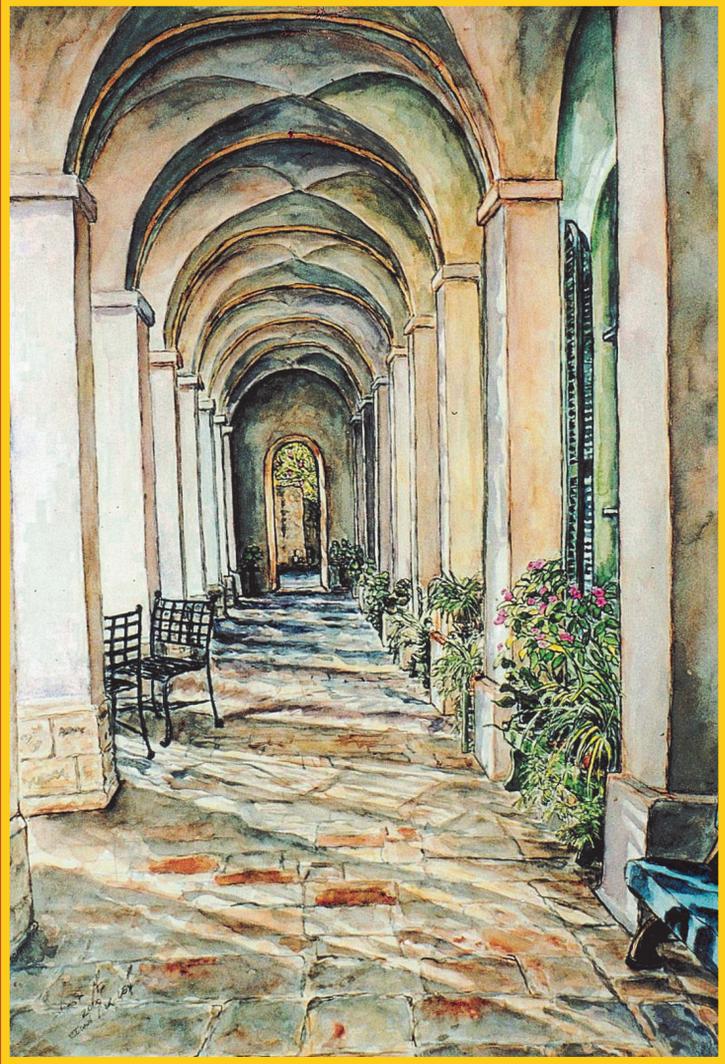


# *Selected Poems*

## *2011*



*Johnmichael Simon*



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## ON HORNS AND JEWS

Do you take this ram as your lawful wedded  
gene-pool partner, said Michelangelo to Moshe Rabeinu

You'll need to take these tablets too, quite harmless  
I guarantee, they're inscribed on one side with the Maker's logo

And on the other, with the likeness of a unicorn  
which will be integrated painlessly into your DNA

The outgrowth can be manifested and blown on festivals  
the only side effect is that it sometimes gives rise

To certain myths which may be avoided by instructing  
your progeny to remove their head coverings

Cut their sidelocks if they grow too long  
to prove to any accusing finger pointer that the rumor

About Jews hiding their horns is simply a lie  
propagated by some jealous story tellers

Who didn't read the correct translation of the scriptures

## COMPANIONS IN THE DARK

There are people you meet on a stormy night whom you remember forever. They gather darkness around them, flash and thunder in your ears, then slip away. Yet you live out their stories as if they were your own. How shooting drugs or alcohol had triggered lightning, tongue and finger. Confessions in a mental ward strapped to a bed, babbling about betrayal, the Via Dolorosa. Memories that don't belong to you suddenly familiar as pain. A public flogging by a sweating muscled interpreter of The Law. A hundred lashes, teeth clenched in an ineffable smile.

This is how I feel every time you come to me pleading to share your story. There is nothing I can give you now except my own. Darkness, rain and lightning. An unlit intersection, monster truck upon us, car spinning from the impact, your door torn open, your body flying away, crushed under wheels.

A lifetime of flogging strapped to this bed has not sufficed to numb my story's telling. Will you remember me as I attempt to share with you that stormy night, will you wake somewhere, reach out in darkness, hold my hand in yours?

## THE CONVERSION OF INIGO MONTOYA

When you were young, climbed on the roof  
waving a flag, you were a renegade  
*Prepare to die* you shouted, your grin  
impersonating a Spanish fencer. Lover of westerns,  
bandit, bank robber, braggard, you were good, bad,  
but never ugly in my eyes.

Observing you I viewed a generation crying  
*Mama I killed a man* as if an anthem.  
Splitting straws with your front teeth or  
dressed in ragged uniform, biceps oiled  
and bulging, cannons blazing, you strode  
to wreak your vengeance on a hostile world.

Some of your friends mobilized, went off  
to face the truth that lurked behind the mask  
of foreign camouflage. Some donned disguises  
eschewed ambition, slashing each others' profits  
with corporate blades. Others gathered in city  
parks and squares, restless, looking for a fight

You chose enlightenment, tradition, listening,  
repeating phrases handed down three hundred  
years. You dressed in somber colors, long socks,  
oversized hat, sidelocks dancing at your shoulders,  
fingers paging well thumbbed hieroglyphics, your  
mouth filled with blesseds and amens.

Yesterday I saw you at the train station, arm around the shoulders of a passenger you'd spied who still had a little time to spare. Fingers unwinding tefillim placing them just here, just there, to represent the holy name. I hardly recognized you with your beard, your black coat and shiny shoes, confirming that you'd finally crossed the line.

Then you looked up at me and smiled. *Shalom Aba*. I could have been anyone's Aba standing there - perhaps in your eyes I even was. And then I glimpsed the tattoo on your arm, the one you could not erase, a piece of past life showing through. It was a compass with a sword pointing at north. And though you had turned back away, continuing to recite your prayer, I once again saw, as in a vision, that unshaven bandit that you had been, once again heard your mocking voice -

*My name is Inigo Montoya,  
You killed my father, prepare to die.*

## OVERTURE TO THE MAGIC FLUTE

### 1. Bergman

A tranquil glade, ochre like yesterday's marzipan  
behind outlines of trees and shadows, a building  
turreted – a castle, perhaps a theatre  
three notes ring out in brass, calling us to our seats  
the opera is about to begin, Herr Mozart is already on his  
podium, baton raised

As violins quiver, a flying eye soars over us, peering  
into each watching face, exposing all emotion every  
expression. Young, old, bespectacled, carved in unblinking  
Swedish symmetry, a hundred life stories captured in  
breathless expectation by the ruthless lens.

While from a porcelain doll's eyes, lips outlined with  
the faintest smile, we wait for wheels to rumble,  
raise the curtain, delight us with magic  
from a simple wooden flute.

Surrounding us in all dimensions, the music, carrying us  
away. Away to another world.

## 2. Branagh

A cloudless sky, blue like today's heart:  
pained, scarred by repeated conflict. Trenches snake  
their way across the meadow. Inside, scurrying like moles  
actors, all blue uniformed, rush like disembodied eyes

Faces etched with fear, bravado, in the background cannons,  
artillery, flights of warplanes soar from clouds, bullets rattle  
out their overture of warfare.

Surrounding us in all dimensions, the music, carrying us  
away. Away to another world.

Where genius meets genius across the sweep of time  
decorating the tapestry with visions from days of calm,  
days of tempest, each artist in his own house, painting on  
its ceiling's vaulted arch and walls. Or in a shelter, bombs  
exploding.

Could you have imagined this dear Wolfgang?  
In 1791, in Vienna?

## YOU WOULD THINK

that someone who has spent his life  
 wandering under wild figs  
 in clover filled meadows  
 by chatty creeks and pools

watching a grasshopper climb a stalk,  
 how a mole noses up from his earthen abode

or composing a sonnet  
 inspired by cawing crows  
 would surely understand

the lament of a felled forest  
 the cry of a polluted lake  
 the horror in a hillside's eyes  
 regarding its quarried baldness

before packing his wood-pulp paper  
 and his graphite-veined cedar pencils  
 back into his animal hide satchel

before driving home in his  
 fume belching jeep  
 before spending his evening  
 getting drunk, wandering  
 streets wet with rainbows of  
 diesel tears

you would think someone like that  
 would be wiser than the rest of us  
 or nicer - somehow 'different'

save endangered primates perhaps,  
 volunteer for a hospital in Africa?

rather than munching that paté  
 at his book launching

## VISITORS

Yesterday we saw them circling  
huge swoops of birds  
causing such a commotion in the sky

Round and around they flew  
for them, our broad valley between the hills  
merely a thin water-glinting landing strip

Mid-November, they were late this year  
we thought, their cousin storks and cranes  
had taken up all vacant roosts on Hula and Agmon

And then driving right under their  
swirling, honking crowd we saw by their  
orange beaks and z-bent necks

That they were pelicans, hungry immigrants  
from colder climes of Romania or Kazakhstan  
trailing their fish baskets over our sky

As if the Sea of Galilee had always belonged  
to them, laughing and honking at the anglers casting lines  
who need to catch the fishlets one by one

## FEEDING TIME

There's a certain time of day  
usually a little before dinner  
when the most terrible slaughter takes place

hidden in the grass the cheetah watches  
an approaching herd of wildebeest  
its eye selects a week-old calf, stumbling

in its mother's shade. Under a tree  
two lionesses observe the brown-white  
flicker of gazelle, necks down – poems

munching scrub and wild grasses, while  
not far above, the wingspread of a vulture  
floats to a hop-skip landing, pushes its way

through a crowd of hungry diners, the hippo  
now its bone structure visible, soon to be  
a silent architecture, a white monument

abandoned even by the flies. There is  
no pain, no horror in the narrator's voice  
as he relates the facts of 'Nature's Eden'

his camera disclosing breathtaking views,  
trees silhouetted against a mountain sunset,  
lapping waves, a brocade of fringes under a starry sky

and as the sponsor's break comes on  
as the aroma of roasting dinner wafts from  
the kitchen, we think gourmet thoughts

remembering meals in five star restaurants  
a pianist playing Chopin while we  
slice our medium-rare Chateaubriands

## WITHOUT THEIR MEDALS

To look at them, you'd never guess  
who they are  
they laugh you in the eyes with their  
single-syllabled grins

wear simple clothes  
guide you through  
their most complex thoughts  
with amiable shrugs

as if they were reciting  
an interesting passage  
from Alice in Wonderland

you could pass them in the street  
without a second glance  
their faces an assorted collection  
of Mr. Anyone, Farmer Jones, Miss Plain

they don't wear their Nobel prizes  
their Pulitzer decorations  
keep their degrees, medals and titles  
in their office closets

the news items say  
the world will never be the same  
because of something  
they wrote, discovered, imagined

but to look at them  
you'd never guess

## OH WOW

Two words. An exclamation three times uttered  
the final message from this departing prodigy...

