of that?
Once medicine creeps in
to the thunderstorm
what's a ninny to do?
If it were just flowers
and a blade or two
and golden curiosity
at the borders,
I would sink there
and count my luck.

Hospital

Nice to bulge
with maturity.
Copper ideas and signs
rise from the bubbling mud.
Smooth faces, prudent manners
coughed up on a solemn journey,
taking the long way.
Glee just might
end it all.
A nametag for my chair
found growing with
a terrific titanium slant
to the story, so
last is never least.
The best is yet.

Independence Day

Time to write a poem about
all the women I've entered.
No, no, no. I've done something
like that. Better about
the mariachi band in the mirror,
or neo-patriotism,
or racing at Daytona,
or how I quit smoking.

Jack Spicer

Bring me the head of Jack Spicer.
I want to lift it,
to know the score.
When they look at me
I want their attention.
Food is one thing
— tasty biscuits.
There is one way to board a bus,
one way to pray.
Make his head round
the way I remember it.
Twenty biscuits.
I want my brain confounded.
There is one way to escape.
In the broken mirror
what crisp cover
destabilizes the loss
of worth?
Even among ghosts
something matters.

Model

You are someone's daughter.
Could also be a mother, sister, wife.
You are a look
that dies like an ice cube.
What kind of a show is that for
infinity or eternity?
— interfering with a thoughtless mind.

Myocardial Infarction

Three quarters full.
Staple my head
at the top
where I can see
over.
The threats are only as hard
as the wrong paint chosen.
You don't go so far.
The stage blinks
and (wait for it) the smile;
a weed waves atcha.
Cold...hot...doesn't matter.
I see roots,
trees, bushes, whatever.
I find an accomplice
I've never met.
The name pops up (a blister).
I don't get it.
All my orders fade.
Then I am served
blind and speechless,
as if it all was
and can't stop.

Oriental Window

Leaves of the fruit tree (ornamental)
gleam against gray housepaint that doesn't.
It's another way of looking for something.

Praising the Dead

*The Light, as usual, doesn't know
there's any darkness in the room.*

Richard Duerden

I want you here.
You got that nub of knowledge formed,
that denim song,
that hat that ain't too big.
You met crispy Dante.
You cared for the first and the last by now.
The completed essay
has your rusty signature
and your bowels don't ache anymore.
You once owned the car
that made men mad,
that smelled of socks
and babies' blues.
What you had
wasn't what I had
and I want it before I go away.
What earthly use?
They're on the water now
with their billowing fat kites
not remembering.
I could teach them a lesson, but
you could speak to them with panache.
Once you've disappeared
you might have clout.
I want you to show me smoke.
I want you here.

President

The president contains
segments of unruly high behavior
that stifles upon the pithy sigh
which crumbles in mumbles.
The president and his cronies,
cronies and brain clones are cobbled
with heels, tongues and laces.
Their soles are pure leather,
inflexible and shiny.
The president is humvee humble,
proud of his stumble.
You must love the feet of the president.
You can criticize your spouse instead.

The Quick and the Dead

There is indeed this tortured soul beneath
that feels his words are wrought as naught but grief.
Their meaning is escaping like a fly
that ere it's swatted knows it is to die.
Eventually the reaper with his swing
will find his target and injure a wing.
The complex thing that is its body splayed
upon a window or a wall is made
to look like Jackson Pollock was its guide
for choosing what it looked like when it died.
For this there is no prize or any guise;
it cannot help but blush as human eyes
see clearly that—despite its posturing—
that its preoccupation was just zing.

Retitling a Selection of Paintings by Matta

a list poem for Larry Fagin

From where she sits she must move.
North, South, East, West, the whole shebang...
Some measurement of ambiguities prepares itself.
The life of a grasshopper is more difficult than it seems.
What goes on when we're not looking?

A woman shows off the egg she has delivered and speaks of it.
As I was dreaming they woke up and sorted themselves out.
In the cabin are pancakes and he shows her offspring how to dance.
Risking a leap the nog spits.
That cute little ghost thing imagines it's alive.

Eyes and windows, eyes and windows, oh come on!
Say, coldness of a freezer can be guessed but not assayed.
Some master writes cheap tricks so we defy the inevitable.
We groom to see ourselves, not to find honey on our teeth.
When jellyfish make modern life to be acknowledged...

Ah, the Nobel prize...who would have thought?
Churches mean stars, not the other way around.
Give me your milk and I'll give you mine.
If you find yourself in Egypt, watch this.
You say it's a room but I see trouble.

