



Art as a Spiritual Endeavor

Marjorie Partch

Partch is a Jungian astrologer, writer, and graphic designer. In this essay, Partch considers the validity of Jorie Graham's use of poetry as a "medium for spiritual undertaking."

While there are many excellent poets who are fully accessible through a single glance at a single poem, Graham is not a poet whose work can be understood or appreciated in isolation.

Some critics may object to the need for any special "preparation," lobbying for the democracy of immediacy. But how many uninitiates can truly appreciate a [Jackson Pollock](#) painting, say, without some introduction? To the casual or innocent eye, his work looks like the careless splatterings of a child or a madman, and indeed these comparisons have been made. With a little guidance, it becomes apparent that Pollock was attempting not at all to make pretty pictures but to portray movement in time. Beyond that, he sought to challenge the whole conceptual framework of reality—to bend space and time. With this perspective, his "action paintings" can be appreciated as delayed-shutter portraits of his dance, more like capturing the motion of writing with a penlight in the dark than snapshots of a posed static scene.

Graham is an enthusiastic fan of Pollock's work and shares similar aims of evoking process in her own work. Rather than the body's dance through the fields of space and time, she seeks to simulate, and then to stimulate, perception and thought isolation, to extend this motion beyond the limits of language, the static "poetic moment" and the printed page, into the reader's ongoing experience. Graham seeks in her poetry to create for herself and recreate for the reader moments of opening, of beginning, rather than endings. Her poems may not always succeed on these grounds, but they must be judged as moving collages rather than failed [still life](#) snapshots, or the neatly wrapped-up happy ending will always appear to be missing. The open-ended lack of resolution is deliberate, not accidental. The suspended non-ending is intended to invite the reader's participation.

Many of Graham's detractors, such as Sven Birkerts, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, question "the viability of poetry as an instrument of

philosophy." Birkerts is also bewildered by "the onward march of mind and spirit searching for some arrival, some consummation, some end to all of this tending toward." But who is to say what is a suitable theme for poetic experience and expression: only matters of the heart? Can the processes of the mind really be declared off-limits? Apart from the aesthetic values normally applied to poetry (and here Graham's work must speak for itself), surely the realm of experience to be explored is no less a matter of poetic license than experiments in form. Some would have it that the immediately accessible realm of the senses and emotions, with some kind of conclusive *point*, constitutes the only "appropriate" terrain for "the poetic impulse." How can one really reserve the poetic endeavor for such touchy-feely subjects as love, loss, and memory? It could even be said that the whole crux of the poetic moment lies in the collision between consciousness and experience—reality. Poets, even the ancients, have always explored this synaptic leap of faith between the so-called objective and the subjective, between outer fact and inner response. Moments of sublime realization, however ambivalent or complex, cannot be disqualified as too intellectual if the entire question of mind is the very landscape of the poet's (perhaps deeply emotional) experience. The postmodern view has shown once and for all that the very notions of self, identity, experience, other, object, etc., are nothing if not conceptual.

The mind can be said to be the heroic subject of a great deal of Graham's enormous body of work, and "Mind" can by no means be considered an exhaustive portrait. But she does here achieve the elusive goal of transcendence, going beyond the individual personal mind. The poem reaches beyond even the projected divine mind to the more mystical concept of the phenomenon of mind underlying and pervading reality on a subatomic level. For mystics of every tradition, mind inhabits and vivifies the infinite spaces between things and is the governing principle behind thingness—the very ground out of which subject and object emerge. In keeping with the model of modern physics, the perspective of modern phenomenology maps the activity of the mind as more of a field of consciousness than a linear progression of thoughts. The mind is seen as but one phenomenon within the universe, which is a field of interwoven and interacting forces, rather than a simple progression of causally related events.

The opening lines of "Mind" evoke and mimic the atmospheric affect of this nonlinear percolation:

The slow overture of rain,
each drop breaking
without breaking into

the next, describes
the unrelenting, syncopated
mind.

Everyday thoughts may seem to unfold one into the next, in an orderly single-file procession of cause and effect. However, Graham points out that in actuality, thoughts are often more random and chaotic than one might like to think, more like popcorn popping or rain drops falling than links in a chain. Sometimes thoughts come one after the other, sometimes simultaneously—but one thought may no more arise with any causality or logic from its predecessor than one rock following another in an avalanche.

Graham both imitates and mocks this common misconception of the inherent orderliness of the mind's associative processes in the shape of the poem—a neat, narrow column of no more than five words on a line—and the poem's uninterrupted flow, coming on in a downpour of images, ideas, and words. But in the end the poem does resolve itself, not with the decisive closing of a door but with a beckoning to a window, where it tells the reader to "See."

The second group of lines following the lines above portray the mind's tendency to project the patterns of its own workings onto what it perceives:

Not unlike
the hummingbirds
imagining their wings
to be their heart, and swallows
believing the horizon
to be a line they lift
and drop. What is it
they cast for?

Later in the poem, Graham subtly shifts the ground of what readers think of as cause and effect:

The city
draws the mind in streets,
and streets compel it
from their intersections
where a little
belongs to no one.

Thoughts tend to follow their routes, once established, as obediently as falling rocks yield to "gravity's stake in things." So, the question arises, does the mind

arise from thought and not the other way around? Can the mind exist without language? Is there mind without thinking? Descartes would have it that being itself is dependent on thought, while spiritual teachers of the East and the West would have it precisely the other way around—being begins when thinking stops. Only when the continual chatter of the mind is silenced, when its relentless busy-bee buzzing is stilled, can consciousness truly interact with reality. This is what is meant by pure mind. Pure mind is the intersection toward which Graham is ever striving—the intersection between not only reality and consciousness but between being and doing, between experience and expression. Graham is continually striving to write from this place of clarity of pure being and to evoke those gem-like moments for the reader.

Like Pollock's attempt to explode the boundaries of his canvas, Graham seeks to speak from silence, to arrive at a place beyond words, by using language to delineate the contours of the ineffable.

It is only when the sharp edges of the "puzzle pieces," the random shards of Mind (thoughts), soften a bit that readers can see how

the picture becomes clear,
the mind entering the ground
more easily in pieces,
and all the richer for it.

The unity of the whole emerges from the fragmentation of the habitual mental processes of the mind, into the fertile ground of the universal mind from which all phenomena, within nature and human consciousness, arise. When the edges are sharp and rigid, overly defined, the edges cannot penetrate the ground of their own being and the puzzle remains unsolvable. It is only when the thoughts' hard edges "give a bit" that they can return to their source.

In a 1992 interview with Thomas Gardner in the *Denver Quarterly*, Graham commented, "Poetry is an extraordinary medium for spiritual undertaking." The immediate and unceasing appreciation and recognition that her work has received—including a Pulitzer Prize in 1996—attest to the validity and viability of her endeavor. The more one knows about poetry and spirituality, the more one will appreciate the risks Graham has taken in her bold experiments in both her content and its necessary form, as well as her task and her achievement. As to the appropriateness of her "use" of poetry for philosophical or spiritual purposes, one might even ask, what else? Are they not one and the same?

The ambitious thoughts represented in "Mind" are not so shabby, coming from the precocious mind of a twenty-something-year-old poet in the late 1970s, a

self-confessed hybrid of Whitman's lyricism on the one hand and Nietzsche's philosophy on the other.

Graham's early musings inscribe an arc with a promising trajectory; a promise duly fulfilled in the ongoing experiments and mature work of this highly complex, philosophical, and intellectual— and also beautifully musical—poet of the postmodern mind.