An intellect that with its sharp-edged imagination  
sliced our world forever in half. Bisected now

Yesterday and today appear like different eras  
the older edition, antiquated before its time

Looking back on some nostalgic version  
of our planet, the younger, brighter half

Like Luna's sunlit face, a glowing Apple in our sky  
to light, to tempt, unravel our yet undreamed webs

Its beams casting their hypnotic glow into every corner,  
every endeavor, illuminating in its white-eyed light

Child, student, author, businessman and dreamer  
all mirrored in its smooth brushed steel illumination

As if an obscuring fog forever lifted, the way ahead  
beckoning, a lighthouse beacon, a shining moon,

A thousand stars lighting the way to universes  
indescribable;

...he says these two words, three times

Oh wow, oh wow, oh wow

...and we, waiting our turn to view

The shining future

...can only gasp and guess

*Steve Jobs, 1955 – 2011*

**B I P O L A R**

lately something has gotten into her again  
something...or someone?  
miss beepie...

it's like her face is rubber  
pushed into a different mask  
eyes smoke, tongue out of scabbard, horses' nostrils

we're used to the weather,  
how winter arrives suddenly  
one day it's sunny full of summer's joy  
the next black clouds; raincoat season

yet miss beepie catches us by surprise every time

we try to examine the record  
go back carefully over the last few days  
what could we have said or done to cause the change?

as we try to find parallels: second childhood,  
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,  
a virus that's been lurking around,  
nothing fits  
except that name...miss beepie

so we tiptoe around, count to ten, then to a hundred  
go for a long walk, talk only to her dog

and then we get up one morning  
and everything's back to normal  
sun, birds, smiles—isn't life beautiful...  
still, somehow each time we forget  
that somewhere, hidden away  
lurks her rubber face, waiting

**IT'S IN THE METASOMA**

we're ants again undermining  
the fabric of our seemingly solid world

we disappear down cracks between  
our frowns, between our politically correct

pretensions. How we deceive one another  
drag our fragments of twig and resentment

earthquakes don't stop our descent, rubble,  
twisted girders, toppled edifices of lies

are for us like six lane highways to subterranean  
caverns where presses print insect tabloids

conveyor belts fold them into bales and  
mutant roaches carry them off for distribution

in sodden classrooms of subterfuge and  
shady dealings, creepy-crawly conspiracies

above ground, crows perched on trees, flap down  
to peck at carrion, corpses of believers

higher still, prophecies, deliberations, postponed  
decisions escape through ozone layer gaps

dissipate slowly into an unblinking universe

**HAY FEVER**

*with apologies to Robbie Burns*

My love is like a wet, wet nose  
That drips from May to June  
My love is like an allergy  
That sneezes out of tune

As fair art thou post nasal drip  
So deep in thee am I  
That I shall cough and wheeze away  
Until my nose gangs dry

Until November comes my dear  
Snot freezing in the cold  
My nose a block of ice my dear  
Until February's old

But rest assured my dribbly love  
April will melt my smile  
My nose will drip again in May  
When pollen's back in style

## FUNNY MAN

You were a glockenspiel accused of bumping off twelve little fiddles. You were our generation's most heart wrenching ugly duckling. You were 'Tschaikowsky' breaking the world speed record for a cappella efsky-ofsky ovitch-ivitch rhyming Russian composers.

You had the fastest roller coaster electric train epiglottis in the universe, a painted wide open grin, an ear-to-ear clown. If laughter was the best medicine as the Reader's Digest insisted, you inspired a hilarious new therapy

A bouncing, flouncing, balding, cavorting, wide-lipped, spinning, ad libbing, wheeling, healing treatment that has transformed our lugubrious hospital system into smiles and squeals of health.

Above all you were the hero of our childhood. Whatever you dreamed, we dreamed, waiting for you to reappear on the Saturday morning screen of the Victory Cinema or from the revolving brown label of a 78, a blustering filibustering Walter Mitty, a pattering quick change artist

We smiled with you, giggled with you, fell in love with you, named our kids after you. Danny, is it a coincidence that it's been raining since you've gone, angels laughing till they cry, rolling in some heavenly aisles?

*Danny Kaye 1911-1987*

## ENTER AT YOUR OWN LIZP

*On receiving an elegantly printed inspirational book of poetry*

Here in these charming ztanzas  
 tiptoez Gwendolyne carzting her zpell  
 of poem and cobwebz culled from her dreamz

O she iz zo faire of faith and pure of zpirit  
 listen how her majick verzes zteam and zmoke  
 twirl like ghosts, like fireflize  
 aszending from her mouth to heaven itself

O Gwendolyne we love thy eyez and lipz  
 thy me and mine zo humble and sublime  
 each page a paeon of myth and mystery  
 on bended kneeze we zwoon

Regretfully we cloze thy booke – perhapz a tad too zoon

## THOUGHTS ON LIFE AND WATER

It's on the news, a hundred seventy  
light years away, a solar system,  
planets containing water, and really

when you consider what is needed  
to sustain life. That it took more than  
the flood, the ancient mariner, Noah,

even the message of genesis took longer  
to reach us. Heaven above, water below  
marine biology, life, floating, swimming

crawling up from mud. Of course we've  
messed it all up since then, drained swamps  
placed our message in a sealed bottle

buried it deep in a desert under a fiery sky  
perhaps a hundred seventy years away  
they're looking at us right now for traces

of liquid. What went wrong, ice ages lost  
pieces of rotting hull, rusted blood stained  
sabers. Wondering what alchemy turned

water into wine, grog, vodka, lust and thirst  
dried up seas for salt, sucked up a planet's oil  
and spewed it to the atmosphere now an airless

dehydrated hulk that once perhaps sustained  
a trace of life. Revolving like a tearless eye  
between the memory of love, the god of war

**LINES FROM A TRANSLATION**

It's imperative said Bana Fru that no line  
have anything to do with another

Crossing Porticus street, veins racing blood  
exogenous beckon of multicolored kiosks

Zigzag flocks of Yam Yum birds  
across a reflective wall of steel and glass

Something to remember Yu Fu by, a grass,  
a knot tied as a daisy, a hippopotamus at dawn

And how we envied you when you quoted  
inscriptions from a fourteenth century monk

Imperfect he said. Imperfect verbs should not be  
translated into whispers of dead poets

Caws of crows over landscapes of blue and gold

## WORDS OF A PROPHET

He didn't speak much but when he did  
 they all listened  
 after their busy chatter, shrill voices raised  
 their views irrelevant, irreverent  
 tongues making empty bucket protests  
 each in its own hollow clang

It has no truth he said  
 deviates from facts recounted  
 like a branch of orange grafted  
 on an oak, rain in a parched desert  
 it is as blessed is to sand  
 blessed he repeated, thrice blessed  
 one for the word, your thirsting souls  
 one for the land

He didn't speak often but when he did  
 they all repeated  
 donned prayer shawls, wrote commentaries  
 discussed, each in his private wisdom

Some prayed together, sang, rejoiced  
 others clanging bucket protests  
 pulled down the walls and burnt the tree  
 replaced them with sharp corners, steel and glass

These are the truths they sang  
 as they impaled him on a doorpost  
 cut each others wrists with jagged shards

## MY YEAR OF WRITING

I can't say exactly when it was that I  
abandoned the desire to write a novel  
was it January, words piling into snowdrifts  
white-ing out sky-climbing branches of my plot?

