

# RIDDLE ME THIS

(2011-2012)



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Portrait by Adra Anne Brown

Green is the path we take  
Between chimeras and garlanded the way,  
The down descent into November's void.

Wallace Stevens, *Owl's Clover*

## Riddle Me This

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## Riddle Me This

*...The combinations  
Of the world are unstable  
By nature. Take it easy.  
Kenneth Rexroth*

Apples and rockets in cave-lit overtime  
present imperfect and ambiguous mercy  
—just enough to dampen or spark  
your appetite for wanting to be understood.

And there it will stand:  
the truth and all its alternates  
challenging your ability to trust,  
just like Mary made Joseph blush.

There are happy times unforeseeable,  
rapids of agua to elevate your mood,  
tendrils of handy ads to titillate.  
You can be glad, as the mountain speaks.

Leaves on the path, you said, will wait.  
Making heads or tails matter it doth not.  
Teeter of teat is in the balance.  
What will you say when Sunday comes?

## **Feinting or Feigning**

We put coal on the fire,  
then wood, then natural gas,  
but now under our eyelids  
just flames have grace.

Like red leaves  
in a dark sky  
—a flutter of omens,  
a peck of burned lies.

Condominiums gather;  
a series of doors gape.  
Entrance is plausible but  
escape is as white as steam.

Looking, stepping, the risks  
may be pretenders;  
they may be gray.  
Honey, do you hear me?

## The Cream at the Top

We don't begrudge the numberless lies.  
Or were they misbegotten, well-meant tugs  
that take the big boats out of the harbor?

The crammed head wants to boast  
independence from those shrimpy suggestions  
that our loyal GPS has disappointed us.

That lone cactus, stingy with its flower,  
makes promises that the best of us can't redeem  
—be big, be red, be rare, but we're not beguiled.

Jesus showed us how this crumpled message works.  
It's not a second or minute or hour—it's just time  
which no soul on Earth knows what that really is.

The blind message was played in a bottle.  
What's in that bottle is duck soup (or gin).  
Ignorance is actually bliss. Pour that in your cup.



## Independence Eve

Over the fence she goes  
like an infamous wastrel  
fearless of the dark, and  
My mother is appalled.  
It's worth a trip  
to somewhere in Isaiah  
before the eyelids say no more.  
Cry aloud, spare not,  
lift up thy voice like a trumpet.  
Bad queen cat, wanting a wide place.  
Here is that dark crescendo  
where the heedless gather  
and ruin the precious planet  
All plantains, platypuses,  
pluperfect exchanges randomly chosen  
sink down in a mild despair  
before the eyelids say no more.  
The shapes of shoe soles in mud  
that directs a willing body  
to remember something it cannot.  
We are not free.  
Between two and four  
it was imagined and branded  
—everything and its wild mating call.



## Parts of Speech

The jejune adjectives, fallible adverbs,  
misplaced pronouns, nonsense nouns  
fill my palpitating heart with gerunds  
that were left behind in another century

with the blessed events, the u-turns of crisis,  
the wounded and the dead, the great artists  
with their slapdash masterpieces still hanging.  
Cultural currency has never been so mystified

as to where do you put your lying head;  
where do you find the time to make it all right  
when wrong is so accepted, adored even?  
Democracy has not corrected itself.

Listen, pal, acquisition has limits.  
Making babies is apocalyptic for sure.  
There's nothing left to vote for that has a chance.  
We can't keep it zipped or properly armored.

## Arithmetic Down Under

Canberra, Auckland, Melbourne and Alice  
could be an austere embryo, a home  
within an inebriate fine art form.  
Judgment is always at its best when it is withheld.

Arrows are important, we know, not just to pierce  
but to show where to pierce, where the wound belongs.  
Locations can resemble many fine art forms.  
Let's get off this bus immediately for our own good.

Australia (and maybe Austria) is candid, awkward  
and well-born. Where do you go where it is not so?  
The problem is always arithmetic, the inability  
to grasp the awful significance of just how many.

Ask Alice. Fear Alice. Always plainspoken,  
recommending dangerous continents, huge islands,  
where escape is impossible until the expiration  
date where the meld goes down and the count begins.



## Confession

The vulgar son of madam  
unleashed his wanton scream.  
The streets of black macadam  
are faultless in their dream.