Source: Marjorie Partch, Critical Essay on "Mind," in *Poetry for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Appendix Poetry by Jorie Graham

Mind

The slow overture of rain,
each drop breaking
without breaking into
the next, describes
the unrelenting, syncopated
mind. Not unlike
the hummingbirds
imagining their wings
to be their heart, and swallows
believing the horizon
to be a line they lift
and drop. What is it
they cast for? The poplars,
advancing or retreating,
lose their stature
equally, and yet stand firm,
making arrangements
in order to become
imaginary. The city
draws the mind in streets,
and streets compel it
from their intersections
where a little
belongs to no one. It is
what is driven through
all stationary portions
of the world, gravity's
stake in things, the leaves,
pressed against the dank
window of November
soil, remain unwelcome
till transformed, parts
of a puzzle unsolvable
till the edges give a bit
and soften. See how

then the picture becomes clear,
the mind entering the ground
more easily in pieces,
and all the richer for it.

The Way Things Work

is by admitting
or opening away.
This is the simplest form
of current: Blue
moving through blue;
blue through purple;
the objects of desire
opening upon themselves
without us; the objects of faith.
The way things work
is by solution,
resistance lessened or
increased and taken
advantage of.
The way things work
is that we finally believe
they are there,
common and able
to illustrate themselves.
Wheel, kinetic flow,
rising and falling water,
ingots, levers and keys,
I believe in you,
cylinder lock, pully,
lifting tackle and
crane lift your small head--
I believe in you--
your head is the horizon to
my hand. I believe
forever in the hooks.
The way things work
is that eventually
something catches.

Salmon

I watched them once, at dusk, on television, run,
in our motel room half-way through
Nebraska, quick, glittering, past beauty, past
the importance of beauty,
archaic,
not even hungry, not even endangered, driving deeper and deeper
into less. They leapt up falls, ladders,

and rock, tearing and leaping, a gold river,
and a blue river traveling
in opposite directions.
They would not stop, resolution of will
and helplessness, as the eye
is helpless
when the image forms itself, upside-down, backward,
driving up into
the mind, and the world
unfastens itself
from the deep ocean of the given. . .Justice, aspen
leaves, mother attempting
suicide, the white night-flying moth
the ants dismantled bit by bit and carried in
right through the crack
in my wall. . .How helpless
the still pool is,
upstream,
awaiting the gold blade
of their hurry. Once, indoors, a child,
I watched, at noon, through slatted wooden blinds,
a man and woman, naked, eyes closed,
climb onto each other,
on the terrace floor,
and ride--two gold currents
wrapping round and round each other, fastening,
unfastening. I hardly knew
what I saw. Whatever shadow there was in that world
it was the one each cast
onto the other,
the thin black seam
they seemed to be trying to work away
between them. I held my breath.
As far as I could tell, the work they did
with sweat and light
was good. I'd say
they traveled far in opposite
directions. What is the light
at the end of the day, deep, reddish-gold, bathing the walls,
the corridors, light that is no longer light, no longer clarifies,
illuminates, antique, freed from the body of
that air that carries it. What is it
for the space of time
where it is useless, merely
beautiful? When they were done, they made a distance
one from the other
and slept, outstretched,
on the warm tile
of the terrace floor,
smiling, faces pressed against the stone.

San Sepolcro

In this blue light
I can take you there,
snow having made me
a world of bone
seen through to. This
is my house,

my section of Etruscan
wall, my neighbor's
lemontrees, and, just below
the lower church,
the airplane factory.
A rooster

crows all day from mist
outside the walls.
There's milk on the air,
ice on the oily
lemonskins. How clean
the mind is,

holy grave. It is this girl
by Piero
della Francesca, unbuttoning
her blue dress,
her mantle of weather,
to go into

labor. Come, we can go in.
It is before
the birth of god. No one
has risen yet
to the museums, to the assembly
line--bodies

and wings--to the open air
market. This is
what the living do: go in.
It's a long way.
And the dress keeps opening
from eternity

to privacy, quickening.
Inside, at the heart,

is tragedy, the present moment
 forever stillborn,
but going in, each breath
 is a button

coming undone, something terribly
 nimble-fingered
finding all of the stops.

To a Friend Going Blind

Today, because I couldn't find the shortcut through,
I had to walk this town's entire inner
perimeter to find
where the medieval walls break open
in an eighteenth century
arch. The yellow valley flickered on and off
through cracks and the gaps
for guns. Bruna is teaching me
to cut a pattern.
Saturdays we buy the cloth.
She takes it in her hands
like a good idea, feeling
for texture, grain, the built-in
limits. It's only as an afterthought she asks
and do you think it's beautiful?
Her measuring tapes hang down, corn-blond and endless,
from her neck.
When I look at her
I think *Rapunzel*,
how one could climb that measuring,
that love. But I was saying,
I wandered all along the street that hugs the walls,
a needle floating
on its cloth. Once
I shut my eyes and felt my way
along the stone. Outside
is the cashcrop, sunflowers, as far as one can see. Listen,
the wind rattles in them,
a loose worship
seeking an object,
an interruption. Sara,
the walls are beautiful. They block the view.
And it feels rich to be
inside their grasp.
When Bruna finishes her dress
it is the shape of what has come
to rescue her. She puts it on.

Self-Portrait as Apollo and Daphne

1

The truth is this had been going on for a long time during which they both wanted it to last.

You can still hear them in that phase, the north and south laid up against each other, constantly erasing each minute with each minute.

You can still hear them, there, just prior to daybreak, the shrill cheeps and screeches of the awakening thousands, hysterical, for miles, in all the directions,

and there the whoo whoo of the nightfeeders, insolvent baseline, shorn, almost the sound of thin air. . . .

Or there where the sun picks up on the bits of broken glass throughout the miles of grass for just a fraction of an instant (thousands of bits) at just one angle, quick, the evidence, the landfill, then gone again, everything green, green

2

How he wanted, though, to possess her, to nail the erasures,

3

like a long heat on her all day once the daysounds set in, like a long analysis.

4

The way she kept slipping away was this: can you really see me, can you really know I'm really who . . .

His touchings a rhyme she kept interrupting (no one believes in that version anymore she whispered, no one can hear it anymore, *tomorrow, tomorrow*, like the different names of those girls all one girl). . . . But how long could it last?

5

He kept after her like sunlight (it's not what you think, she said) frame after frame of it (it's not what you think you think) like the prayer that numbers are praying (are they ascending are they descending?)

He kept after her in the guise of the present, minute after minute (are they ascending are they?) until they seemed to quicken and narrow (like footprints

piling up, like footprints all blurred at the end of, at the scene of . . .)

until *now is forever* he whispered can't you get it to open,
present tense without end, slaughtered motion, kingdom of
heaven?--
6

the shards caught here and there--*what did you do
before? or will you forgive me? or say
that you'll love me for*

ever and ever

(is it a squeal of brakes is it a birthcry?)