Or at the writers group in February  
Amelia Jones bringing her fourteenth  
Chapter One rooted in that same old  
dysfunctional family saga, a host of characters  
rushing, changing costumes, changing names  
until frustration crumpled pages into balls

Or when in March I realized  
short stories rush my adrenalin  
a sip, a puff, a joint  
quick-acting highs  
I gave them up, too habit forming

In April poems floralled,  
flowered  
melted on my page  
like unshed tears

In May I tried  
a haiku  
in June July, frogs croak  
not really me

As for the rest  
dumb with amazement  
November now shivers into  
December

wordless at last

**WRONG AGAIN**

curled inside the ordinary  
lies a thumb print, a crab nebula,  
a baby hedgehog with its paw  
stuck in a pool of sky

it wasn't there last night when  
we opened that jug of calculus  
poured ourselves an axiom  
opened consciousness' grating  
just a crack to find

a riddle with a vintage gleam  
fermenting over centuries  
hidden under dusty suppositions  
an alchemy we sipped in awe

perhaps we should have let  
it be, waited to see what happens  
next but curiosity aroused we  
sipped and watched and watched

and sipped and as our theories  
grew we wondered maybe it  
might grow into a happy ending  
or sadly into yet another  
self fulfilling hangover

**RAVE REVIEW OR BLURB**

we're on the back cover again  
saying something inventive  
about someone else's book

a rain of meteorites, a lighthouse,  
the aurora borealis could do  
no more to attract a flicker  
of gasping admiration

yet despite an anthill of agonizing  
artfulness, we fear that other  
literary connoisseurs will somehow overlook  
our incisive diamond-faceted contribution

and turn to the blank-faced  
procession of zombie phrases  
inside waiting to be analyzed  
and puzzled over, then

eventually relegated  
to a growing pile of price-slashed  
sale items where our inventiveness

will rest face downwards in the dust  
to finally be recycled into dull gray  
egg-box hill and valley sameness

## NIGHTMARE

Imagine a tragi-comedy  
 a million actors  
 on a revolving stage  
 lighting—incandescent / black / after-image  
 like a neon sign

each actor mouthing a different script  
 at the same time  
 gesticulating, cartwheeling, falling, rising  
 numbers and letters on the display  
 changing so rapidly that  
 even if you could read them  
 they'd still blend into incoherence  
     *incandescent / black / incandescent / after-image*  
     *fractions of seconds / guesswork / puzzle*

Imagine a sound so deafening  
 a million scripts bellowed simultaneously  
     *laughing / crying / voices hoarse / beseeching*  
     *accents / languages / competing*

while in your heart a single abandoned infant  
 cries endlessly in the night

And you waken from this nightmare  
 it's morning, the traffic on the highway hums outside  
 you switch on television, computer, smart phone  
 facebook, twitter, google, drink a cup of coffee

bad dream

outside life goes on  
 and off, like a neon sign

## UNAWARES

It always catches you by surprise  
dark ships of cloud rolling in  
over the mountains, with their cargoes  
of rumble, cold and drench

Only yesterday sparrows frolicked  
in pools of sunlight as if summer  
was their immortal playground

And you can't help thinking of infidelity,  
old friends caught muttering behind your back  
or insults thrown unguarded  
that dropped the temperature of a relationship  
to freezing and below

The clouds roll in over the mountain  
neighbors, old friends, begin to bellow  
launch frigates of belligerence into your quiet lagoon

The tide turns, heavy as oil  
hungry mouths slurp at your sand castles  
that yesterday seemed so firm—  
this little corner that you call your home

eroding now, you shouldn't have forgotten  
how suddenly each year  
one day over the mountains  
winter rolls in

## L I L A H

Perfectly dressed – a fashion magazine cover – her blonde hair coiffed, Lilah sits at her counter set slightly below floor level so that waiting patients can view a beauty spot on her left breast.

But it is her perfect crimson lacquered fingernails that command center stage lightly caressing her keyboard, they type in today's registrations, doctor's appointments, referrals – all a busy hospital clinic's business handled with efficient traffic control aplomb.

Two phones are attached to her ears, one plugged neatly over her tear-drop pendant earring, the other tucked between her right shoulder and cheek. Each call receives her courteous ten second allegro attention.

Under Lilah's fingers pass mammograms, chemo routines, common colds and colonoscopies they seem to leave no mark on her composure her gloss lipstick, face powder, mascara.

At five o'clock exactly Lilah turns off the computer clicks on four-inch heels to catch the ten past five bus. At home she kisses the mezuzah on the door frame, showers, changes into jeans, starts to prepare supper for the twins aged eight

one crippled when an enraged 'freedom fighter' drove a stolen bus into a crowd of waiting passengers – a photo of their father who was killed in that attack, hangs protectively in the kitchen.

Lilah bathes the twins, tucks them into bed,  
reads them a few pages from *The Little Prince*,  
she changes into her oyster shell kimono-like  
dressing gown, sits by her varnished dresser

carefully starts to repair tiny flaws in her nails.

**SUDDENLY IT'S SPRING**

It's not like a house  
where the plumbing needs modernizing  
electricity needs rewiring

Nor like a car  
due for an oil change  
new plugs, some paint on the door  
where you scraped it on that gatepost

Not even like a computer  
with a failing hard drive  
daily receiving requests to upgrade  
to the latest version of this or that

Sometimes you think about  
Schubert's unfinished symphony  
warbling and wobbling down the centuries  
on only two wheels

And wonder if he didn't leave behind  
an extra non troppo or con brio  
stashed away somewhere gathering dust  
But you know, reality's not like that  
you've attended too many funerals  
read the news, gasped, sighed

It's more like the snowy head  
of Mount Hermon that greets you  
all winter until one day spring arrives  
suddenly as usual

And all you have left is  
a handful of photos

## THAT NOVEL YOU LONGED TO WRITE

oh how you labored, how you dreamed  
nights bent to labors by candle light  
fifteen years in the writing, family duties neglected  
tithe paid only to vellum

oh the pain of it  
that growing mound of words, scratching outs  
rewritings, margin notes, the best years  
of your life poured out in blood and ink

and finally a mewling newborn manuscript  
birthed in a publisher's hospital where other  
mothers wait for a ward round of the editorial  
staff with luck to escort your firstborn novel  
into a stretching row of crib-like nooks all wailing fretful  
anxious to be read

the wretched afterbirth of self analysis  
soul searching in the bare spot on your desk  
where once your dream had spun

it sold twelve copies in the local village shop  
another handful sent to maiden aunts  
and old school friends, the rest dispatched  
over the years to dusty back room shelves

but it was worth it wasn't it darling  
as strolling down the avenue you hear two  
neighbors whisper – *there goes our writer*  
*she's had a novel published you know*

*can't remember what it's called*

## DIANA

Golden curls flaming  
 like a sunburst over her  
 innocent alabaster moonface  
 five years old, already a cross between  
 Anna Pavlova and Norma Jean

Impudently accepting her place at the  
 center of attention of every act she inhabits

Now, mauve leggings wet by some  
 unmentioned accident she comes to sit  
 beside me on the chaise longue  
 legs ceilingward as she tugs  
 the offending garment off

When I look back she is prim again  
 folds of her cascading Barbie doll skirts  
 securely concealing her down to her  
 multicolored painted toenails

Hopping off the sofa she shoots me  
 a coquettish smile – *You shouldn't look  
 at my knickers – it's not polite*

and with a pirouette she flashes away  
 towards her future world of stage  
 succeeding stage

## SHOCK TREATMENT

Her life a bombardment  
 of vehicles revving neighbors screaming  
 cats slit-throat Romeos  
 garbage truck grunts  
 sharp slaps-in-face from beer-stained  
 partners her nerve endings twitching  
 to every metallic discordance

Well we all know how a barrel peeler  
 works on a load of potatoes *DON'T WE?!*

The psychiatrists labeled it histrionic  
 she remembered how stepfather had slobbered  
 on her younger sister lap-trapped in growling purr  
 how the witch had dragged her away when she  
 gawked, windowpanes in her throat shattering into  
 a thousand daggers flying flaying finding softest  
 flesh to pierce; how she had cowered at the vulture  
 bombs overhead, crash of landings ripping masonry  
 to deafness

Stripped raw she buried herself in steel mesh blanket  
 protective, an underground cocoon

Until the treatment came and tore her ears into the sky  
 red-mouthed witch shrieking at her as she dug her up  
 in klaxon forkfuls until she fainted into silent relief

The doctors made chalk marks on their boards, gathered  
 her up into failed pieces of statistics

## MARBLER

Here we are  
at the edge of the universe  
playing marbles with the boss

We polish ours between thumb and forefinger  
(it's a misty green and blue cat's eye  
flecked with white, a real beauty)  
and away it rolls across the sand  
It gets scratched a bit on the way  
loses some of its shine

Now it's the boss's turn, he lets loose a comet,  
it sneaks between the orbit of a meteorite cloud  
and a large cold planet, smashing aside tons  
of hurtling rocks on the way  
pow, no rocks, all gone to dust

We spit on our planet, rub it to bring back its shine  
but our saliva is acid and only further discolors it  
so we roll it back to the line in the sand,  
take careful aim

In the meantime the boss is making points,  
he shoots at a couple of pulsars, pow, they explode,  
zaps a planet past a huge black hole  
it veers, wobbles, finally slips into the hole, disappears

Our planet's not looking so good, we find a bottle  
of planet cleaner, add a few chemicals of our own,  
swish it around in a glass dish, remove it,  
dry it off with a couple of tons of carbon monoxide.  
That should make it beautiful again, but it doesn't,  
some of the white haze seems to be disintegrating,  
it looks a bit pitted

The boss is having fun with a couple of nebulae,  
he spins some supergravity at them and they  
change direction, dance like fireflies

Our planet seems somehow to have lost its roundness  
we light a couple of huge atomic fires, pass it through  
them carefully, just to soften it enough so we can  
roll it around, restore its perfect shape, but it doesn't  
work, some of the blue has invaded the outlines of the green  
and a few large brown discolorations appear  
that we hadn't noticed before

Too late we realize that we've got to make our play now,  
but our planet's in real bad shape, it's lost its smoothness  
altogether, we flick it as best as we can saying a little prayer  
under our breath and off it goes, hopping and weaving across  
the sand like a dog with only two legs. Soon it disappears  
into a cloud of cosmic debris and gets lost in a storm  
of misshapen moons, we can't find it in all that whirling stuff

We look at the boss sort of coy, like the novices we are,  
hoping he'll give us another cat's eye to play with,  
let us have another chance

But he's busy with his own end game. Pow, another nebula, pow,  
a whole bunch of them, he's picking them up now,  
putting them in his bag which is swelling by the minute.  
He's like a snooker master, pocketing the balls expertly,  
one by one, the red ball, the brownball, the pink ball. All gone

Then he sets them all again in a triangle, lines them up,  
lets off a thunderous opening shot, smash, a big bang and they all  
fly apart, some of them already going into pockets

What about us, we ask. Can we have another chance, try again?  
Sorry kids, he says, go back to school, study a bit, get smarter,  
learn how to take care of your marbles.