The crows that caw betray us.  
Their black wings will be shaved.  
Their countenance outrageous  
will be by Christ yet saved.

Our plants are now divided.  
Our crimes are fixed on high.  
The soul that makes our sins glow  
will be forgot and how.

If you who don't believe me  
say we are not to blame  
should meet me at the nut tree  
and I will speak your name.

## The Fork on the Swing

*Now, if you have a cleft palate and are trying  
to speak with the tongue of men and angels,  
you're gonna still speak through a cleft palate.*

Jack Spicer

Tanks are rolling down our street  
as thanks are ever giving us the willies.  
Stop where the tanks stop;  
look under the tread—crumbled concrete,  
asphalt that looks like you slept in it.

The smell of inner investigations  
obscures the radiance of justified war  
where the odor entombs the last letter,  
decorates the small minds reading,  
like tornados dancing coast to coast.

If you're fond of sand dunes and salty air,  
quaint little villages here and there,  
grow an enormous pocket to stash that.  
Roads will be breached by those popularly  
called bitches, regardless of their gender.

The cognoscenti know that gender is exploded.  
We live with the pieces, peacefully  
because we're smart and overloaded  
with what righteous means, slender,  
muscular, and impregnable to tanks.

## The Other Uni Verse

What is ink ed here is genuine  
and oughta be nourished.  
It will take your change and give some  
back to the wild weather we have now.

If a serious mien is all you've got,  
spend it, relish it, tell your family  
about it. Words make the other wise  
smile even with unwhitened teeth.

Words are not a kalashnikov,  
so you don't have to duck  
and what good would that do  
anyway? Other than exercise.

Yes, gymnastic responses in B flat  
maybe will stop the continuing horror  
that this sorry planet hears always.  
Let's hear an other song.

## Sign Here

*Invention is your signature, your worth*  
Richard O. Moore, from *delete*

Sandblaster, look alive.  
The mature animal is painting.  
Newspapers may die but not the governors  
—sunken cities to be described in detail  
as if the coming week will be better.

At a distance the sameness is blinding.  
In the mirror in mirror confection  
Lazarus, lazy, lies, finally just sleeping.  
But once the window is closed  
the breeze freezes all possibilities.

Yes, ironic cold from the bessemer sun  
is all the crying a person can do.  
A deep shudder under a plastic island  
is a half-off bargain with it comes to life.  
Pulling the one-armed bandit is not a smile.

A golden nutcracker awaits us.  
We don't need our genius to appease it.  
Empty your tote near the inglenook;  
make room for the ashes you've bled.  
You can't hear the car alarm in here.

## Sore Lips

*I had a store of such remarks, be sure,  
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.*

Robert Browning, *Fra Lippo Lippi*

The contraptions we permit  
to open the gilded gates  
are a taste rusty and troubled.  
Under sentence of dearth.

Why the clammy mouth can't sing  
until something in the garden winks  
is the romantic curse, the soft edges  
of the Pre-Raphaelite disposition.

Cruising all directions that angels  
fuss about and flap their bedewed wings  
would be funny if it was, but  
I prefer the stumbling Messiaen.

O, to ring the blinking din  
that smolders invisible untested  
—that could bring the end in range  
of one last meandering kiss.

## Half a Pair of Scissors

The genuine article cost light-years to make.  
All the inhabitants were aghast, puzzled and pointed.  
What is a miracle if it isn't milk and cookies?  
All analogies stood up and asked to be counted.

Memories swirled around the spoken problems.  
Manifestos were sung in strange ethnicities.  
So many mirrors squirmed with impatience.  
The endings and beginnings dropped out of the race.

The atmosphere was a kiss and some appropriate gesture.  
A central city was born to add to the confusion.  
Factories and dealerships were now squirming in mists.  
A golden age was announced and then regretted.

No more horses on pavement nor salt in the sea.  
Card games, foreign languages and medicines are corrupt.  
The good news is palm fronds; the bad is traffic.  
Lives expire and names are window dressing.

How many light bulbs does it take to screw up big?  
If table manners are important God is out to lunch.  
DNA comes from somewhere; its investment is protected.  
Someday her arm will be so sore the torch will descend.