(let x equal forever he whispered let y let y . . .)
7

as opposed to that other motion which reads Cast it upon the ground
and it shall become a serpent (and Moses fled before it),
which reads Put forth thy hand and take it by the tail
and it was a rod in his hand again--
8

That's when she stopped, she turned her face to the wind, shut her eyes--
9

She stopped she turned,
she would not be the end towards which he was ceaselessly tending,
she would not give shape to his hurry by being its destination,
it was wrong this progress, it was a quick iridescence
on the back of some other thing, unimaginable, a flash on the wing of . . .
10

The sun would rise and the mind would rise
and the will would rise and the eyes--The eyes--:
the whole of the story like a transcript of sight,
of the distance between them, the small gap he would close.
11

She would stop, there would be no chase scene, she would be who,
what?
12

The counting went on all around like a thousand birds
each making its own wind--who would ever add them up?--

and what would the sum become, of these minutes, each flapping
its wings, each after a perch,

each one with its call going unanswered,

each one signaling separately into the end of the daybreak,

the great screech of the instants, the pile-up,
the one math of hope, the prayer nowhere is praying,

frame after frame, collision of tomorrows--

No she would go under, she would leave him in the freedom

his autograph all over it, slipping, trying to notch it,
13

there in the day with him now, his day, but altered,
14

part of the view not one of the actors, she thought,
not one of the instances, not one of the examples,
15

but the air the birds call in,
the air their calls going unanswered marry in,
the calls the different species make, cross-currents, frettings,
and the one air holding the screeching separateness--
each wanting to change, to be heard, to have been changed--
and the air all round them neither full nor empty,
but holding them, holding them, untouched, untransformed.

What the Instant Contains

Presently Lyle gets into bed.
The amaryllis on the sill hum.
The dust starts inventing the afterwards.

He is not getting up again.
The dust starts inventing the afterwards.
The whole thing from the ground up.
The presently. The Lyle gets into bed.
The amaryllis on sill hum.

The roses on the wall grow virulent.
The dreadful increasing dimness.
Then even the wicked no longer matter.
Even the one who would steal the water of life goes under,

even the unread last 49 pages
of the mystery novel on the kitchen table,
(the sill under the amaryllis hums),
even the ancient family name,

even the woman he never found.
If you sit there, near him, in the sofa chair,
if you look at him he's sleeping now, curled,
the oxygen furious in its blank tubes,

you can hear the wind as it touches the panes,
then, as the wind drops, bushtips brushing the panes,
buds on the tips,
then, as the wind stills altogether,

the weight of air on the panes,
the face of the air not moving,
the time of day adhering to the panes,
the density of the light where the glass fits the frame

of the windows Lyle built,
in the walls Lyle built,
all of it adhering--glass to light, light to time--
all of it unable to advance any further,

here now, arrived. If you sit here,
if you sit in your attention watching him sleep,
if it is still sleep,
looking past the vials and the industrial oxygen tanks,

hearing the tap at the pane,
hearing the tap, click, as the wildgrasses rap
as the wind picks up,

looking into his closed face for the gaze,

you will see, if you can posit the stillness
that beats on its pendulum at the heart of the room,
x beats per minute,
if you can place it at the center,

the beat of the stillness on its tiny firm arc,
like a face on a string, perfect, back and forth,
to permit the center of the center to glow,
you will see the distance start to grow

on the shore of the endlessly lain-down face,
yellow shore which the wide hand holds--
right there on the pinpoint of the face in the room...

When he wakes I will give him some water.
I will try to feed him some soup.
We will try to drive back into the body
what roves around it,

will try to darken the body with a red flush,
make it affirm itself in relation to the light again,
make it know something, make it grow dull again,
instead of this translucence, this mirror becoming glass,

dents in it, sockets, tape on the left cheek
pulling the papery skin folds back
to hold the nostril open
to fit the radiant tube inside.

But now the face is going faster, faster

--floor sills dust going the other way,
the whole marriage pulling apart--his dream for the drawer,
waiting from skin--
Now he opens his eyes and looks across the room at me,

now there are men on the bed with him, many men, naked,

one puts his fist in another's mouth,
one puts his fingers in another's ears,
another's fingers are in there now too,

they put their hands on each other's feet, they roil,
there's a shield in the air but you can't see it,
it's the thing the dust makes when it's cast up,
there are elements from history,

the air hums, edges, undersides, beveled lips,
shadows behind the edges, ears, fingers,
Circe there on her throne in her shining robe
with golden mantle and the place was lovely

and nymphs and naiads waiting on her
carding no fleece, spinning no wool, but only
sorting, arranging from confusion
in separate baskets the bright-colored flowers,

the different herbs,
and where we had shoulders we have no shoulders
and where our arms were in their right places
there are no arms, there are no right places,

her song would move the wood, would stop the
streams, would stay the wandering birds,
her song would move the wood
would stop the stream

would stay the wandering afterwards. Tap tap.
Presently the cast-iron stove,
with metal fruit upon its wondrous flanks, is cold,
grapes swelling there, and apples, pears.

I put my hand on them.
I press my palm onto the icy fruit.
Tap tap the flowertips.
The heart of waiting. Tap.

There are two directions--fast--in the instant,
two, tangled up into each other, blurred, bled,
two motions in every stillness,
to make a body, waiting--

the motion into here, the firming up,
chest paper book face leaf branch drawer,
the order of events, days, days,

something like a head at the top, stiff,
the minutes flowing off into limbs, fingertips,
the trunk made of actions-that-can't-be-undone,
shield high,

the first minute of existence ruffling like feathers on hair
at the top of his crown, stilling,
the next minute arriving, stilling,
all of him standing there on his crucial deeds, on the out-

come, growing ever more still.
And then, faster and faster--fed by dream--
fed by each glance in the mirror however swift in passing,
moving suddenly in limbs that are not limbs,
moving with a will not yet an individual will--

and the room containing this flow or being contained
by it,
and Lyle momentarily on the crest till the wave breaks again,

and Lyle being distributed partly to him partly to her,
torn up and thrust,
(I want to forget it, I want to forget what I saw),
the face riding for a moment longer on the spray,

the look on the face riding after the face has
dissolved,
for just a moment longer the gaze in the eye looking out,
tossed out--

dust lifting and drifting--
specks and sparkles of dust in the empty room--
then us walking by a mirror on our way out and looking in,
and us being fooled for a moment longer

before we realize what's in there, look,
does not belong to us at all
but is an argument tossed out
in that instant
for the sake of discussion

by the queen on the other side
on her throne with shining robes and golden mantle
(and the place lovely)
towards him whom she loves

to convince him, to undo him.
I look in there at it a moment longer--my face--my
expression
flung out into the room where the cloth is not woven
only colors sorted back into that separateness

the earth in its fields has momentarily blurred--
columbine, fire-on-the-mountain, vetch and iris--
the iris
so early this year as we leave, and waiving patches of sun--
and then the blue vase I'll put them in for a time.

The Region of Unlikeness

You wake up and you don't know who it is there breathing
beside you (the world is a different place from what it
seems)

and then you do.

The window is open, its is raining, then it has just
ceased. What is the purpose of poetry, friend?
And you, are you one of those girls?

The floor which is cold touching your instep now,

it is more alive for those separate instances it crosses
up through you whole stalk into your mind?
Five, six times it gets in, step, step, across to the
window.

Then the birdcall tossing quick cuts your way,

a string strung a thousand years ago still taut....

He turns in his sleep.

You want to get out of here.

The stalls are going up in the street now for market.
don't wake up. Keep this in black and white. It's

Rome. The man's name...? The speaker
thirteen. Walls bare. Light like a dirty towel.
It's Claudio. He will overdose before the age of
thirty someone told me time
ago. In the bar below, the counterterrorist police

(three of them for this neighborhood) (the Old Ghetto)
take coffee. You hear them laugh.
When you lean out you see the butts
of the machineguns shake
in the door way.

You wake up from what? Have you been there?
What of this loop called *being* beating against the ends

of things?