Come back when you grow up

Then he lets loose with some really dazzling impossible shots,  
bouncing them off wall after wall effortlessly,  
finally pocketing the whole lot

See you kids, he says, have a good day in school, then he smiles  
that special knowing smile of his, winks at us

You can't beat the boss, he's the best

## PING WITHOUT PONG

In a pink and blue frock among daisies, her life a soliloquy of flowers in a Panama hat; captured as adolescence drifted towards ripeness she usually posed for Degas.

*“Imagine darling at the time that she lived clock hands were withering towards a new century. But I see you are somewhere else, your Gauoise left burning, unattended, your brow creased in some private séance. A centime for your musings mon ami. You answer not. Don’t burn the tablecloth, I’m off to inspect the décor in the Ladies. They say the wallpaper is exquisite. If the waitress arrives please order for me a watercress salad and a bottle of Perrier”.*

*“Henri, mon dieu, somebody call an ambulance!”*

## NOT YOUR TYPICAL SUBURBAN LOVE AFFAIR

He spent years collecting little packets  
of salt from fast food takeouts to put together  
a replica of Lot's wife, combed the city, sack in  
hand gathering plastic bottles to create a model  
of the Taj Mahal. Bones his specialty, his basement  
piled high with spines, jawbones, skulls that glared  
through carbon dated eye sockets, Neanderthal,  
Australopithacus and one, his pride and joy,  
he announced – a missing link he nicknamed Lucy.

The girl followed him on every dig, groupie a third his age  
denim skirt flying in wind and dust from crumbling  
corners of cultures and civilizations. Eventually she  
captured him one moonless night in a Bedouin tent pitched  
on a sand dune (or in some two-seated corner of a kosher  
McDonald's). Together until he too went to dust, she now  
shows his margin notes proudly to visitors, his polished skull  
next to some flint arrowheads on her mantelpiece underneath  
a print of Brueghel's Tower of Babel, a collection she fondly  
calls My Tongue Tied Lovers.

**B U G**

there's this bug that crawls across my work  
drags its body forth and back, a linebreaking  
red and black spotted intruder from microsoft  
or some automated literary critique program, every  
time it crosses a definite article it beeps, if a phrase  
is repeated more than twice it hiccups a reptilian  
triplet and when it encounters a numeral or an  
ampersand instead of everything spelled out, it spins  
a little dance, raises its hind wheels and edits the  
offending abbreviation with a white-out wand and  
clacking overtyping that makes me think it's a descendant  
of one of those golf ball typewriters my father used.

the only thing it can't do is turn pages—when it reaches  
a page break it flips over on its back and tinkles a little  
motto almost like my dog does when he wants you to  
scratch his tummy; only problem is this bag of cuss words  
it collects which you need to empty out manually every  
so often. i'm keeping this trash to have a private  
ticker tape parade next time one of my manuscripts  
is accepted.

## THAT SAME OLD SIDESHOW

We're off on this seaside holiday  
sun flawless over a petticoat sea,  
this morning we're sitting in the shade  
Yasser, Bashar and me, taking a break from  
improving our tans in the 40° heat  
watching Punch and Judy while nibbling  
at pistachios and licking frozen ices.

Punch is bashing Judy with a baseball bat,  
she falls but gets back up, then he kicks  
her with his boots, draws a dagger from his  
trousers and slashes at her – again she drops  
and when she stumbles to her feet, Punch  
shoots her in the back with a submachine gun.  
Meanwhile the policeman despite all the going  
on is snoozing under a palm tree, stage left.

Then a miracle – Judy recovers, takes Punch  
by his jalabiya and throws him to the ground. He  
lies there groaning. The policeman wakes, slaps  
handcuffs on Judy and drags her protesting to  
the International Court which unanimously  
declares her an aggressor and demands that she  
apologize to Punch, pay him reparations.

Serves her right, says Yasser to Bashar, taking  
a lick at his frozen lolly. Vicious little bitch.

**SHEHEREZADE AND ALL THAT**

Some stories are like  
off-on-a-journey kisses  
they blow marzipan and tangerine lip marks  
all down the page  
flute notes and train whistles  
in the margins as  
suitcase in hand they prepare  
to depart for Shangri-La

Others are battle relics  
packed with shrapnel and loss  
the hero's tales repeated by firelight  
where glow of bronze reflects  
burnished shields and kingdoms  
clash of sword and bayonet  
clanging through the ramparts of your  
eyes and ears, plundering treasure chests  
behind the drawbridge of your mind

Best are those page turners  
with thumbbed and well worn  
scuff marks - punch and judy, peter pan  
greensleeves and gingerbread  
where curled up in a rocking chair  
with hot chocolate, marshmallows  
or in some well-loved library or bookshop,  
are all the heroes and heroines you ever wished  
to spend your life with (or hoped you might become)

You're timeless as  
you wander through their trysts and turns  
recalling each adventure like the echo  
of lost but never forgotten bedtimes  
gooseflesh rising once again

**RELEASE**

This was the day everything came right  
my tooth stopped aching  
the limp in my leg disappeared  
my back straightened out  
my eyes cleared, I could see for miles  
and down there was a tightening  
I hadn't felt for years  
I felt light, all bouncy  
ready for anything

and then this cloud floated by  
as I soared past it  
and realized where I was

## OUR SNOWFLAKE FAIRY

She had a fever that rose and fell  
her breath cascading softly  
on the pillow. Like mermaid's hair

Her eyes spangled green  
that in the night, lit up  
the air around her with glow-worm thoughts

Alien she was, we found her on the moor  
silk spider net encrusted  
cocooned, pulsing at the stars

We brought her home nestled in  
phosphorescence, held nightwatch by  
her bedside, her light a quiet adagio

And in the dawn's first glimmer  
she melted, was gone  
leaving a damp outline

Which as much as we tried  
with facts, hairdryers and science  
we could not remove

## THE ILLUSTRATOR

Deft, her fingers weave, outline, snip  
then fill in brushstrokes of her imagination  
quick tufts of green, a serious brown, ochre  
for the flagstones and a regal splash shouted  
across a pale blue sky for parrots  
in the breaking dawn

Here's where the path meanders between  
thick trees, she mutters, tricky now, disappearing  
into bunches of sun-warmed yellow. Buttercups?  
Here's where Hansel and Gretel lived, rough-hewn  
shack of split-pole pine. And here's the witch—  
dark clouds of gray and black rushing, as her  
fingers grabbed pencils, flying charcoal, huge  
slashes of dark and thunder crisscrossing, until she  
laid it down, exhausted, smoke poring out of her  
nostrils like some heaving mare

This is what she remembers:  
the night the witch came and changed her world forever  
a thousand storybookslie torn, bloodied  
around her disarray.

## THE SLAM

I can still see him  
sitting with his Shorter Oxford dictionary  
the ton of him weighed down  
in concentration, composing what  
he hoped would become the distinctive  
fin de siècle, turn of the tide luminosity,  
the one that would divide Poetry  
forever into before and after George,  
prove that Sol revolved around his  
brilliance, illuminate a world of filament  
that before his rising was flat, routine.

When he got up to read  
at the slam, how sad his splutter,  
a wilting sparkler at Catherine's birthday affair  
the public address squawking like a coop  
of hens - and then a power failure  
the lights went out and left him blinking  
in his bifocals, stammering his broken  
revolution into scraping chairs, coughing  
and shuffling shoes.

Up on the stage delivering his fading stanzas  
the rest of us already across the street  
heading for a pint.



as her daughter repeats in a loud voice but you're not  
listening to me at all i told you we're just thinking about  
the psychologist's point of view the kitten's  
older brother tearing up the furniture out of some destructive  
boredom

until grandmother bangs down the phone  
eyes full of tears  
the body of the cockroach deep under the piano  
gathering dust and cat hair  
for years until nanette, refusing  
to practice her scales, goes upstairs to watch  
lady gaga on the computer

## FROM A BALCONY

From a balcony, the same scene, each frame  
a season of forgetting. How a red tractor  
thrashes golden hay into bundles. Birds hopping  
behind, pecking impressionists. And in the distance  
an undisturbed river, paddle boats, children  
fishing for carp with bent pins and worms.

From a balcony, the same scene, high rises stretch  
upwards, pushing shoulders each to be taller. They  
have built a parking lot next to the funeral building, buses  
depart to places in the city, shopping centers prowled  
by security guards.

The old cemeteries are full. Buses are rerouted to  
new ones. Rows of graves, walkways, freshly planted  
trees. Small gatherings walk past flower sellers. Only  
my window remains black. Mourners chat about politics,  
scandals, cheap holidays in Barcelona, grandchildren,  
old friends.

No one notices this camera, quiet now on the  
balcony. Birds fly past, peer into its glass eye. See only  
a reflection of themselves.

## EXUBERANCE

Unleashed now it paws the ground, sniffs  
 then dashes off to bushes, bookshops  
 discarded yellow pads of cramped notes  
 –this urge to write, this dogged imperative  
 for self expression,  
 to mark the territory

It's raw, a rush of blood, animal and vital  
 call it what you wish, it has saved me from  
 drudgery, boredom, going through the motions,  
 munching routine kibble at company meetings  
 production reports, marketing memos, nose glued  
 to bowl of daily tasks renewed by supervisor each day

When I was young work was a dirty word  
 the opposite of play, school was the same  
 now I'm a hound, a terrier, a hungry mongrel  
 unleashed I paw the ground, sniff, dash off again

This is what writing has done for me, this excitement  
 to waken each day into a new landscape of trees,  
 trails, strange smells and buried meals  
 paws scrabbling at the sand, flinging a hail of stones  
 this time I'll unearth a poem, a story, perhaps  
 a Rosetta bone

**AFTER YEARS OF FIDELITY  
ESCAPES THE MOON**

You may deny all but  
you cannot deny your blur  
caught in my eyes like parchment

No plastic surgeon, no spatula  
can eradicate your gravitational creep  
each year you move another inch away

Leaving me without protection  
from marauding meteorites, sudden  
collapse, implosion, lunacy

This eroded scene of bones and memories  
is all that remains to hold together  
a cameo of Eden I carry in a locket

A young couple naked, new born  
frolicking over waves, planet and moon  
embracing, year in, year out

in gravity's uninhibited grip of love

## HOME

Impossible country. Where Jesus walked on water  
we grow fish. We drain swamps, regret, preserve what's  
left for birds and tourists. We curse in Russian,  
Amharic, Yiddish and Ladino, talk war, talk peace,  
pray for rain, pray for flood waters to abate. Cheering for  
our favorites we rush to television broadcasts to witness  
yet another competitor disqualified, sent home.

