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This thesis consists of fifty-two poems written by the author, predominantly within the last two years, and offered in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts. The poems, written without exception in free verse, were not written as a book; however, it is hoped that together they form a book.

It should be mentioned for practical purposes that all characters and events mentioned can be considered fictional. Whatever the original reality status of such variables, the author's imagination has transformed and conjured them.

Approved by

Charles Advisor

TAKEN TO BIOPSY:

"

Piedmont Poems

& Other Poems

by

John Andrew Grundberg

"

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro  
April, 1971

Approved by

Robert W. Kiser

Thesis Advisor



APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Advisor

Robert X Watson

Examination Committee  
Members

Robert B. Ross

Fred Chappell

\_\_\_\_\_

April 21, 1971

Date of Examination



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Some of these poems have appeared in the following magazines: The Brown Bag, Epoch, Fly by Night, Kayak, The Greensboro Review, and Worksheet. "The Piedmont Manifest" has been privately printed in pamphlet form by The Buffalo Press, copyright 1971 by the author.

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the page don't work cause the  
 reader took the handle ...

Bob Dylan  
 "Subterranean Homesick Blues"



LIFE IS WELL

Into her private heart filled with  
her hell private never she says  
is different is blown

What's a secret? I will

LIFE IS WELL

her smiling magazine screaming

"The KID way To Have A Day"

get out of those

looks that bring crutches weathers.

Then comes: "What are you

good for, wasting my life (remember

her hair washed against

my cheek saying she

you) every morning?"

The pump don't work cause the  
vandals took the handle ...

Bob Dylan

"Subterranean Homesick Blues"

Check the floor. No, nothing there

pick up the glass with my teeth

on the table she doesn't smile

I laugh

like an ancient bell brought out

to ring the way dead.

Say, what's the KID way?

She plays her guitar

my last stroke.

## LIFE IS WELL

Into her private heat filled bitching at  
her bell bottoms velvet she says  
is zirconia is bloom

What's a zirconia? I spill  
V-8 juice all over  
her morning magazine screaming  
"The HIP Way To Have A Baby"  
get one of those  
looks that bring churches members.  
Then floods: "What are you  
good for, messing my life (remember  
her hair washed against  
my cheek saying yes  
yes) every morning?"

Check the floor. No, nothing drips.  
Pick up the glass with my toes  
On the table she doesn't smile  
I laugh  
like an ancient bell brought out  
to ring the war dead.

Say, what's the HIP way?  
She picks her teeth:  
my last straw.

## SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION WIFE

"Couldn't you disappear today, join  
 an expedition or fall  
 through the ice of a dark well?"  
 Well no I guess not --  
 and I get a smile for that

that rolls over the table  
 over the room  
 over the backyard where the pump  
 handle is broken.

fly under her skirts & hang there  
 blinking her spores.

The moon drips in the planetarium  
 like hot grease.

The sun splatters & she watches  
 her husband asleep under glass:  
 she raises the lid  
 like a promissory.

Only his smile escapes the redb  
 bacterial lumps.



## SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION WIFE

They told her for his  
sanity not to attack him  
with words -- "dangerous  
to balance" they said.

Following their advice she became  
a toadstool.

Now at night  
velvet Asian bats  
fly under her skirts & hang there  
tickling her spores.

The moon drips in the planetarium  
like hot grease.

The sun splatters & she watches  
her husband asleep under glass:  
she raises the lid  
like a possibility.

Only his smile escapes the rabid  
bacterial lusts.

## NOTES ON THE PILLON WAR

They pass laws & "will  
not be responsible for" etc.  
but all her time belongs to her first  
perfect & wonderful baby.

Frying in blackets.  
She decides to name him  
Lewis Carroll.

Excellence of enzyme paste makes  
from the fingers to the planet.  
Some want to give a reading,  
others keep silent.  
Their words are adjectives simple  
giving birth to paragraphs.  
Now look, you bastards:  
love's empire has grown.

The lip-reading with the battle  
has lost the war.  
The boarders are evicted  
from the kingdom of the mind.  
She abandons all hope  
of negotiated settlement.

## NOTES ON THE PILLOW WAR

Only the rat remains alive

In this season a tree  
reveals more than it hides.