The shutters, as you lean out to push them, creak.
Three boys seen from above run fast down the narrows,
laughing.
A black dog barks. Was it more than

one night? Was it all right? Where are
the parents? Dress and get to the door. (Repeat after me).
now the cold edge of the door crosses her body
into the field where it will grow. Now the
wrought iron banister--three floors of it--now the *clack*

clack of her sandals on stone ---
each a new planting ---different from all the others---
each planted fast, there, into that soil,
and the thin strip of light from the heavy street-door,
and the other light after her self has slipped through.
Later she will walk along and name them, on by

one---the back of the girl in the print dress carrying bread,
the old woman seen by looking up suddenly.
Later she will walk along, a word in
each moment, to slap them down onto the planting,
to keep them still.
But now it's the hissing of cars passing,

and Left into Campo dei Fiori--
And through it should be through flames dear god,
it's through clarity,
through the empty thing with minutes clicking in it,
right through it no resistance,
running a bit now, the stalls filling all around,
cats in the doorways,
the woman with artichokes starting it up

--this price then that price--
right through it, it not burning, not falling, no
piercing sound--
just the open, day pushing through it, any story pushing through.
Do you want her to go home now? do you want her late for school?
Here is her empty room,

a trill of light on the white bedspread. This is
exactly
how slow it moves.
The women are all in the stalls now.
The one behind the rack of flowers is crying
--put that in the field for later--into

captivity--
If I am responsible, it is for what? the field at the
end? the woman weeping in the row of colors? the exact
shades of color? the actions of the night before?
Is there a way to move through which makes it hard
enough--thorny, re-

membered? Push. Push through with this girl
recalled down to the last bit of cartilage, ash, running along the
river now, then down to the bridge, then quick,
home. Twenty years later

it's 9:15, I go for a walk, the butterflies are hatching,
(that minute has come),
and she is still running down the Santo Spirito, and I push her
to go faster, faster, little one, fool, push her, but I'm
in the field near Tie Siding, the new hatchlings

everywhere--they're drying in the grasses--they lift their wings up
to the

groundwind--so many--
I kick them up gently to make them make room--
clusters lift with each step--

and below the women leaning, calling the price out, handling
each fruit, shaking the dirt off. Oh wake up, wake
up, something moving through the air now, something in the ground
that
waits.

Prayer

Over a dock railing, I watch the minnows, thousands, swirl
themselves, each a minuscule muscle, but also, without the
way to create current, making of their unison (turning, re-
infolding,
entering and exiting their own unison in unison) making of themselves a
visual current, one that cannot freight or sway by
minutest fractions the water's downdrafts and upswirls, the
dockside cycles of finally-arriving boat-wakes, there where
they hit deeper resistance, water that seems to burst into
itself (it has those layers) a real current though mostly
invisible sending into the visible (minnows) arrowing
motion that forces change--
this is freedom. This is the force of faith. Nobody gets
what they want. Never again are you the same. The longing
is to be pure. What you get is to be changed. More and more by
each glistening minute, through which infinity threads itself,
also oblivion, of course, the aftershocks of something
at sea. Here, hands full of sand, letting it sift through
in the wind, I look in and say take this, this is
what I have saved, take this, hurry. And if I listen
now? Listen, I was not saying anything. It was only

something I did. I could not choose words. I am free to go.
I cannot of course come back. Not to this. Never.
It is a ghost posed on my lips. Here: never.

Le Manteau de Pascal

I have put on my great coat it is cold.

It is an outer garment.

Coarse, woolen.

Of unknown origin.

*

It has a fine inner lining but it is
as an exterior that you see it — a grace.

*

I have a coat I am wearing. It is a fine admixture.
The woman who threw the threads in the two directions
has made, skillfully, something dark-true,
as the evening calls the bird up into
the branches of the shaven hedgerows,
to twitter bodily
a makeshift coat — the boxelder cut back stringently by the owner
that more might grow next year, and thicker, you know —
the birds tucked gestures on the inner branches —
and space in the heart,
not shade-giving, not
chronological...Oh transformer, logic, where are you here in this fold,
my name being called-out now but back, behind,
in the upper world....

*

I have a coat I am wearing I was told to wear it.
Someone knelt down each morning to button it up.
I looked at their face, down low, near me.
What is *longing*? what is a *star*?
Watched each button a peapod getting tucked back in.
Watched harm with its planeloads folded up in the sleeves.
Watched grappling hooks trawl through the late-night waters.
Watched bands of stations scan unable to ascertain.
There are fingers, friend, that never grow sluggish.
They crawl up the coat and don't miss an eyehole.
Glinting in kitchenlight.
Supervised by the traffic god.
Hissed at by grassblades that wire-up outside

their stirring rhetoric — this is your land, this is my *my* —

*

You do understanding, don't you, by looking?
The coat, which is itself a ramification, a city,
floats vulnerably above another city, ours,
the *city on the hill* (only with hill gone),
floats in illustration
of what once was believed, and thus was visible —
(all things believed are visible) —
floats a Jacob's ladder with hovering empty arms, an open throat,
a place where a heart might beat if it wishes,
pockets that hang awaiting the sandy whirr of a small secret,
folds where the legs could be, with their kneeling mechanism,
the floating fatigue of an after-dinner herald,
not guilty of any treason towards life except fatigue,
a skillfully cut coat, without chronology,
filled with the sensation of being suddenly completed —
as then it is, abruptly, the last stitch laid in, the knot bit off —
hung there in Gravity, as if its innermost desire,
numberless the awaitings flickering around it,
the other created things also floating but not of the same order, no,
not like this form, built so perfectly to mantle the body,
the neck like a vase awaiting its cut flower,
a skirting barely visible where the tucks indicate
the mild loss of bearing in the small of the back,
the grammar, so strict, of the two exact shoulders —
and the law of the shouldering —
and the chill allowed to skitter up through,
and those crucial spots where the fit cannot be perfect —
oh skirted loosening aswarm with lessenings,
with the mild pallors of unaccomplishment,
flaps night-air collects in,
folds... But the night does not annul its belief in,
the night preserves its love for, this one narrowing of infinity,
that floats up into the royal starpocked blue its ripped, distracted supervisor —
this coat awaiting recollection,
this coat awaiting the fleeting moment, the true moment, the hill, the vision of the hill,
and then the moment when the prize is lost, and the erotic tinglings of the dream of
reason
are left to linger mildly in the weave of the fabric according to the rules,
the wool gabardine mix, with its grammatical weave,
never never destined to lose its elasticity,
its openness to abandonment,
its willingness to be disturbed.

*

July 11 ... Oaks: the organization of this tree is difficult. Speaking generally
no doubt the determining planes are concentric, a system of brief contiguous and
continuous tangents, whereas those of the cedar wd. roughly be called horizontals
and those of the beech radiating but modified by droop and by a screw-set towards
jutting points. But beyond this since the normal growth of the boughs is radiating
there is a system of spoke-wise clubs of green — sleeve-pieces. And since the

end shoots curl and carry young scanty leaf-stars these clubs are tapered, and I have seen also pieces in profile with chiseled outlines, the blocks thus made detached and lessening towards the end. However the knot-star is the chief thing: it is whorled, worked round, and this is what keeps up the illusion of the tree. Oaks differ much, and much turns on the broadness of the leaves, the narrower giving the crisped and starry and catharine-wheel forms, the broader the flat-pieced mailed or chard-covered ones, in wh. it is possible to see composition in dips, etc. But I shall study them further. It was this night I believe but possibly the next that I saw clearly the impossibility of staying in the Church of England.