## Dead Man

*to celebrate John Updike*

I must read your latest book.  
It will improve Hamlet  
because you had more sense.  
You engaged the scientific method  
and returned with garbled memories  
and appropriate clothing for your age.  
You blew words like bubbles  
from your loose ship-sinking lips,  
doing all you could do  
while it always rained.  
Fucking tomorrow came and pointed  
the smallest finger a djinn could find  
to make the truth you trusted come true.  
You had the pillows of words  
whose covers never coordinated  
with the fabrics you made your bed with,  
and they would not preserve the sunken shape  
that your miraculous skull  
pressed into them. God bless.

## Pornography

*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr

On a bus,  
seeing a skirt  
not draped down  
between thighs,  
but stretched across,  
promising a glimpse,  
the possibility  
of free nature  
at its best  
— this sentence  
cannot be ended.  
My uncle's magazines  
saved from the 30s  
hidden poorly  
in the garage  
intoned my brain  
and the connection  
of brain to body.  
Yes, stretch marks  
can be an invitation;  
and unshaven legs  
suggest a happy  
wantonness. A smile,  
wry or ashamed,  
can reveal the id.  
Some poses  
cause droop  
by distraction.  
Other men  
and their gear  
are extraneous.  
If it is not a drama  
inside my skull  
it just is not.  
When the rod is risen  
all is forgiven.

## In Cottage Grove

*Our bodies, Craig thought, are  
a ponderous residue the spirit leaves behind.*

John Updike, *Personal Archeology*

Ask a cat:  
Is living worth dying for?  
Its answer is so bloody obvious.  
Ask a human and its brain  
goes into a mesh.  
So love the mesh I guess  
while you can.  
Watch a child learning to walk  
and the whole of ontology  
is in that silly small body.  
All of our made-up religions  
are owned by that insistence.  
Like many I was told:  
You think too much.  
Well, right now I'm thinking  
only just enough.  
My dying octogenarian sister  
used her walker to cross a bridge  
in Cottage Grove, Oregon,  
just like a child to find out she could.  
That's what she finally derived  
from extensive education.

## Providence

*...living in a Protestant city  
and my heart too bleak for self-pity...*  
George Stanley, *Vancouver in April*

Tragedy without pardon or reason  
may be from the '38 flooding of this sober  
entrance to maples and birches and elms.  
Haul me out of here where I cover my ears  
for fear of the world that screams outside me.  
Looking for a window seat that feels  
like order and relief and an uncompromised  
sun-sported smile by a small animal  
that eats flowers and quiet musical embraces.  
Where shadows are allowed for the sake  
of brightness, of superterrestrial solid light.  
A skirt drapes an edge and shows  
a flat sole strapped round the shoe.  
Nothing to do with making a baby might I add.  
Dry shattered leaves, October's joke, blend  
this awful rampant brain with  
the gray in grandma's braided hair.  
Wake up, mom, it's snowing now.  
Can we just feel good for a minute, Polly?

## Thinking Too Much

*Faith is an oasis in the heart  
which will never be reached  
by the caravan of thinking.  
Kahlil Gibran, Sand and Foam*

I, my Lamb, am a regular man.  
You gave me the right to flee.  
You suffered me, so no one talks down to me.  
My ears are poisoned by peace, my soul.

And still, not one scientist knows  
what a scientist is, my Lamb.  
The Name escapes them. Come back, soul.  
I shudder to think; they think to shudder.

Explanation leads our lives, my Lamb.  
My soul knows the Name, my soul.  
The Name's handy, obtuse, and besotted  
—a big peace, a very large extra peace.

Come back, come back to where You are,  
to my hands, ok, my Lamb, my Only.  
No one talks down to me. All is up.  
The recipe is in the direction.

## Twenty Minutes

In so little of time  
the explanations have been made  
—ludicrous and eternal they are done.  
Don't forget that I did it.  
All those guys (and others we don't know about)  
did their best in whatever tongue they had available.  
It was explained where you get to a point.  
I don't need this anymore.  
It stands among all else that stands  
by what self is itself.  
It has been imagined and we speak English.  
Such a fancy tongue has big limitations.  
Is wordless silence closer, do you think?  
Stop pestering me about this.  
Skateboarders love repetition  
and mothers love whatever happens.  
You can't just read it.