On summer nights we sit on balconies, eat watermelon  
with salty cheese, talk war, talk peace, swat flies  
with right wing or left wing newspapers. We argue,  
have ten opinions, all regretted when war is declared,  
keep our battledresses ready duffel-bagged just in case,  
take loans to buy the latest model SUV's we use to  
travel to the local mall.

We marry and divorce like bumper cars at fairs, poles  
bristling electric sparks, buy high-priced apartments  
to be divided among hungry swarms of lawyers.

We curse our neighbors, swelter in the humid weather  
sit in bomb shelters listening to the news. We lick  
our wounds, bury our dead, atone for sins and then  
commit them all again. We emigrate to Boston and  
Los Angeles, phone home twice a week, learn English  
but would rather speak in Hebrew.

We complain yet desperately love this country,  
eventually return. Where else can you get tax free  
appliances just for coming home?

## CLARITY

What we do for coherence  
exclaimed Tradismus smacking his lips,  
green cheese, we smear her page with it  
looking up at the sky from our kitchens

See how delicately she floats across  
my curtained window. Coherence  
is a lady, a mystery waiting to be solved

Part her curtains, reveal her secrets. She's  
modest. My predictions wooed her beneath  
six layers of underclothing. But the seventh?  
Heaven!

They were married for an impossible  
number of light years. Here under my plate  
I have written on the tablecloth an exact  
formula for calculating it.

I see you do not understand. Why bother?  
Take up poetry instead, music, cooking.  
Each man is born to his own vision. Have  
some more green cheese.

## THE ROAD

Road 90

slips between Naftali's hills and those  
of the Golan, zigzags down to Tiberias on the lake  
and thence, slivers in its crusty trench  
towards the lowest place on earth.

As evening approaches it becomes a darkening river  
flanked by mountains where shadows of trees  
lengthen towards sunset down rocky slopes  
to drink from the asphalt

Impervious to traffic they slip across the road,  
surmount the concrete barrier. A slow evening  
overcomes the scene, lights of passing cars  
come on and later, twinkling strips of village  
embracing village come into view beyond  
the now unseen border with Jordan

Silent night. There is no moon. History, battles,  
rattle of artillery, all wiped out for this moment  
by the writhing cadenza of a black and yellow snake.

Now, even shadows have disappeared.  
peace beckons surreal,  
shadows leave no corpses.

**AFTER MANY A SONNET  
DIES THE GOOSE**

Some of these word-warbling wonders  
are born with Webster or Oxford  
embedded in their genes

They blow politically correct spittle bubbles  
that burst with perfect pentametered plops  
and in their diapers they deposit  
fragrant replications of Wordsworth, Gray or Keats

Infant prodigies, their innocent hiccups  
are careless gems flung into the air of  
hamburger and limp French fry preschool lunches

At colleges, sonnets that they toss off while  
solving crossword puzzles are published  
in anthologies, compared by lecturers  
in literature to bards of bygone days

How I detest these effortless syllable-crunchers  
literati, pushcart nominees, poet laureates  
of geese-honking provincial hamlets

When all I have to decorate tradition's walls  
is a bunch of graffiti and expletives  
with which to eulogize  
this motherfucking world

**BRONX CHEER**

it's always guaranteed  
to get a laugh  
this puff of air  
unexpected intruder  
into some distinguished silence

little non sequitur  
speaking its universal language  
of embarrassing surprise

a fragrant or  
at times  
unobtrusive visitor  
to a world  
obsessed with it's own  
importance

we can't help  
welcoming its  
sudden perspective  
reminding us of our  
shared humanity

or as uncle tochis  
that alte kocker  
was wont to say

zay gezunt

**STRANGER**

bam bam you dead  
you not from our gang

you stupid accent  
prayer book, you not

the right color  
a freak

cover you face  
uncover you face

you friend of whatisname  
who everyone knows

is just part of  
an international conspiracy

so we holding a conference  
of peace loving friends

to expose you schemes  
you subterfuge

hold up this  
democratic decision

for all rodents like you  
to see

you last chance to surrender  
stop you war-mongering tactics

ok our unanimous decision  
bam bam you dead

## FAITH

Gorvitch is worried about his physician  
 who told his wife she was as healthy as a horse  
 then the following week she fell and broke her hip.  
 “Liar, fake, misogynist” he yelled after a consultation when  
 this imposter told Gorvitch not to worry about his ulcer,  
 to drink milk (but not after meat) not to neglect  
 his devotions, avoid black cats, walking under ladders

But Gorvitch worries  
 he worries about rising prices, about crooked politicians  
 yesterday another sex scandal was exposed  
 a rabbi was caught seducing young boys  
 things are on a downward spiral, thinks Gorvitch  
 you can't trust anyone, surely judgment day approaches  
 he reads newspapers looking for clues to prove  
 that which he is already sure of, searches the Internet  
 aha - a huge comet is heading for our system, ozone layer  
 thinning, several species of rodents have become extinct,  
 a new virus, sunspots, salmonella, recalls Sodom and Gomorrah

Most of all Gorvitch worries about God  
 he wears a raincoat with a hood even in dry weather  
 hands covering head he hurries fearing retribution  
 for misdemeanors he's perhaps forgotten. Intellectually  
 Gorvitch doesn't believe in God anymore; holocaust, wars,  
 disease, corruption, all point to a world devoid of divine  
 benevolence, whirling to inevitable destruction

But he still repeats his morning prayers  
 hurries to synagogue on Sabbath in his raincoat  
 goes through the motions  
 he's not taking any chances

## DOES IT REALLY MATTER

If there was domestic violence back then, repressed feelings of inadequacy, incest, ingrown toenails, body lice, poetry, music, works of art never created because of the high price of vellum or because Rome was sacked by barbarians that night? What we are looking for are letters chiseled in granite by stonemasons, taken into slavery by kings, conquerors whose names are carved on tombs and temple portals.

Does it really matter if a mist-eyed peasant girl, dying of tuberculosis, stroked the beard of her married mentor who had children older than her, saying our love will last forever, stories of sons and daughters, jealousies and dreams, washed away, eroded, vaporized, cloud matter that drifts, leaves no trace on rocks or flagstones?

Will anyone wipe away a tear from a sphinx, hold a coin collection for orphaned children of soldiers buried alive beside their emperors?

## THIS MOTHER HAS HER OWN IDEA

about evolution, her own way of  
 pulling a kangaroo out of a hat—  
 examine the record; each time you thought  
 you had her nailed, she hunkered off to an unexpected  
 crevice of an abyssinian mountain, laid a roc egg,  
 buried an aborted missing link, hauled fifty ton  
 chunks of rock, dumped them on an island  
 blank faced, eyes leering at some extinct star configuration

as in a cave somewhere roasting under sea level  
 a bunch of unwashed fanatics scribbled their heads off  
 to be marketed millennia later by a hungry bedouin  
 with a phd as his own interpretation of an archetypal jigsaw  
 puzzle. mother laughed, almost coughed herself silly  
 into her latté, watching passers by in lemuria. yawning, she  
 left a tip for the waitress, tucked the fragments of her next  
 novel into a pocket of her parka, went home in an ice age muse  
 to meditate, consider how to write her next chapter

that night she couldn't sleep, coughed an earthquake, an  
 avalanche, filled her bathtub with boiling lava, soaped her  
 bermuda triangle, watched three episodes of planet's got  
 talent, eventually fell asleep for forty days

waking with a queen sized headache she inspected herself  
 in the mirror, decided enough of this bohemian childishness,  
 dressed herself in a rainforest, went out to look for a regular  
 job, proofreading encyclopedias or editing versions of genesis

## A HUG TO REMEMBER

my body is not my body, it's someone else's  
 he is old, much older than i am  
 the skin on his legs and upper arms  
 covering places where muscles used to be  
 is crinkled like tissue paper, the kind party surprises  
 were wrapped in but stretched thin so that some  
 of the veins show through  
  
 i forget the right name for those surprises  
 yesterday he told a worn out joke to my daughter  
 who must have heard it a hundred times  
 but laughed politely—i was so embarrassed  
  
 i forget the point of this joke as i forget a lot of names  
 there's someplace where he keeps them  
 a drawer perhaps without a handle  
 or where the handle comes off when you  
 try to pull it open and you can only guess  
 what's inside, you're usually wrong  
 thinking it starts with an 'm' or a 'd'  
  
 yesterday he looked at me in the  
 bathroom mirror but didn't recognize me,  
 it's strange bumping into people  
 in the gloom who touch fingers  
 to their lips as if to say  
 we know something you don't  
  
 until the light goes on  
 and you recognize  
 teeth, hair, eyes  
 so you laugh politely with her  
 as she calls you zaydeh,  
 when she leaves she gives you a hug  
 you know it's for real  
 and you could die of happiness

**S O R R Y**

they never said it  
not even once  
down the years  
of empty promises  
stale bread, cigarette butts  
lotto tickets  
cursing at 3 am  
rancid butter  
unwashed dishes

the most that emerged  
from their whiskey fumed throats  
once, on a five hour trip  
sleet blowing through broken windows  
no toilet stop, squeezing my legs  
old car rattling, spluttering  
no promised beach resort

no summer holiday  
hail stinging  
eventually the car gave up  
out of gas

the most that emerged  
perhaps we could have done it  
differently

\*\*

it isn't even true, I just made it up  
the real things are buried in my desk  
third drawer down  
goodbye