*

How many coats do you think it will take?

The coat was a great-coat.

The Emperor's coat was.

How many coats do you think it will take?

The undercoat is dry. What we now want is?

The sky can analyse the coat because of the rips in it.

The sky shivers through the coat because of the rips in it.

The rips in the sky ripen through the rips in the coat.

There is no quarrel.

*

I take off my coat and carry it.

*

There is no emergency.

*

I only made that up.

*

Behind everything the sound of something dripping

The sound of something: I will vanish, others will come here, what is that?

The canvas flapping in the wind like the first notes of our absence

An origin is not an action though it occurs at the very start

Desire goes travelling into the total dark of another's soul
looking for where it breaks off

I was a hard thing to undo

*

The life of a customer

What came on the paper plate

overheard nearby

an impermanence of structure

watching the lip-reading

had loved but couldn't now recognize

*

What are the objects, then, that man should consider most important?

What sort of a question is that he asks them.

The eye only discovers the visible slowly.

It floats before us asking to be worn,

offering "we must think about objects at the very moment
when all their meaning is abandoning them"

and "the title provides a protection from significance"

and "we are responsible for the universe."

*

I have put on my doubting, my wager, it is cold.
It is an outer garment, or, conversely a natural covering,
so coarse and woolen, also of unknown origin,
a barely apprehensible dilution of evening into
an outer garment, or, conversely a natural covering,
to twitter bodily a makeshift coat,
that more might grow next year, and thicker, you know,
not shade-giving, not chronological,
my name being called out now but from out back, behind,
an outer garment, so coarse and woolen,
also of unknown origin, not shade-giving, not chronological,
each harm with its planeloads folded up in the sleeves,

you do understand, don't you, by looking?
 the jacob's ladder with its floating arms its open throat,
 that more might grow next year, and thicker, you know,
 filled with the sensation of being suddenly completed,
 the other created things also floating but not of the same order,
 not shade-giving, not chronological,
 you do understand, don't you, by looking?
 a neck like a vase awaiting its cut flower,
 filled with the sensation of being suddenly completed,
 the moment the prize is lost, the erotic tingling,
 the wool-gabardine mix, its grammatical weave
 — you do understand, don't you, by looking? —
 never never destined to lose its elasticity,
 it was this night I believe but possibly the next
 I saw clearly the impossibility of staying
 filled with the sensation of being suddenly completed,
 also of unknown origin, not shade-giving, not chronological
 since the normal growth of boughs is radiating
 a system of spoke-wise clubs of green — sleeve pieces —
 never never destined to lose its elasticity
 my name being called out now but back, behind,
 hissing how many coats do you think it will take
 "or try with eyesight to divide" (there is no quarrel)
 behind everything the sound of something dripping
 a system of spoke-wise clubs of green — sleeve pieces
 filled with the sensation of suddenly being completed
 the wool gabardine mix, the grammatical weave,
 the never-never-to-lose-its-elasticity: my name
 flapping in the wind like the first note of my absence
 hissing how many coats do you think it will take
 are you a test case is it an emergency
 flapping in the wind the first note of something
 overheard nearby an impermanence of structure
 watching the lip-reading, there is no quarrel,
 I will vanish, others will come here, what is that,
 never never to lose the sensation of suddenly being
 completed in the wind — the first note of our quarrel —
 it was this night I believe or possibly the next
 filled with the sensation of being suddenly completed,
 I will vanish, others will come here, what is that now
 floating in the air before us with stars a test case
 that I saw clearly the impossibility of staying

Manteau Three

In the fairy tale the sky
 makes of itself a coat
 because it needs you
 to put it
 on. How can it do this?
 It collects its motes. It condenses its sound-
 track, all the pyrric escapes, the pilgrimages

still unconsummated,
the turreted *thoughts of sky* it slightly liquefies
and droops, the hum of the yellowest day alive,

office-holders in their books, their corridors,
resplendent memories of royal rooms now filtered up — by smoke, by

must — it tangles up into a weave,
tied up with votive offerings — laws, electricity —
what the speakers let loose from their tiny eternity,
what the empty streets held up as offering
when only a bit of wind
litigated in the sycamores,

oh and the flapping drafts unfinished thoughts
raked out of air,
and the leaves clawing their way after deep sleep set in,
and all *formations* — assonant, muscular,
chatty hurries of swarm (peoples, debris before the storm) —
things that grew loud when the street grew empty,
and breaths that let themselves be breathed
to freight a human argument,
and sidelong glances in the midst of things, and voice — *yellowest*
day alive — as it took place
above the telegram,
above the hand cleaving the open-air to cut its thought,
hand flung

towards open doorways into houses where
den-couch and silver tray
itch with inaction — what is there left now
to believe — the coat? — it tangles up a good tight weave,
windy yet sturdy,
a coat for the ages —
one layer a movie of bluest blue,
one layer the war-room mappers and their friends
in trenches
also blue,
one layer market-closings and one
hydrangeas turning blue
just as I say so,
and so on,
so that it flows in the sky to the letter,
you still sitting in the den below
not knowing perhaps that now is as the fairy tale
exactly, (as in the movie), *foretold*,
had one been on the right channel,
(although you can feel it alongside, in the house, in the food, the umbrellas,
the bicycles),
(even the leg muscles of this one grown quite remarkable),

the fairy tale beginning to hover above — onscreen fangs, at the desk
one of the older ones paying bills —

the coat in the sky above the house not unlike celestial fabric,
a snap of wind and plot to it,

are we waiting for the *kinds* to go to sleep?
when is it time to go outside and look?

I would like to place myself in the position
of the one suddenly looking up

to where the coat descends and presents itself,
not like the red shoes in the other story,

red from all we had stepped in,
no, this the coat all warm curves and grassy specificities,

intellectuals also there, but still indoors,
standing up smokily to mastermind,

theory emerging like a flowery hat,
there, above the head,

descending,

while outside, outside, this coat —

which I desire, which I, in the tale,
desire — as it touches the dream of reason

which I carry inevitably in my shoulders, in my very carriage, forgive me,
begins to shred like this, as you see it do, now,

as if I were too much in focus making the film shred,
it growing very hot (as in giving birth) though really

it being just evening, the movie back on the reel,
the sky one step further down into the world but only one step,

me trying to pull it down, onto this frame,
for which it seems so fitting,

for which the whole apparatus of attention had seemed to prepare us,
and then the shredding beginning

which sounds at first like the lovely hum
where sun fills the day to its fringe of stillness

but then continues, too far, too hard,
and we have to open our hands again and let it go, let it rise up
above us,

incomprehensible,
clicker still in my right hand,

the teller of the story and the shy bride,
to whom he was showing us off a little perhaps,

leaning back into their gossamer ripeness,
him touching her storm, the petticoat,

the shredded coat left mid-air, just above us,
the coat in which the teller's plot

entered this atmosphere, this rosy sphere of hope and lack,

this windiness of middle evening,

so green, oh what difference could it have made
had the teller needed to persuade her
further — so green
this torn hem in the first miles — or is it inches? — of our night,
so full of hollowness, so wild with rhetoric

Of The Ever-Changing Agitation In The Air

The man held his hands to his heart as
he danced.
He slacked and swirled.
The doorways of the little city
blurred. Something
leaked out,
kindling the doorframes up,
making each entranceway
less true.
And darkness gathered
although it does not fall . . . And the little dance,
swinging this human all down the alleyway,
nervous little theme pushing itself along,
braiding, rehearsing,
constantly incomplete so turning and tacking --
oh what is there to finish? -- his robes made
rustic by the reddish swirl,
which grows darker towards the end of the
avenue of course,
one hand on his chest,
one flung out to the side as he dances,
taps, sings,
on his scuttling toes, now humming a little,
now closing his eyes as he twirls, growing smaller,
why does the sun rise? remember me always
dear for I will
return --
liberty spooling in the evening air,
into which the lilacs open, the skirts uplift,
liberty and the blood-eye careening gently over
the giant earth,
and the cat in the doorway who does not
mistake the world,
eyeing the spots where the birds must
eventually land—

The Guardian Angel of the Little Utopia

Shall I move the flowers again?
Shall I put them further to the left
into the light?
Win that fix it, will that arrange the

thing?