## What Makes Me Crazy

*for Paul Anthony Burrows*

Real poems don't know  
the silliest grievances  
that make the p trap  
lose its sense of gathering.  
I love you, and I love you still,  
I wish I knew what are you thinking?  
All that surprised ten years ago  
has obviously gone down the drain.  
The poet, which is after all  
the only thing I am, wants to know,  
gumballs and merriment aside,  
what was captured?  
Is it shunning that survives  
or only what might have been?  
You are an appropriate mystery.  
I never found a way to connect.  
Thomas Merton is waiting.  
The gumballs are waiting.  
Damn the grievances and the plumbing.  
I always had an hope of somehow  
making a connection I never found.  
Regardless of all else, I would like  
to discover and forget  
where that inspiration collapsed.  
"Water flowing underground..."  
Again say I regardless of all else.

## A Proposition

We pay for the trumpets  
that glance us about  
not meaning one slender word,  
not one dusky ounce of it.

These are not my vowels, or anyone's  
These consonants are fancy pants.  
Perhaps an audible inquiry approaches,  
speckled, shiny and flowfully formed.

Escape is pointless to some location.  
The white space pause lingers like a sore lip.  
Is it a serious infection? To garble and gurgle  
in an air-conditioned apartment?

But the computer virus is a poor example  
of the pain of choicelessly traveling light.  
I come by, I come by this  
silly insurgency, a room of one's own.

What was suggested  
was never suggested, but  
that which can be insisted  
is forgiven out of foggy gladness.



## O Wally

You say what spirit have I  
but what comes from the son.  
This supreme homonym:  
sun and son.

Just bend.  
Our paradigms are strong  
and weaken us.  
Step away.

The shadow knows  
a pert hello  
is all it takes,  
mean it or not.

How do you know  
about that house  
that Hartford has so many of?  
There is bloom, crime, and windows.

A center of plagiarized brain  
is good enough for now  
Step for step  
our last strides...

## The Mass

*No more than that, no subterfuge,  
No memorable miffing, bare and blunt.*

Wallace Stevens, *Owl's Clover*  
(*Mr. Burnshaw and the Statue*)

A drunk old man writing a poem  
finds his way home liturgically.  
He knows repetition will set him free,  
marbles lost and marbles found.  
Repeat after me.

Call upon what has no name for influence  
and wait from birth to death  
for a call back, a smack back, a kiss or slap.  
You must love a mystery  
or what else you got?

You've got to love the saints who got it right.  
But spare a hug for those who lost and tried.  
The ground has tried insistently to sink me down.  
However, kind sir, if you cut my roots,  
I can't grow.

## Misogyny

Blow smoke in her face.  
Grab her for your thrill.  
Take the wheel because you drive.  
Smell like a cowboy.

Think she is wrong.  
Tell her to be quiet.  
Make fun of her slacks.  
Tell her you are waiting.

Know you are stronger.  
Believe you are braver.  
Be patient with her chatter.  
Dig your own grave.



## Knuckles

*Natives charm the future with their knuckles*  
George Stanley, *Punishment*

Give them a Gregorian chant.  
Make them shut up.  
It might be the adjunct  
to prohibited responses  
has arrived.

If I can say your chin is glass  
or I don't see what's cute,  
how melancholy has short days,  
thinking it is everyday,  
how difficult it is to chart a course.

An exclamation is due.  
I called long ago for it to come.  
Yes, it's hidden by clothing.  
Let's elevate our thinking.  
Sunday starts then Sunday ends.

## Homegrown Meditation

*A telephone that rings but who's to answer  
Oh, how the ghost of you clings...  
Eric Maschwitz, *These Foolish Things**

Having never been wise enough to obey my misgivings,  
that I might clumsily make light of the profound,  
I hear the clamor of a rap being reduced  
by the sample overcoming the blather.

But the blather is calm, already reduced  
as in: Get all that shit out of the attic.  
Not monotone but severe, short and welcome,  
because next is next and not now.

What mind shall I inhabit? Genius or jejune?  
Waiting for a straw that destroyed an ungulate?  
Or just smelling some innocuous swing air  
that contains everything that can be answered?

## Cazadero Again

*The whole of appearance is a toy.*  
Wallace Stevens, *The Dove in the Belly*

Climbing walls for a meal of peace  
while in the seat here watching  
dahlias mooning the sun,  
bending away from the light behind.