**A P O L O G Y T O A D E F I N I T E A R T I C L E**

how many times I've used you  
exploited you  
scattered your cry uncaring

cast you like rice or wheat seed

across blank pages, wind blown  
what did I think, heartless  
that you would cause brown sod  
to sprout a green delight of budding verse

look at them, these pages  
a dozen of you, two dozen  
throttling landscape, cluttering ground  
where one or two could have sufficed

to intersperse flower from weed  
meaning from clamor  
life from a cemetery of words

I should have known better  
spared you humiliation  
saved you for more special use  
to differentiate specific  
from base, occasion from everyday  
important from banal

dear article, I beg forgiveness  
here's your rightful place, your throne  
I've saved you for  
The End

## MILKY LULLABY

Blessed are they who slumber unconcerned  
whose lullabies are stitched into a twinkle-eiderdown of dawn  
sequined stars hush over them on tiptoe  
and all those busy creatures who come and go  
painting moon-shadow canvases in ballets of the night

Are to their milk-toothed eyelids as fairy tales untold,  
as midsummer madness undreamed as yet,  
knowing not of those who write news headlines,  
bake fresh loaves, empty garbage cans, mend bones

All these are kings and divas in an opera  
whose overture has scarcely wet its quill upon their lids

Blessed are they who sleep unmoving  
through the nights, whose pattering and chattering  
intrude our last attempt to salvage half another hour  
between insomnia and dirty dishes

Burdens waiting to be shouldered for another day

**WORDS WITH LOST MEANINGS**

telegram

perambulator

gentleman

penny farthing

love is all you need

permanence

whites only

god save the king

all you need is love

**TRANSFORMATION**

It rained mud today  
frogs, gallstones, blood

hail large as cannonballs  
rabble rousing music

and through forests  
of waving tentacles

a giant scythe ploughsheared  
a twitching hairless path

the artist, taking a mop-like brush  
plunged it in a beaker of water

washed the dream slate clear and  
woke into a morning fresh with birds

as in museums we delight  
in twisted clocks, stairs that lead nowhere  
geese that turn to fish in flight

**AFTER SILENT YEARS**

How many times I've voiced this prayer  
I wouldn't go that way again  
perhaps my last I cannot say

I wouldn't go that way again  
resentment stained my eyeglass black and red  
I could not see the mirrored child inside

Perhaps my last I cannot say  
I pray for understanding, you and I  
will have another chance to meet, forgive

I pray for understanding, voice this prayer  
despite resentment, attempt to reconcile  
bad blood; I wouldn't go that way again

## GO FORTH AND MULTIPLY

On our window ledge  
 a pair of doves have built a nest  
 of twigs and now  
 take turns to sit on creamy eggs  
 waiting for a biblical commandment  
 to repeat its timeless cycle

unconcerned of cats that lurk below  
 wailing their lusty arias

as we in our curtained bedrooms  
 go through the motions  
 we mistakenly call love

Multiply...  
 ten million sperms for every egg  
 ten thousand fishlets for a whale's mouth  
 a hundred million planets whirling  
 pulsar, nova, star dust, red shift

One of the dove's eggs hasn't hatched  
 a fledgling falls helpless from a bough  
 two of our children, fully grown  
 have emigrated, they send emails  
 photos of grandchildren  
 one is saving orangutans in Borneo

And now it's spring again  
 the yard is a riot of wild flowers  
 and from the window ledge  
 a choir of cooing comes

Perhaps there's life on other planets  
 waiting for a distant sun to incubate its eggs

**GRANNY'S EAR TRUMPET WORLD**

From outside it's just a head  
bobby-pinned, mostly white, a few gray strands  
hint of lemony shampoo lingering  
and an ear you speak into  
through a trumpet

When she doesn't answer at once  
you greet her again  
'hello granny, it's me'

She turns and looks at you  
ever so slowly  
as you wait for her smile  
for her reassurance that  
all is well inside her  
inner world

It's like waiting  
for an amaryllis to bloom  
or a fox terrier, head cocked  
beside a Victrola

Perhaps she's listening  
to a song  
left somewhere in childhood  
'the music goes round and round  
...and it comes out here'

'Hello Cornelia' says granny  
'I was just having the most  
amazing dream'

and then you both smile

**SADNESS OF LITTLE MOMENTS**

wild flowers  
hues fading  
because a camera battery was empty

dream story  
melting  
when garbage truck clanked outside

tadpole sperm  
swimming brave  
(to slay the dragon  
marry the eggy princess)

frustrated  
behind a latex  
road block

**WORM'S EYE VIEW**

this alchemy  
that mutates forest into book  
flower into song  
stick of charcoal into sketch  
bayonet into ballpoint

is all the history you'll  
ever taste, dear worm

a meal of printer's ink,  
canvas, pigment  
held together with what used to be  
a tree trunk

munch away, consume, consume  
digest, fill your intestine with it  
Battle of Hastings  
ballerinas, boy's in blue  
sunflowers

you'll never find it  
despite all evidence  
that something, some magic ingredient  
a secret condiment  
has made this meal so tasty

and all the rest's a legend  
prepared by an absent chef

## POSTPRANDIAL REVENGE

You are as enigmatic as coal  
 expressionless as the jibes you dig at me  
 poker-faced while sipping your Pinot noire,  
 cutting into your chateaubriand, pinky raised  
 in just a hint of savoir-toute derision

Oh that I could curl up inside a piece of hollow pasta  
 hide myself inside your spaghetti Bolognaise  
 sail down your alimentary canal in my wet suit  
 Leica in hand, snapping everything, take it all  
 back to some editorial laboratory for analysis

Turn of the tide. The Russian army at Berlin's gates  
 flag waving crowd of gastric bacteria cheering the  
 demise of a dictator. And then the publication of your  
 secret diaries. A wiki of disclosures. That Phd, a  
 plagiarist shame. Strings of disappointed lovers  
 deriding your premature E's. Your military  
 service - in a battle rations packing house

There you go again between the Pear Helene and  
 Cointreau, laughing at my mispronounced French,  
 my lowly hard-earned-yet-honest B. Ed. I'll get you  
 still, you rat. Impale you on a kibble stick. Feed you  
 to your snot nosed Pekinese. Watch him choke  
 on your sarcasm, eat grass, expel you on some  
 distant intersection. Never to be seen again.

OK. I'll drive home. You can sleep it off  
 in the back seat.

## MORNING BREAD

There's nothing to equal it-  
this fragrance wafting through lamp-lit streets  
of Glasgow, Paris, Marrakesh  
or any humble village where mothers wait for  
flour dusted loaves, steaming, table-ripe  
that tempt children to tumble from warm beds  
with promises of breaking, spreading, munching  
good morning bread

So I can understand this dappled street cat  
who, patient as a statue in the undergrowth  
awaits the crumbs I cast to crowds of sparrows,  
blackbirds, doves and jays perched in trees  
or on telephone wires above our garden path  
where manna, predictable as sunrise descends  
each morning in a cloud of crunchy crumbling

Warned by experience the waiting birds  
don't budge. They've got his number, they're  
not fooled and when I return from my walk to  
find the path still strewn I understand  
that Felix is there somewhere  
lurking for the pounce

Of course it's not those stale baguettes he lusts  
old carnivores don't really care for crusts

## MACNAMARA'S THEORY OF RELATIVITY

He's in a train compartment, stationary,  
while painted landscapes trundle past on boards  
as MacNamara ponders Life and Time

Mr. Magoo, villagers call him  
with his crazy notions, bushy eyebrows  
blackboard fingers chalking calculus and moons

But MacNamara knows something they don't  
knows that Time is not a thing we travel along  
but rather moves outside of us. No that's not quite

what he means, refilling his tankard, wetting whiskers  
in Guinness foam, face stained white, as his fingers  
move peanuts and crisps across the counter

Time, he declares flipping a peanut, is not like that  
at all, - not like this, or this.. but more like...  
It's closing time says Paddy the barman, drink up

And so the Nobel Prize for physics went to  
a pair of Vodka slurping Russians

## CUBICLES

As I write on squared paper purchased by mistake  
my mind bends to a lifelong task; filling in the squares

It's a bit like drawing lines between dots  
connecting neural synapses that hungered there before  
discovery through microscope or lens  
chasing receding stars

Or like an antique chest of drawers of oak and maple  
fashioned by an invisible designer  
yet still quite solid in its workmanship  
into which inquisitive fingers collect, collect, collect

A cubicle for stamps, some penny blacks,  
thick almanacs of names and dates of wars  
a drawer for spun glass animals, for butterflies and whales  
and one for loving, one for warnings,  
one for people to avoid

We think of hopscotch outlines chalked  
on a sidewalk, simultaneous chess  
and stones in Hadrian's great wall  
it's endless; invention spawns inventions  
a universe of pigeonholes, chambers inside chambers,  
damsels, dragons, Beethoven and Bach, all printed on  
brain's vellum, bound ribboned and stored

And oh the sadness, pitiful  
that comes with advancing years  
the nook you placed your glasses in  
the corners you stored those names  
that once were so familiar

they're empty now or lost  
beside a Scrabble board upturned



## GOING FISHING

It's a carnival booth world,  
     armed with poles and magnets  
         we're fishing for lost continents  
 Atlantis under the plains  
     of Salt Lake City, Pangaea,  
         a number of Ararats, scattered  
 Bones of Lemurian warriors  
     in Nashville, Greenwich, Mecca  
         and Tiberias, moldering, slimy  
 Carbon-dated yet distinctly  
     reminiscent of a fossil found  
         in Drakensberg, anthropopoidal  
 Arrowhead of Flintstone quoting  
     his now famous pre-kindergarten  
         national anthem. They say that  
 At any meeting of ten scholars  
     there are twenty dissenting opinions:  
         the Paleolithic length of the pole  
 The magnetic pull of pre-Cambrian  
     Eden giving exactly the right tilt  
         to six thousand years of recorded expulsion  
 Adam and Eve discussing Jungian  
     consciousness, dinosaurs and demons  
         relegated back to the laboratory of a  
 Non-existent big bang theory  
     now finally disproved; she holding his pole,  
         homo erectus, magnet dipping precisely into  
 The continent where Jonah swallowed his whale—  
     quad erat demonstrandum  
         the Loch Ness Monster!