Yellow sky.

Faint cricket in the dried-out bush.

As I approach, my footfall in the leaves
drowns out the cricket-chirping I was
coming close to hear.

Yellow sky with black leaves rearranging it.

Wind rearranging the black leaves in it.

But anyway I am indoors, of course, and this is a pane, here,
and I have arranged the flowers for you
again. Have taken the dead cordless ones, the yellow bits past apogee,
the faded cloth, the pollen-free abandoned marriage-hymn
back out, leaving the few crisp blooms to swagger, winglets, limpid

debris

Shall I arrange these few remaining flowers?

Shall I rearrange these gossamer efficiencies?

Please don't touch me with your skin.

Please let the thing evaporate.

Please tell me clearly what it is.

The party is so loud downstairs, bristling with souvenirs.

It's a philosophy of life, of course,

drinks fluorescent, whips of syntax in the air

above the heads -- how small they seem from here,

the bobbing universal heads, stuffing the void with eloquence,

and also tiny merciless darts

of truth. It's pulled on tight, the air they breathe and rip.

It's like a prize the way it's stretched on tight

over the voices, keeping them intermingling, forcing the breaths to

marry, marry,

cunning little hermeneutic cupola,

dome of occasion in which the thoughts re-

group, the footprints stall and gnaw in tiny ruts,

the napkins wave, are waved, the honeycombing

thoughts are felt to *dialogue*, a form of self-

congratulation, no?, or is it suffering? I'm a bit

dizzy up here rearranging things,

they will come up here soon, and need a setting for their fears,

and loves, an architecture for their evolutionary

morphic needs -- what will they *need* if I don't make the place? --

what will they know to miss?, what cry out for, what feel the bitter

restless irritations

for? A bit dizzy from the altitude of everlastingness,

the tireless altitudes of the created place,

in which to make a life -- a *liberty* -- the hollow, fetishized, and starry

place,

a bit gossamer with dream, a vortex of evaporations,

oh little dream, invisible city, invisible hill

I make here on the upper floors for you --

down there, where you are entertained, where you are passing

time, there's glass and moss on air,

there's the feeling of being numerous, mouths submitting to air, lips

to protocol,
and dreams of sense, tongues, hinges, forceps clicking
in anticipation of as if the moment, freeze-burned by accuracies--of
could be thawed open into life again
by gladnesses, by rectitude -- no, no -- by the sinewy efforts at
sincerity -- can't you feel it gliding round you,
mutating, yielding the effort-filled phrases of your talk to air,
compounding, stemming them, honeying-open the sheerest

innuendoes till
the rightness seems to root, in the air, in the compact indoor sky,
and the rest, all round, feels like desert, falls away,
and you have the sensation of muscular timeliness, and you feel the calligraphic in you
reach out like a soul
into the midst of others, in conversation,
gloved by desire, into the tiny carnage
of opinions. So dizzy. Life buzzing beneath me
though my feeling says the hive is gone, queen gone,
the continuum continuing beneath, busy, earnest, in con-
versation. Shall I prepare. Shall I put this further
to the left, shall I move the light, the point-of-view, the shades are
drawn, to cast a glow resembling disappearance, slightly red,
will that fix it, will that make clear the task, the trellised ongoingness
and all these tiny purposes, these parables, this marketplace
of tightening truths?
Oh knit me that am crumpled dust,
the heap is all dispersed. Knit me that am. Say therefore. Say
philosophy and mean by that the pane.
Let us look out again. The yellow sky.
With black leaves rearranging it

The Guardian Angel of the Private Life

All this was written on the next day's list.
On which the busyness unfurled its cursive roots,
pale but effective,
and the long stem of the necessary, the *sum of events*,
built-up its tiniest cathedral...
(Or is it the sum of what *takes place*?)
If I lean down, to whisper, to them,
down into their gravitational field, there where they head busily on
into the woods, laying the gifts out one by one, onto the path,
hoping to be *on the air*,
hoping to please the children --
(and some gifts overwrapped and some not wrapped at all) -- if
I stir the wintered ground-leaves
up from the paths, nimbly, into a sheet of sun,
into an escape-route-width of sun, mildly gelatinous where wet, though mostly
crisp,
fluffing them up a bit, and up, as if to choke the singularity of sun
with this jubilation of manyness, all through and round these passers-by --

just leaves, nothing that can vaporize into a thought,
 no, a burning bush's worth of spidery, up-ratcheting, tender-cling leaves,
 oh if -- the list gripped hard by the left hand of one,
 the busyness buried so deep into the puffed-up greenish mind of one,
 the hurried mind hovering over its rankings,
 the heart -- there at the core of the drafting leaves -- wet and warm at the
 zero of
 the bright mock-stairwaying-up of the posthumous leaves -- the heart,
 formulating its alleyways of discovery,
 fussing about the *integrity of the whole*,
 the heart trying to make time and place seem small,
 sliding its slim tears into the deep wallet of each new event
 on the list
 then checking it off -- oh the satisfaction -- each check a small kiss,
 an echo of the previous one, off off it goes the dry high-ceilinged
 obligation,
 checked-off by the fingertips, by the small gust called *done* that swipes
 the unfinishable's gold hem aside, revealing
 what might have been, peeling away what should . . .
 There are flowerpots at their feet.
 There is fortune-telling in the air they breathe.
 It filters-in with its flashlight-beam, its holy-water-tinted air,
 down into the open eyes, the lampblack open mouth.
 Oh listen to these words I'm spitting out for you.
 My distance from you makes them louder.
 Are we *all* waiting for the phone to ring?
 Who should it be? What fountain is expected to
 thrash forth mysteries of morning joy? What quail-like giant tail of
 promises, pleiades, psalters, plane-trees,
 what parapets petalling-forth the invisible
 into the *world of things*,
 turning the list into its spatial-form at last,
 into its archival many-headed, many-legged colony . . .
 Oh look at you.
 What is it you hold back? What piece of time is it the list
 won't cover? You down there, in the theater of
 operations -- you, throat of the world -- so diacritical --
 (are we all waiting for the phone to ring?) --
 (what will you say? are you home? are you expected soon?) --
 oh wanderer back from break, all your attention focused
 -- as if the thinking were an oar, this ship the last of some
 original fleet, the captains gone but some of us
 who saw the plan drawn-out
 still here -- who saw the thinking clot-up in the bodies of the greater men,
 who saw them sit in silence while the voices in the other room
 lit-up with passion, itchings, dreams of landings,
 while the solitary ones,
 heads in their hands, so still,
 the idea barely forming
 at the base of that stillness,
 the idea like a homesickness starting just to fold and pleat and knot-itself
 out of the manyness -- the plan -- before it's thought,
 before it's a *done deal* or the name-you're-known-by --
 the men of x, the outcomes of y -- before --
 the mind still gripped hard by the hands
 that would hold the skull even stiller if they could,

that nothing distract, that nothing but the possible be let to filter
through,
the possible and then the finely filamented hope, the filigree,
without the distractions of wonder --
oh tiny golden spore just filtering-in to touch the good idea,
which taking-form begins to twist,
coursing for bottom-footing, palpating for edge-hold, limit,
now finally about to
rise, about to go into the other room -- and yet
not having done so yet, not yet -- the
intake -- before the credo, before the plan --
right at the homesickness -- before this list you hold
in your exhausted hand. Oh put it down.