Chump change for the best vacation  
will buy pleasant blurred vision  
to say goodbye with if hello  
has passed us by and signed it.

Blazing yellow in stolen daylight,  
making the love seat a fit for the moment.  
No deposit required, just open eyes.  
Keep us here, stay with us, then leave.

What could be more plain?  
Hummingbirds sound like humming  
just like an internal combustion engine  
climbing walls for a meal of peace.

## The Resolution of Fear

*If it were done when 'tis done,  
then 'twere well it were done quickly.  
Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 7*

If it is to come, let it come posthaste.  
All the patrons are lined up to wave so sorry.  
Juveniles, adults, aged parents, Irish uncles  
stand stiff for the ceremony while wiggling.

The passage is crammed with the ghosts  
of America, Canada, Mexico and elsewhere.  
Their visas are multiplying; the ice is melting.  
And the sun is melting now that it may.

The saurians are smiling, waiting for the day  
which is a gala for the suspected unsuspected.  
Will incest, sodomy and the love of pain prevail?  
If that is to come, why should we bother?

We have manners, expectations, the weirdness of camels.  
We don't need a seven-ten split or indigestion.  
If we live through one hundred then die as infants,  
somewhere it is written down... Or is it up, or in invisible ink?

Selling vacuum cleaners, inspecting girdles or testing  
the accuracy of calipers for a year or so  
does not prevent tuberculosis or rheumatic fever  
or the long-lasting effects of a thousand cigars.

So when the globe heads for home plate  
from the knuckles of an all-star pitcher  
the umpire, however well-armored, should duck  
or dive or retire or take up knitting for the nonce.

## Comfort Defined

How ridiculously weak, fragile,  
the thread of language stretching  
its complexity for safety from the predator  
who understands it and whom it annoys.

All gems, names, equations, riddles  
that the thinking lathe shapes are consumed  
by the death of the oil that burns  
from exhaustion, only a stain remaining.

The sagging sage shuts up and listens,  
drinks only a Logo, sweet and simple,  
retiring in the brilliance of infant opacity,  
smiling like a silent ripple lost in the desert.



## Man at the Rim

Here at the rim smoldering  
his lousy objections; the man  
lies smearing the love that he expects.

Every bus he takes leaves him  
waiting for the next one  
that some obscure transfer

tells him to take forever  
if he has that moment to waste  
while he is pursuing forever.

O the mistakes of awe  
that he smothered like mothers do  
if they are not inhibited.

Wellfulness is not directed;  
it's assumed you have the talent  
to make everybody shut up and listen.

## Look It Up

Reading Manroot 10 and changing voices  
and all this Hollywood sunblast  
about sneaky Greek poesy, regular gravy,  
that never met a stage it didn't like...

Take the turnoff at a famous exit  
and be saying: No magnets for me, please,  
just the good plain hellishness that  
my pet Caterpillar 12 is engrossed with.

Caterpillars, by the way, don't endure;  
they're just God's eggs that wiggle about  
dreaming of flying among eucalyptus trees;  
then they die, sort of, and then they do.

## The Forward Pass

Age creeps up like a lobster tail.  
The signal was clear, we wish.  
Let's not trip over ourselves.  
There are those who walk without legs.  
Keep your vermilion passions out;  
we're working on the basics.  
Too late to discover corn syrup...  
There are still traces of mercury at Minamata.  
Plus, the worst bloody nose I ever had...  
Contaminants are passing the filters.  
Jamborees have come to the expected end.  
Mind muddied, boggled, bruised,  
not blank, just calling for a taxi.

## Choirboy

One's catarrh is released by this ghostly guitar.  
No way to measure what's lost or gained.  
Stupid is as stupid does—facing a mirrorless wall.  
Let the little animals animate what can't be seen.

Disappearance is acute and as handy as the wet local.  
Whatever remains cannot storm or grieve again.  
Well, it's late in the day and all the plants are asleep  
while the stones in the wicked garden are confused and inept.

Fill the tank with gas on petrol day, cheap day, Wednesday  
when whatnot watches and guides is in a midweek mood  
or mode that can't be described or controlled,  
the way nails on foot or hand give off pride and yearning.