A knee is bright and informative.
Flowers.
Make of it what you will.
The sea is dying and so is whatever is in it.
Woods, too, are fine. But what is the percentage?

Again, a small mistake brings life to those who waited.
I saw her majesty and borrowed some.
It was a party and the rest of it was too.
Limbs, vegetables and golden gore on the rocks.
They sang "Blood of the Rabbit" and "The Chorale of Tools".

An uprising of pacific trends.
Don't call me. I'll grow my own.
Pardon me. This is serious.
The best nights compare awkward meanings.
We prayed for the birds to fly over us and then....

Rockeater

Paul told the Christians of a joy
from applauding the implausible.
An equivalent in modern times might be
to appreciate the plausible
all the way to zero.
Two ways to redemption each marked
by unqualified, unwarranted faith.

Three Free Verses for Columnist Jon Carroll

1. Sex and God

A glass at the edge is about to fall off a table.
To rescue the container would mean
God does not have a plan or does He?
Or is He an It? It's beautiful (or not) the way we say
God is a man, not a hermaphrodite,
certainly not a woman. God help us.
Even women, a least a few, object to that
— meaning God as feminine, but also a few
object to God as masculine, object to masculine.
The resolution is to divide gender and sex.
God is who you want He, She or It to be.
Gender is ambiguous and wholesome; sex is not.
The glass is an it. So is the table. And my cat.

2. Descartes

There is no judgment I have not made
or would not if I could.
If the height of scraping the sky is a question
I open a window and answers float past.
And extremely loud leafblower?
Let us kiss the trigger before he drowns.
Take pleasure in the disruption of knowing
exactly where the craze needs to be played.
When the strings are uplifting the end
is approaching fast and will be expected as rain.
Such can make us miserable like illness
which can just as easily be forgotten.
Nothing happens unless I am there. Or my cat.

3. Evolution

Biota grows and dies and so do I.
An early mystery was *cuspidor*.
I reached for it in a cupboard that was bare.
One thumb behind my back
—two thumbs would have made no difference.
Perhaps a blind street I reasoned.
But they make a walk longer is all.
An object, a concept or a Spanish explorer?
It was damage by youth,
by a lack of mundane sophistication.
Later in life I loved trigonometric identities
and the fusion music of Miles Davis
who could spit anywhere he pleased. Like my cat.



Ugly Alien

*Not the ocean of the virtuosi
But the ugly alien, the mask that speaks
Things unintelligible, yet understood.*
Wallace Stevens, *Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery*

A step in mud brings the stars down, then
a moment escapes and a day stays, then
an awkward drawer spills lawyers onto the rug, then
a warrior takes in cold old food as a pet, then
the wisest parent hums and hums like knitting, then
a wholesome long division raises a glass, toasting, then
a cataract that annoys tells beauty to swell, then
televisions leak the glance of Orpheus freezing, then
another guy named Rusty sails off, then
a tense coincidence makes a mockery of money, then
a job opens up and swallows radiance whole, then
morals erupt, blossoming Sunday sung in petals, then
milk of kindness wends its way by size alone, then
what does it mean? What happened to AC/DC? Then
we needed wheelchairs to walk, then
flame passed using the breakdown lane, then
context outlives foci, and background beats the bell, then
the skill to crawl returns unnoticed, then
acid seems wholesome, nails stem fear and shed it, then
(pearla, dooma, samba, grackles and doves)
we are lifted so firmly our teeth refuse to clatter.

Waves (Credo)

Living is horizontal,
returning before leaving,
inventing a horizon behind the eyes;
ebb feeding the swell,
swell eating the ebb,
vertical, only curling;
the values of distance
consoling myopic nerves,
danger denuded,
daring advanced,
proximate to approximate
glorified, crushed and gathered
unhearing, blinded, pain submerged
minding a coming light.

Working at a Standstill

Creatures come up but gravity hinders them.
The few steps bite the progress they want.
Hellos gather, marching in time.
All so upset yet having a good time and good sense.
Nothing to apologize for. Crashing bores.
Dreams make mistakes like everyone.
He, the foot-warmer, is taking off the title.
No end. No end. Great spirits with yeast.
He, the same, has been shifting the weight.
Introductions fornicate and bend over backwards.
Cracks in the foundation supply drama.
Did I mention we are selling sand?

Zappa

My valentine is blood runs
according to a scripture
hot and cold.
I have been to El Monte Stadium,
and caused many motels
to clean my room.

It's a gland that breaks;
not the heart.
Whatever is red
whatever is blue
belongs to you.
Fuzzy dice indeed.