**NO FUN IN THE DARK**

Ty cries as  
father comes into cave  
with carcass of animal  
slain in hunt  
blocking sunlight  
for a moment  
Ty, hopping around  
on one leg  
stubs a toe  
on a rock

mother comforts him  
with a piece of dried meat

Tim cries as  
his room darkens  
power cut  
tv screen blank  
playstation not working  
no response from  
computer  
Tim wails  
I've got nothing to dooo

mother comforts him  
with a handful of m&m's

Some things don't change  
in a hundred thousand years

## ROADSIDE POETESS

*On such a night as this  
When no moon lights your way to me,  
I wake, my passion blazing,  
My breast a fire raging, exploding flame  
While within me my heart chars.*

(Ono no Komachi circa 850AD)

It's culture free, we live in America. McArthur,  
MacDonald macadam. Madam please move your  
vehicle we've got a road to repair here, right where  
the midnight sun burns holes in your eyes. What's those  
butterflies in your hair? Move that damn pony cart  
sister, we've got picks, steamrollers, tar molten and boiling,  
our men are laying down rows of red and white cones,  
warnings, work to do and only six hours till the dawn.

Progress, that's what we call it here baby, equal opportunity,  
each man for himself. You've got nothing like that back in  
slant-eye land. Here the lone ranger can be president,  
Rambo governor of Orange County, count them lady  
fifty one burgers on blue and red background, swing that  
shovel, pick that pick, watch out for falling tar, we've got  
Mouths to feed, kids to send to school.

*Once there were rice paddies, once there were jasmine-lined  
pathways, ponds with goldfish, once there were picnics  
under the trees, water lilies, plum blossoms, chestnut nibbles,  
green tea bowls. Once there was a place to sail away  
over the blue horizon, over the rainbow, bubbling streams of  
rose water, goose dumplings.*

We don't write love songs here lady.

No time for dreams.

Move that goddamn dream of yours or it'll get buried in steaming asphalt. This is America. Go home lady. Go write your poem in some safe place. Five hours to dawn and another four until the bar opens.

## COUNTING

I count stairs  
 birds, kerb stones  
 children on a bus  
 spectators at a stadium  
 I count breakers on the beach  
 seconds, years, minutes

The world whirls by  
 relentless  
 a missed step  
 a missing child  
 a stampede at a soccer match  
 or at the Hajj

One more, one less

I count blood  
 floods, earthquakes  
 revolutions of the moon  
 passers-by  
 I count stars  
 repetitions of amen  
 the number of begats

Compressed into myself  
 I count teeth, hair  
 the hours until  
 my next meal

Water leaking from  
 the wall of my cell  
 drip, drip, drip

Winter comes  
 water turns to icicles  
 I count heartbeats

## MRS. ROSENGARTEN AND THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

Off-axis and wobbling. The morning overcast, my neighbor whistles to his dog pouring some kibble into his bowl, refilling water. Mrs. Rosengarten who doesn't drive since her son was conscripted is calling for a taxi to take her to her sister, she's haggling about the price. The woman who sells newspapers from a baby pushcart is resting on a bench outside number twenty four, she's smoking her second cigarette today. Most of the men are in the army now. A flight of storks flaps overhead on its way to Europe, they haven't heard the news. The water ration's cut again and yesterday our Geiger counted rising doses from the milk and eggs.

Down the road a panel van converted from an ice-cream wagon blares klezmer music from a loudspeaker, moshiach, moshiach, moshiach, ai yai yai yai yai yai. Yesterday it was the old goods van whining its recorded message; sewing machine, washing machine, bed, table, old goods old goods.

The radio's playing Beethoven's Emperor concerto again, the third time this week. Holland's disappeared under rising waters but we knew that would happen and there's another volcano where New Zealand used to be. Mrs. Rosengarten has won the latest skirmish with the taxi driver who is charging last month's price but this will be the last time. It's minus fifty five across the western seaboard.

Off-axis twenty seven degrees and wobbling. I think I'd better sell grandmother's antique closets to the old goods man. When the messiah arrives you won't be able to give them away for free.

**GREEN CARD TO THE GALAXY**

*“Jerusalem is not yours, it belongs to mankind” - Umberto Eco*

When it was over,  
flags, monarchs,  
fences, barricades, bombardments  
rebellions, revolutions

we realized that  
we never owned  
anything at all

all those misshapen polygons  
and untidy splashes of  
color tagging

national anthems  
flags

replaced with  
rental contracts  
maintenance clauses  
brochures  
and refreshments  
for guests and  
passers by

Out there in the universe  
silent for so many millenniums  
there was a great sound  
of cheering

**G R A F F I T I**

on my body  
after midnight  
your signatures  
barely above the hairline

decorate my secret  
places  
armpits  
behind my ears  
under my sheets  
paint canvases  
from Modigliani

what I appreciate  
about you most  
is the way your eyelashes  
turn down  
demurely  
as if to say  
these small indiscretions  
are not for public view

a private showing  
tasting of citrus peel  
and Campari

## A GOOD BOOK

it's a good book and i'm proud to be in it, assorted williams and elizabeths, parchment, printing presses, rebels, rogues and rumpelstilskin, foolscap fugitives, all scrying away, a bubbling brook of babeldom, yefskys and kovskys rubbing shoulders with llamas in pajamas, monarchs, minstrels, humptys and humphreys, here you can sail away with sinbad, steal thunderbolts from zeus, chuckle at seuss, all without leaving your window seat.

i'm on page five thousand seven hundred and something, close to the end depending on which way it opens, a quick read, begin begat begone, pouf, but at least i made my blot, amazing really, all written by a bunch of plagiarists let loose in a cauldron of alphabet soup, babbling away in the same twenty six letters, except the yefskys of course, theirs have been distorted in the cooking, upside down, some back to front, anyway it's a good book and i'm proud to be in it.

## S A F E D

Hills surround her, one hill leads to the Rabbi's tombs  
 another to the hospital. Supplicants and sufferers travel  
 between them, hope is abandoned on one  
 regained on the other where peddlers sell trinkets  
 guaranteeing health, marriage, children.

City of cats, beards, sidelocks, artists,  
 children called home by pregnant mothers  
 cross busy roads without looking ingrained in the  
 certainty that the Name will take care of them.

Safed – Tzfat in Hebrew, a patchwork of languages  
 where black curls walk one side of streets  
 frayed jeans the other, all speaking at once  
 on ram's horns, discarded supermarket flyers,  
 mobile phones, conversations with ancestors  
 and cousins from Canaan and the Bronx.

When Safed is happy she dons a prayer shawl  
 of sunlight reflected from the Sea of Galilee  
 clarinets laugh and wail klezmer music,  
 dance black and silver. Thousands arrive in  
 cars, buses, on foot and Harley Davidsons  
 it's like Lag Ba-omer, this unshaven city  
 suddenly a dozen weddings

But on the ninth day of Av, Tisha Be-Av,  
 Safed weeps. Tears fill its cobbled alleys  
 gather in its synagogues, flow down  
 the mountain to replenish the sea

When Safed rains tears, even  
 unbelievers say Amen

**P R O M P T S**

Many come from dreams,  
on waking a thin thread  
which you pull, then  
line by stanza  
a poem unravels.

Some you find  
in books, anthologies  
other people's dreams  
winging their way like  
migrating birds, from India  
from China, from someone's  
heart to yours, sitting as you are  
gazing at the sky or  
fishing in a stream.

The third kind,  
surprising and unbidden;  
you're driving along  
past some children playing  
or walking, noticing an ant  
crawling from beneath  
an illustration torn  
from a billboard.

And it writes itself  
with all the imperiousness  
of a new-born infant.

Or a tiny biplane  
dragging a banner  
across the sky.

## CLEAN NEW WORLD

On screen  
a Japanese scientist  
beautiful in humbleness  
is demonstrating his invention

An appliance into which  
he throws plastic garbage  
bags, bottles, packaging  
he presses a button  
and after a few minutes  
a stream of converted oil  
petroleum or kerosene  
flows from a pipe into a beaker

Now he's showing his machine  
small enough for any kitchen table  
to children in other countries  
explaining how it may be used  
to clean the world  
recycling heaps of clutter  
back to their original constituents

And I wonder  
if in some moment  
of brilliant ingenuity  
someone could possibly  
create a similar device  
which might recycle  
metropolitan sprawl  
poverty, overpopulation  
child abuse, drug dealing  
back into two naked  
lovers reclining under apple tree  
in a sun filled garden

## DOLLY

*Got myself a crying, talking, sleeping, walking, living doll*  
 – Cliff Richard, 1960.

As soon as you see her you'll recognize she's one of them  
 by the bruises on her padded thigh, burns on her cotton rag arms  
 stitches undone on her forehead, hair full of knots, lacquer  
 peeling and when you turn her upside down she leaks

secrets, confessions, life stories, all come pouring out,  
 the cheating, the nights she threw all those bottles and needles  
 into the garbage, sure-bet horses that ran last, lotto numbers  
 that never came up, unanswered phone calls in the dark

cops, lawyers and social workers with ears tuned to other  
 stations, how they screwed her, how she never had a chance  
 to tell her real story until now. And you wonder, can she be  
 repaired? Silicone, plastic pellets, injection of recycled innocence

surgery to bypass the heart-place where weariness and  
 disappointment clog her fibers, hardened fabric and sponge  
 that once were soft and pliant. Maybe you could regress her  
 to some pastel organza and taffeta-skirted place in childhood?