Come back, choirboy, with Vitalis waving your head.  
You used your toothsome and weeping moment so purposefully.  
Red bows, gray cassocks, white cottas guarantee eternity.  
Every step, every sneeze, every curse, emits an everlasting clef.



## Constant Gifts

*Peer inward, with the spirit's lamp,  
Look deep, and let the truth be known*  
Wallace Stevens, *Phrases*

I have thrice visited Paris.  
Yes, on the metro you will smell  
the waft of a body that is not washed.  
But, god, man, it is just an odor.  
Untrain your nose and go back  
a century and some more and what  
do you think your forebears were sniffing?

What we are privileged to have entered us  
is the gift of being alone—the generosity  
of being—like nothing else—like nothing.  
In a flood the mud might reach the attic.  
So you get on the roof and wonder:  
if they find me, will they hate me or love me?  
Mathematics is not easy, of course, just irrelevant.

## Feline Note

If a cat wrote a poem—bugs, bugs and more bugs,  
noises of triumph, rejection, and bowels;  
the flight of talons to an empty box;  
something stuck in a body part that stinks interesting;  
nanodifference between smiles and scowls;  
me-out, me-in, and no diagrams, just air;  
an intruder in every sound except what why music;  
a dialog of biting, slurping, and the dance of particles;  
absolutely no philosophy or religion –just absent words;  
that moment of movement regardless of light;  
a social order of memory without ink or size;  
head bumping, ear plumbing, the whiskery mystery;  
where am I, what is that, what's new?

## Getting Close

*For the luckless prey prayer's all that's left*  
Tom Clark, *True West*

We leap no more.  
We graze with uncertainty.  
Nameless twigs and false grass  
are beguiling and pretentious,  
gracing the sand with temptation.  
They wave at us like a lullaby.

But we still see and mouth  
the available musty condiments,  
thinking that something might be useful.  
A glass of nut brown ale turns  
up at the corner and blows its top  
like a rusty organ pipe.

When the skin clumps and wanders,  
when the heather turns gray,  
when the lions see you limping,  
when the children go away,  
when the moment's magic withers,  
there's nothing more to say.

## Interjections

You are, everyone, everyone forgiven.  
The big eye sees you,  
no blinking, just as you do not.

Words enslave us. They make a mark.  
That tattoo drowns us. Take off your skin  
to come to a world that's not the UN.

I am or not a Christian. A million would agree.  
All I care about is making me love you,  
my glorious neighbor, and the extra mystery.

My real orbit is chatter;  
the inconsequential is more alive  
than embellishments of scholars' brains.

What's unresolved is why I care  
about the studied strictured thoughts  
of people I might love if they would have me.



## Moon Talk

*I fear what the moon may know and never say.*  
George Stanley, *Moon of Green Street*

The spines of books are nonsense.  
What're words to do with them?  
Strung out like tree lights surrendering  
to the sturdiness of prickly, sappy branches.  
Grim, trippy, abbreviated facades  
to please what a reader thinks meaning means.  
Any nebulous page will lie to the title  
that pretends to smell or taste or feel.  
Names peek out from meandering plots  
looking for a stone to live on.  
Memories die with us; what's left  
is what somebody mystified wrote.

## My Friend

*The Master of Rime told me, You must learn to lose heart.  
I have darkened this way and you yourself have darkened.  
Are you so blind you cant see what you cant see?  
Robert Duncan, The Structure of Rime XX*

He is always impinged by the shock of living.  
There he is in the black emerging  
like an optional vision of Caravaggio  
seeking approval and forgiveness.

What's he after all but a spark,  
a lamented slightly praised image  
of the fortune of that endless biology  
that we all smell of and demonstrate.

Come, my urbane godlike rhymer that believes  
the underbelly has its reward and compass,  
that smells a new brand of climbing,  
as if the entire gimcrack thing was alive again.

His particular song does not praise like a psalm;  
it deconstructs the warble of Hilda Olson at her best  
and grinds not a significant but a trusty truth  
that admired and scowled knows not of what it speaks.