The Surface

It has a hole in it. Not only where I

concentrate.

The river still ribboning, twisting up,

into its re-

arrangements, chill enlightenments, tight-knotted

quickenings

and loosenings--whispered messages dissolving

the messengers--

the river still glinting-up into its handfuls, heapings.

glassy

forgettings under the river of

my attention--

and the river of my attention laying itself down--

bending,

reassembling--over the quick leaving-offs and windy

obstacles--

What is it searching for all the leaves turning towards you.
Breath the emptiest of the freedoms.
When will they notice the hole in your head (they won't).
When will they feel for the hole in your chest (never).
Up, go. Let being-seen drift over you again, sticky kindness.
Those wet strangely unstill eyes filling their heads-
thinking or sight?—
all waiting for the true story—
your heart, beating its little song: *explain*. . .

Explain requited
Explain indeed the blood of your lives I will require

explain the strange weight of *meanwhile*

and *there exists another death in regards to which*
we are not immortal

variegated dappled spangled intricately wrought

complicated obtruse subtle devious

scintillating with change and ambiguity

SUMMER

Explain two are

Explain not one

(in theory) (and in practice)

blurry, my love, like a right quotation,

wanting so to sink back down,
you washing me in soil now, my shoulders dust, my rippling dust,

Look I'll scrub the dirt listen.

Up here how will I

Where is the dirt packed in again around us between us obliterating difference
Must one *leave off* Explain *edges*

And *bless*. And *blame*.

Vase in the kitchen)

Explain duty to remain to the end.

The good.

A wise man wants?

WINTER

Dwelling in place for example.

In fluted listenings.

In panting waters human-skinned to the horizon.

Muzzled the deep.
Fermenting the surface.

Wrecks left at the bottom, yes.

33

Light on it a woman on her knees-her having kneeled everywhere already.

God's laughter unquenchable.

Back there its river ripped into pieces, length gone, buried in parts, in sand.

Believe me I speak now for the sand.

Here at the front end, the narrator.

At the front end, the *meanwhile*: God's laughter.

Are you still waiting for the true story? (God's laughter)

The difference between what is and could be? (God's laughter)

In this dance the people do not move.

Deferred defied obstructed hungry,

organized around a radiant absence.

In His dance the people do not move.

Woods

No one has died just now.

But that is only as far as I know.

As far as I know a breath can be contained

by a line. O stubborn appetite: *I*, then *I*,

loping through the poem. Shall I do that again?

Can we put our finger on it?

These lines have my breathing in them, yes.

Also my body was here. Why try to disguise it.

In this morning of my year

that will never be given back.

Also those who will not give it back. Whoever they
may be.

How quietly they do their job

over this page. How can I know when it's the
case—oh swagger of dwelling in place, in voice—

surely one of us understands the importance.

Understands? Shall I wave a "finished" copy at you
whispering do you wish to come for lunch.

Nor do I want to dwell on this.

I cannot, actually, dwell on this.

There is no home. One can stand out here

and gesture wildly, yes. One can say "finished"

and look at the woods. One can even, say,

look *into* the woods, as I do now, here,

but also casting my eye out

to see (although that was yesterday) (seeing in through the alleyways

of trees, the slantings of morninglight)
(speckling) (golden) laying in
these foliate patternings, this goldfinch, this
suddenly dipping through and rising to sit very still
on top of the nearest pine, big coin, puffed-out,
turning in little hops and hopes when he turns, sometimes
entering full into
a beam of sun—becoming yellowest then—these line
endings
branching out too only so far
hoping for the light of an other's gaze to pan them,
as the gaze pans for gold in day, a day sometimes overcast,
but what
would the almost-gold (so that I can't
say "golden") bird be but your eye?
Do not harm him. I can bring him back,
and the way he hopped, turning, on the topmost spike
of the pine, how many minutes
ago was it I said "golden," and does he still linger there
turning chest into and out of the story, hot singular,
not able to shed light off himself yet so full
of my glance from this open window, me in relative
dark, running on something that cripples me,
do not harm him, do not touch him, don't probe
with the ghost your mind this future as it lays itself out
here, right over the day, straight from the font, and yes
I *am* afraid, and yes my fear is
flicking now from limb to limb, swooping once completely out of
sight—oh flickering long corridor—then
back,
the whole wind-sluced avened continuum taking
my eye around in it—who could ever hold so many
thoughts in mind—here he is now, back, my fear,
—my mind gathering wildly up to still itself on him.

Covenant

She was being readied by forces she did not recognize. This is an age in which imagination is no longer all-powerful. Where if you had to write the whole thing down, you could. (Imagine: to see the whole thing written down.) Everything but memory abolished. All the necessary explanations also provided. A very round place: everyone is doing it. "It: a *very* round and glad place. Feeling life come from far away, like a motor approaching. And in its approach: that moment when it is closest, so loud, as if not only near you, but *in* you. And *that* being the place where the sensation of real property begins. Come. It is going to pass, even though right now
it's very loud, here, alongside, life, life, so glad to be in it, no?, unprotected, thank you, *exactly* the way I feel.

illegible, now placed into
my hand. The other baggie he snaps open: here:
a button: we mostly tell them from the buttons:
this was a paratrooper: you can see from
the size, the color of the casing. The sleeve
of something other than time, I think,
slides open to reveal, nested, as in a pod, this seed, hard, dark, how does he
make out its

identity--a paratrooper--a German one--each people's
buttons different--if it's a German, we get called--if he is ours
we begin work--whatever clothing still exists--part of
a boot,

a lace, can get you back
the person--a metal clip--the stitching of a kind of
cloth. There were so many more kinds of fiber then. Then
as much soil as we can get--bone-fragments when there are--
how fast flesh turns to soil again--that is why clothing is
so good.

Where there are teeth too it is good--
we will be able to notify the family.
There is great peace in knowing your person is found.
Mostly in Spring when the land is plowed.
Sometimes when they widen roads.
Many were put in with the apple trees.
One feels, from the way they are placed, the burying
was filled with kindness. I don't really know why, but it is
so. I turn the oval in my hand. Soil on it still, inside the chiseled number-
group, deeper

in the 3's and 8's, so that it's harder to make out the whole.
The boy is 17 he says.
What if he hadn't been found.
What if he is now found.
What does he re-enter.

Champigny Saint Andre will receive
some earth, jaw, teeth, buttons, dogtag, an
insignia, hair, bones of most of one
right hand. When more than one have been found
together, the official of the graves registration department
--this man with soft large hands holding the folder out--
portions out enough human remains
to make up as many people as possible.
The possible person: a tooth is enough. *Anything*
will do really, he says looking up, almost inaudibly.
With whom is he pleading.
Behind him now the field where in '47 American bodies, and parts-of,

put here
temporarily,

were dug up and moved for the last time
to their final resting place at the American Normandy War Memorial--
and these available German parts and wholes pulled from their
holding grounds and placed in openings Americans
released.