It's hopeless they say, she's too far gone. Don't waste your  
 time. You might spend months, years, fixing her up, carefully  
 scraping off old paint, grime, replacing stuffing, stitching places  
 where she's coming apart. All for what? After you've comforted her

dressed her in shiny new clothes, paid for the best psychiatrists,  
 then what? You'll wake up one day to find she's drunk,  
 overdosed, slit her wrists without a word of explanation. But  
 compassion overtakes you, you're drawn to this role of rescuer

remember a sick cat you took in off the streets, how he became fat and sleek, would curl up on your bed and purr. And there's this emptiness inside you, deep and dark, going down so far that you could spend the rest of your life just trying to fill it

with any whimper or tear that comes by, any broken doll's heart that just might be repaired and made whole again, down into that place where the two of you can rest, snug and warm listening to that sleeping cat purring away at the foot of the bed.

## A PLANET CALLED LULU

*Bang bang Lulu*

*Lulu's gone away*

*who we gonna bang bang*

*when Lulu's gone away?*

*- Bawdy sixties ballad*

Before we arrived, music was woodpeckers  
pollution was vulture's dung heaps  
lions picked their teeth with victim's bones  
anthills crumbled, glaciers tumbled

Out in space planets collided soundlessly  
pulsars imploded invisibly and black holes  
still undiscovered, swallowed everything  
in reach - in short, banging has been around...

Since we arrived, Lulu's become more organized  
her body hair shaved for timber, her green  
hills mined and quarried for chemicals, grinding  
and bumping she was drilled in intimate places

We sucked her body fluids to run our sexy little  
vehicles, each pod containing a single pea  
careening directionless like termites on tar tracks  
bang, crash, growing graveyards of rusting iron

We desecrated all her secret places, tore her  
album of folk music to shreds, she's past saving  
now, skirts up to her balding chemotherapy scalp  
everything exposed, derelict mine shafts, extinct pub songs

And now we're off to conquer other worlds  
we've packed our chromium saws into bio degradable  
bags, with nuclear engines we'll dump our waste into  
space as we go, singing our bawdy verses to wake and bang  
even a most innocent Venus  
unaware her masters have arrived

## POST AQUARIUS REALITY

Skinny as a telephone pole with a blip  
somewhere in its middle, I think “*woodpecker*”  
but coming closer, “*spaghetti*” moving on six-inch  
high heels and an incongruous teenage pregnancy

You’re swinging home from school with your friends  
satchel-backed chorusing something from the  
pop charts as if nothing unusual has happened

You tell me when I inquire that he, motorcyclist lover,  
traveling at a neck breaking one forty had an  
unforeseeable collision with a safety fence  
and you’re going to keep the baby

There’s a bright star coming up over the horizon  
dear neighbor’s daughter, one that never sparked  
in my baroque youth, nor that of your tight-crested  
class mistress mother

One that Woody Woodpecker could not have imagined  
if he had hopped into our gleaming Facebook universe

Looking around to discover if there’s life on other  
planets or just a hard-beaked reflection of his and our  
own teenage rebelliousness now only an sms away

## THE WORLD ACCORDING TO POTATO

Sometimes I get to wondering about whether folks empathize when they dig us up, in bunches, triplets, quadruplets, torn from soil that mothers us, shake us out, gobs of loving mud still adhering to our faces as they rub us clean, place us in their baskets.

Know that for most of us it's a rough birth, a lumbering combine, blades forking deep into our peaceful sodden abode, a quick tumble, wrench and heave into a loader. No affection there!

Bagging's a quiet internment after that. A place to recuperate, huddle together again in brown paper or jute. Imbued with innate potato self awareness you begin to contemplate your future, what you'd prefer if given the choice - highway to a supermarket theater, a good seat preferably in the back row watching purse-lipped humans trundle down aisles flicking across your field of vision. Or perhaps a trip overseas stowed away in the wave-rocked hold of some chugging ocean cargo ship bound for romance of Paris, Bangkok or Marrakesh.

Next you get to thinking about your life, what you're cut out to be. Just plain old mash or something exotic like rosti, gnocchi or latkes. If you're photogenic you might aim for a cookery book or a TV kitchen show, surrounded by smiling mozzarella or parmesan. Or a career in politics, ambassador of friendship, potatoes after all are one of the great international favorites. You'll need to practice your basic foreign language skills of course, try bulba, kartofi or jagaimo.

After you've made your mark, perhaps you'll want to consider settling down, having some children. For a potato that means giving up dreams of grandeur, being served to presidents or kings, or starring in that prime time commercial. You'll need to relax in some bin or on some shelf reserved for non celebrities. A bit of meditation and bingo, you'll start to sprout. If you scoffed at the idea of reincarnation, now's the time to think again as back to mother earth you go, halved, quartered, budding away to new generations in that dark heaven beneath the Irish loam.

## NEW AGE THINKING

I received an email from Elizabeth Arden  
a UFO fell smack on the temple mount  
my favorite mushroom sprouted in our garden  
I bought some rubles, sold Egyptian pounds

You might say things are not connected  
as I do when the car won't start  
and then we hear bad weather is expected  
and the neighbor needs some aspirin for his heart

But there are folks who understand the meaning  
of stars and tea leaves, accidents and dreams  
I married one and since then my brain's teeming  
with angels and predictions, spells and fairy queens

It's hard to be a skeptic in our household  
where books of hidden wisdom line the shelves  
where quantum theories disappear down mouse holes  
and dandelions blow spores of dancing elves

It seems there's no alternative solution  
if you can't beat them... so the saying goes  
I'm going to join our local Rosicrucians  
and at old dusty logic, thumb my nose

## MORE THINGS THAN HORATIO DREAMED

What vibrates faster than a hummingbird  
the mentor asked, is deeper than a well,  
what's stronger than an elephant, mysterious  
as an eclipse. Before beginning what end came  
as fast and deep as any mystery we could name

The student, dreaming of his love's embrace  
his thoughts swift to her breast, her lips  
and musing on a tryst that night, quickly explained;  
when I think on a distant star, I'm instantly transported  
as for the rest, who knows, who cares. Ah sweet desire

so deep, so strong, such mystery - there is the bell  
abandon questioning, philosophy, drink deep  
from passion's spell

## TALKING WITH DAD

What's that? he asks.  
A computer, a mobile phone. I answer.  
And this?  
It's shaving cream, gel actually. Look.  
So where's the brush to make it lather?  
No brush, only fingers.

Every day we have these conversations  
gadgets in the car, digital cameras.  
He's been dead thirty years, now I'm  
older than him

Yet that doesn't stop him lording it.  
This Studebaker I bought, he say's  
cost five thousand bucks, it's automatic  
when I put my foot down there isn't  
a car on the road I can't pass  
going uphill even.

He was always so full of himself  
knew better than everyone about most things  
so I really enjoy showing him around proudly  
and he doesn't seem to get tired of it  
even though we had almost the same conversation  
only yesterday

My wife came into the bathroom one day  
while I was talking to him in the mirror  
she's a sport - Your dad again? I nod.  
Give him my regards she said.

## COUNCIL HOUSE MEMORIES

A constant odor of boiled cabbage and duties remaining casts shadows of a woman heavy with child hand pressed to flat of back, across already gleaming pseudo Italian ceramic floor tiles, which

Hair pushed back, perspiring, she'd mop, often more than daily, slopping bucket pushed along with slipped foot, then stooping into a well practiced groan she'd swab up fake marble stairs on hands and knees

Shooing him with an "I don't like you hanging around the house", she'd clear away his almost completed breakfast, fold away his newspaper snapping "Go out and work" or "The garden needs weeding - tidiness is next to ungodliness"

Sitting in the bar, his midday glass of brandy chased with foaming lager, he'd tell no one in particular of his plan to leave her, rent an apartment in some seaside village, then comforted and hungry for his brisket and veg he'd weave his way back home for lunch

Afternoons the house was silent, children weren't allowed to pass their bedroom door except on tiptoe shoes removed and barely daring to breathe, then a little after two, a bellow ending on a question mark that we carried into later psychotherapies

Hours later came a thick-tongued roar, "Woman bring me my tea", but by that time we mostly were well out of earshot, playing ball under the trees or scooting down the lane, their admonition not to yell or curse ringing in our ears "Behave nicely, what will the neighbors think"

## IN OUR ANTHOLOGY

Words rub shoulders  
 page by titled page  
 divided into sections  
 with common interests  
 so that inhabitants will feel  
 comfortable with one another  
 hold a discussion, let's say like  
 neighbors or patients in a cancer ward  
 perhaps rejected lovers at a support group meeting  
 and so on and of course Holocaust survivors  
 as we're a Jewish anthology they're always  
 present recounting grim histories of bones, pits of horror

Side by side college  
 students and pensioners  
 bend to telescope-turned world outlooks  
 at times strange, comforting  
 surprising, inevitable; at flip-through glance  
 you might think they're mirror images; the same  
 writhing limbs, same blood pounding through same arteries

As fresh from  
 printer every year  
 a new batch of tousled or  
 graying heads engage the  
 fragile page, shed tears over, rip up  
 rewrite, squeeze, exhort, cajole new aspiring  
 combinations and permutations of twenty four  
 letters reused, anagrammed, laid out like dewy  
 petals on a fresh white tablecloth, edited, fonted  
 glued, bound, covered, until we're ready for distribution  
 public readings, ooohs, aaahs, white wine and petit fours





Johnmichael Simon was born in England, grew up in South Africa and has lived in Israel since 1963. He has published five books of poems and several collaborations with partner Helen Bar-Lev and other poets. His poetry has been awarded numerous prizes and is published widely in print and website collections.

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