## Our Lady

Ave, Mary, queen of heaven, the model,  
shapeless, blue clad, divine womb.  
The ultrasound image is too many bells,  
too much breath in the sails.  
The sheets are tense and ragged.  
Silly halo that makes your neck  
in shadow, blessing our doubts.  
All man and all God and sublime  
spirit that makes lilies stand  
up and be noticed and matter.  
Science takes a beating now.  
We imagine more than science knows,  
and kneel we do to think of it,  
because we can think of it.  
Nothing can stop thinking  
except being beyond thinking.

## There Is No Time In Space

*For (the writer) does his work alone and if he is  
a good enough writer he must face eternity,  
or the lack of it, each day.*

Ernest Hemingway, *Nobel Prize Speech*

If we can understand things mathematically, we don't need to picture them.  
If we can understand period, then comma, then apostrophe and colon  
will follow the scent like a bloodhound or death like a retriever.

The lineup is wide open for you, slugger, if you can slug.  
The chalk is to decorate your shirt and the coach is music.  
Make an equation, a homerun or a touchdown and we'll give it a number.

Billions have died before us. So keeping score  
should have eternity included in the hits column with strikeouts  
and where runs batted in or hail marys are the now of it.

Getting it is a matter of chutzpah or in sports we say confidence.  
Grab the golden ring and stick to the carnival song.  
It's already been said: Your guess is as good as anybody's.

## Seriously

Start with a broken ankle.  
Leave symmetry out of it.  
Put in to confuse a slice of moon  
across the isthmus of wherever we gather.  
What were we supposed to remember?  
Maybe ye old moon is a ho and a virgin.  
Cheat us not of those wicked thoughts.  
Freedom warranties certain anonymity.  
Fix the gumballs for the wizards; make them whole.  
The pasture is weakened by the absence of breeding;  
we shouldn't be screwing around like that, anyway.  
The next question could be the most important one.  
Death being what it is, what does it matter?  
The broken ankle does not disappear;  
angry billions of legs will be here.  
The slut of a moon has her willful way,  
imprisoned by circumstances and time  
whatever the hell that may mean, I'm sure.

## Le Trottoir Roulant

*We are not dead yet, by Jingo! Are we!*

Augustus Saint-Gaudens

This feature of the odious bazaar  
with the tinkling rhapsody of Chicago  
comes into whatever mind remains  
on the shelf devoted to the poet's life.

Rip off the ribbon, tear the damn paper,  
look at the gift begun with topnotch fornication.  
What a prime surprise the grizzly store does not sell  
—business is incompatible and irrelevant.

This especial tumbleweed tripping years  
rejects the false fish or the garbled assumptions  
and spectaculates a motivation that grins a lot.  
No more shut up; no more puzzled looks.

Foot follows foot follows foot  
and the shoe...well, the fitting is fine.  
Go ahead and edit all you want to  
as does the mirror match the moment.

## Finally a Poem Called Enigma

It will catch us by surprise and lack of indifference.  
We will not know why it could possibly matter.  
The screws, of course, are loose and the nails rusted.  
Come and see us down by the lake where minnows  
have difficulty staying alive and are hardly wanted.

What's the point of building something? he asks,  
that ignorant, crepuscular, mocking nobody, who's asking.  
He has a moon he's thinking of, even not feeling it.  
There is, isn't there, a solution to every problem?  
Another question that we must assuredly ignore, that is.

Let's instead have an image, a cure perhaps, or a disease.  
There's a leak in the garage that has to be fixed.  
This is not a farm where the solutions are easy.  
We can't wait until Christmas; there's work here now.  
It's about reparation and the goofball is not ready.

If it was round, we call it square; rhomboid and we'd say ugly.  
There is not a minute to lose and we lost it.  
Where is the ice cream truck when you need it?  
Why is this hair growing all over me? I don't want it.  
Miracles venture everywhere but here.

## **You or I Want Me to Stop Now**

Farmers, planters, and shopkeepers found it very difficult to hire free workers in colonial America, primarily because it was so easy for those workers to set up their own farm. And so it was if you believe that bees are the keepers and the apiarists are free.

The fundamental flower and the song of poetical comeuppances have their favorite choral arrangements that make it right that the heavenly gauge of admittance and glorification is exactly positioned in the middle of all our lives.

These are always difficult times. There are, need one say, no other kinds of times. The sentence that cannot, should not for sure be written or condoned comes next and here it is: The top of the pagoda is not where it stops but where it begins.