Forgive me says the man still in his seat,
I have been rude, I did not mean (gets up)
my name is _____, here is my card.

May I hold the button a moment longer?
You from under the apple orchard,
you still not found in my field
and the mole hacking through,
and the rabbits at dawn eating,
and the bird I cannot identify,
you, meaninglessness,
speak out--what do you hate--what do you hate--

Physician

My person is sick. It trembles. They have looked everywhere
in my body for a cause, oh my body is brilliant. Forgive my brilliant body,

dear

gods, whatever hallway you have strayed down--maybe even answering
a house call? Maybe finding your way out? I agree
the layout is growing increasingly complicated. Not one exit is
marked. It must feel to you like a horrible labyrinth, this
history of ours. No
opening. And all our walls! Everywhere crammed full of the crushed
and confused and still-milling numberless angels.
Everywhere in the solids of our world them rushing towards each other.
As there is nowhere *else* for them to rush towards.
Even in my room, in my walls, right there, deep inside them,
something filled with greatest passion, thickening folds of it, is
personally embracing
a void.

My person, ah, America, sinks into its bed.
Into the brooding.

All day long reads only the *Physicians' Desk
Reference*. To find out what is wrong. Has *all*
the symptoms. Is not mad. Wants to tell you,
read carefully, you will find you have them
too. This takes a while, but after a while, you will find yourself
shuddering into your diagnosis. It's like having inside you
numberless confused angels. At evening my person
looks briefly out of

the upstairs window, just before the light goes,
over the stony valley, where the hawk always sweeps round
the left end of the field. That is YOUR field my person says under its
breath, and the hawk knows it, and the disease knows it,
and the summer which is very far away and which might never
come back knows it, even the steps out the front door
which might never again give of their service
to my person know it. *Your field, yours*, it says
although this time only with its eyes, as the room stuffed full of angels is

best

kept silent. My person loves history. It loves the great battles which make

it weep

as it lies in bed remembering. It wants to remember all of them.
What did we look like then? The bugle boy
enters into the room, shyness in him, then the note
is sounded. A crowd of horses tries to turn around in
the small room--the bed in their way--the nightlights

confusing. Their riders have a hard time holding.
Where the hell are they? IN MY BODY'S HEART.
Formation for battle, first assault--it is not easy in a small space
such as a mind or a bedroom. Memory is a much larger space of course
but these armies are not in there, they are in
here. Will you not help me at least with this, you
powers. The Pythian Goddess once sat here, fumes rising from her into

the
early dawn. My person had fallen into a moment's rest so was sleeping
and missed her. So how do I know this? At any rate it is the bloody shiny
campaigns I need to watch--one by one, in greatest detail--
run through their course, over all
the continents, through every one of the centuries.
There was a time when there were no centuries.
It is what began with them my person needs to review.
There is not much time and it needs to do it all.
The sickness: new doctors come every day, I send them
away. I read the desk reference. I am on page 293.
You can see it open here, and all the underlining.
The disease is not as bad as the remedies. I try
them all. I will try them all till it is over.
How do I tell my person it is not my body that is ill.
Not my body, not me, that is right. To be sure, there is
terminal personal illness, but this is not personal, there is no longer
personal illness. No. It is something else.
Outside: seasons, what is left of them, a household, what is
said and done, ashes cleaned up again, a new fire set, bread, promises
called-out from one room to another, solid floors,
and then motion, motion all day long,
its miraculous invisible millions of paths
all over everything. *That is that* says my body. Then there's *this*--my

telling

to you, the me in me, the multiplication of persons, out of control....
What will my body do when the book is all read.
It will have had them all, the possible illnesses.
It will ask for others. The unknown ones.
That their symptoms be listed and brought to it.
It trembles. It is trembling. It will look back on even this with a memory
of devastating joy.

Passenger

Where are you from. I have never been there. Why
did you leave. Excuse me. I cannot hear you. Because
of the partition. Is there some way you could lower
the partition. Where is your country. How many family
did you leave behind. Behind--is that what you would call
your country. Was it worth it. I can't imagine
what you have seen. Your desert your mountains your
endless blue rivers. *Blue rivers*. Your dirt cities. Your, your--oh what
is it, I have seen it in pictures, or things like it.
But *your* country. Your tiny piece of
country. Do you regret. I always ask you this. You keep on
changing there in the front seat driving me to my

destination. The destination changes. But the
 movement is the same. You are making [not enough] money.
 Not enough. You are on the phone, or your country's
 radio is blasting. Over your new country your old country's radio.
 Or you are stoned. Or you are very angry. Scores fly
 through the small space between us. Someone *is* wrong.
 That is one firm truth. But you see I cannot
 do any right thing here any longer. I can think and
 out-think and so on. But we're at the gates of
 Judgment and you are still driving I am still the passenger.
 We could change places. You see of course it's only on this page
 we can do that. I will be the one who is
 sleeping when I as a passenger arrive at the stand and knock at the front
 window, or simply open the back door. *Wake up*. I will be the one
 abruptly awakened. I will be sorry to awaken you. I will say you
 didn't wake me I wasn't sleeping. I will say o.k. You
 will say I was just thinking. I will say of what. We are
 now pulling away from the curb. I will say I was thinking of
 my country. I count out my money again. I use this word *enough*.
 We are approaching the destination. I am afraid.
 I am afraid I will not be able to handle your suffering.
 But that is a lie. You are so far away now from
your country--you have had to give up something so great
 [God only knows what][I don't know what] for money,
 I mean let's face it, for money to send home, yes, and then
 to get all the stuff--not very much it is true but they make
 you feel it is always almost *enough*. Also you are scared
 [therefore the flags on your windows][one in the car itself].
 Scared they will say you did IT. Or could have. I
 am also scared. Am I driving now? It is not clear here.
 There were supposed to be instructions. Stage directions.
 Or signs from the deities, but they have moved on. There
 must be an *other* place I think sometimes. For them to have
 moved on to. The Apocalypse? That is a common
 destination spot for many human minds now. The
 rapid swallowing of all we made. The bird's eye view we're
 so in love with. Ah. Is this town empty? We keep on
 driving. You, you who have come here abandoning what you
 should not have abandoned (we both know this), what
 cordless thing thundering with gold were you imagining when you boarded
 your bus
 away

fast, lake in the distance? The heroic wanderings of your
 own past people,
 what have they come down to here, you glowingly immersed in cablight,
 in the jagged sums you take home to make
ends meet. In the humming exchange rates for what you send
 home. Do you love them still? Here I see your eyes in the rear
 view. Ah. How many names can you name. Of people who are
true Americans. The flags plastered on this vehicle block my view
 everywhere. How many will cover for you. How many names have
 you changed. Have you attended to your outfit.
 Do you sing it well, the god-sanctioned anthem. Are you
 fluent in *this* one-god's country. I know your country also has
 one god but read the fine print he is not the
 same as ours. "Ours." How does one peel this sticky

nationhood off. The vehicle keeps moving I can only be its
good passenger. You shut your eyes. You slumber and watch
the suburbs go
by. You tilt your glance to an aesthetic point of view. You shepherd
all the
interesting details. You "learn" how "others" live. Ah. End of the
Republic. How your outskirts flow by on this way away
from you. Your poor trapped immigrant driving your un-
imaginable sums around in his heart. Your balance sheet the road
to him. His balance sheet enough to make you fear if you
still fear. Goodbye. Fearlessness of the American.
How you are hated. Everywhere. Goodbye.