## Why Cats Stop Poets

*...All are evasions like a repeated phrase,  
Which, by its repetition, comes to bear  
a meaning without a meaning.  
Wallace Stevens, Owl's Clover*

We and the angel Gabriel have said it all.  
Las Vegas doesn't care; the local rector dances;  
my fleet of feet is less gently anymore; all crises  
in a storm; broke overpopulated days are now.

There will be Christmas. The canals are open.  
Every urge has its retraction ready. Come age  
of crowds. Sensible feelings and other affections  
are looking for that room where animals hover.

Wait until tomorrow and this damn poem  
still scratches at the door, waiting for recompense  
or some particle of understanding for the elderly,  
the soon-to-be cremated darlings of our time.

## Established 1967

*Each grain of sand  
With us will be  
If we are dead.  
Jack Spicer,  
A Portrait of the Artist  
as a Young Landscape*

The nameless tree in Buena Vista  
is a reproduction of who God thinks God is.  
Without wild rain and worms profound  
the language of God is mistaken for moving air.

So we root for the root to be biologically correct  
and to make the object it supplies  
make music that locates the origin of all species  
however imploded or exploded the ash could be.

Getting food up the trunk needs a determined urger.  
The young man old enough to drink alcoholic liquids  
has chosen instead a dot on paper,  
a mere stain that permits of vision of how all works.

Rogue root in the rut of a roughened situation  
participate in the best way to be found.  
All bark and no bite, craving unction  
and a perfect now that don't begin or end.

Sucking up juices from the middle,  
the party will commence soon enough.  
An angle of development is in charge  
and botany has surrendered to fools.

What was vibrant, what was cool  
has measured the use of liveliness.  
But the jury favors the geologists  
who look at what rock and angels do.

Dust is mechanical and does not sing well.  
It moves slowly with the longest consequences.  
I and you cannot imagine what time is.  
If anything lives it is the firmament of stone.

## **All Roads Are Closed**

*Alle Wege sind verschlossen.*  
from Lew Ellingham

Not a transparent message...  
Only Zeus is transparent and his minions.  
We are, all of us, a story waiting for print  
or some space in cyberspace.

The nature that commences  
with love and plum bum  
leaves little room for argument.  
The case is solved.

Not wanting to stop I think  
is akin to not wanting to start.  
The amusements and pits  
that leave us crying or smiling

are not fit for human consumption.  
There is no room for advice.  
But tears are an option but badly  
they are not eternal, only the big us.

## Biology

*We're going to die, and that makes us the lucky ones.*

Richard Dawkins

It's all crammed in up there  
way over the windows  
more crystalline than transparent  
more wonderful than just good.

You can refer to where you guess it is.  
You can make fun of me thinking  
what in blazes makes the whole thing  
thinks it can sing, thinks it's necessary.

To what end reaches this adventure  
this impatient groping in ordinary  
—so ordinary is this day as all are  
—any moment will be the next

until next ends and the end is next.  
Play the bells; find a white sheet;  
let the plows make ruts for seeds  
that makes such passing clearer.

## **Brahms Intermezzo A Major, Op. 118, No. 2**

*for Lew Ellingham*

What could that be but  
a new wall where the old wall  
undiminished, resolved, resuscitated  
now breathes an eye new moved,  
an eye that sees what a wall is  
when before the wall just was?  
Where can a sound that has no  
place to be in the trees  
that can't be seen but heard  
in the eye, seen in the ear,  
a voice without word or note?  
Who is the error or the savant  
that commits the scene,  
betrays some vague truth,  
combines the urge with the place,  
notates the moment timelessly?  
Dolce, repeated dolce, fingers  
believing the spirit of the page,  
knowing nothing of the page,  
resonating what can't be heard,  
blurring the page, the wall.

## Repraying

Always the moon and some tree  
or a flower...  
But a hip has broken.  
Majesty has moved.  
We are not infected  
and words are the least of it  
If you can cook you're wanted:  
if you can't, you eat.  
Room always for all of us. Scritch.  
The spiral points to the divine.  
Nothing is measured, all insane.  
You knew it; you felt it; you spoke it.  
There's the rub.  
Code or parables, the word is broken.  
For God's sake, just touch us.  
What is the expression with which  
you would like to leave the world?  
"...without speech or language  
or sound of any voice."