Insects drop asleep, their holes  
frying in blankets.

She moves the sheet  
into flames.

exceptions to his rule.

Battalions of enzyme poets embark  
from the fingers to the planet.

Some want to give a reading,  
others jump ship.

Their nouns and adjectives couple  
giving birth to periphrasis.

Now look, you bastards:

love's empire has grown.

The lipreaders win the battle  
but lose the war.

The boarders are evicted  
from the kingdom of the mind.

She abandons all hope  
of negotiated settlement.



Only the rat remains alive

to imagine everything.

He imagines

himself in a maze.

He thirsts for a dream which

carries off his feet.

There are not one, but two

exceptions to his rule.

In a relationship this deep

our teeth hold our breath.

In enlightened self-interest

we refuse to act.

In the dead of winter

the citizenry finds its peace.

## OPERANT COND. STALEMATE

tubes are inserted & the suction. Pumps  
 seems impossible. But the pain in her  
 unless a toilet seat? Outside birds chirp  
 & trees. Tiny electric shocks that go  
 the head shaven. Soon her whole body not  
 before they clean it out. Across the sky  
 oscilloscope blips & forceps. Pulling it  
 several hairless patches appear. Salt water  
 through the window the birds. The cortex &  
 dilates the vaginal walls. Electrodes  
 like a snake wriggles. Some states outlaw  
 the scalpel must roil. Once violence prone  
 as the seizure progresses. A stiff breeze  
 sloughing off. If you think morality can  
 taken home in a jar. As the heart is

Salt sticks in the snaker every spring

# FOUR MOVES TO STALEMATE

i.

The way wood is  
when it's found lying  
on the ground with mushrooms  
that break  
when I bend it

ii.

After a scream in the dark  
everyone turns his head  
North

iii.

The vortex searching a stream  
grabs a passing branch and  
throws it spinning  
to the center

iv.

Salt sticks in the shaker every spring



## SNOWBOUND

The wind expresses itself  
hordes snow in its cheeks

Like a buzzard  
the blizzard  
rips flesh from ski slopes

The lifts close  
too much of a good thing  
it's said

"I love you" I wire  
my wife stranded  
spliced into opacity

Holding the day's newspaper  
in her hands  
like rain

My lips crack  
a crevice yawns  
electricity falls from the mountain

Across candles the skiers  
decide if the morning will melt  
its wings salted free

## NAMING IT

It's been said that

each act of love contains a little

itch, a carcinoma concealed

like shrapnel beneath the skin,

but no words for last night

when she held the bedroom

like an outpost & slept

inside her fingertips -- then

I felt another nagging, a scratch

in the record of our passion.

Even in solitary confinement or

quarantine life goes on.

This we know.

Love becomes its own consolation.

To console myself through

a gauzy morning of late &

later shows, I thought up titles.

## DIPLOMACY

First came titles for poems;  
 then titles for movies, titles  
 for journals smuggled out from prisons,  
 titles for medals, titles for manuals, titles  
 for barbiturates & for pain-killers;  
 then I thought up titles  
 for the unborn, for America's  
 future nobility.

about a speech I'd made

before the U.N.

and you ran

off and

adopted a hermit.

The pages are

creased in my pocket.

I wonder

inside your house

positions I'll be a knife.

Now what?

The suitcase.

Wherever it has been it's been there.

I shouldn't have

said -- how dark --

The world are glad.

You're stuck in Iceland.



## DIPLOMACY

It's that black magic: for  
every time  
I go one  
way you  
go another

but I was thinking  
about a speech I'd make  
before the U.N.  
but you ran  
off and  
adopted a hermit.

The pages are  
creased in my pocket.  
I wonder  
inside your lotus  
position: I'll be a knife.

Now what?

The suitcases.  
They don't need you in Moscow.

I shouldn't have  
said come back --  
The words are glue.  
You're stuck in Iceland.

## GETTING SEPARATE

Entrenched in a litter  
of suitcases, the  
apartment lease  
expired, I  
repossess my life.

My late-model  
Mercury waits, its trunk  
full with worn  
tires, used rubbers, empty bottles  
-- its hood  
rusted & its clutch  
already gone.

I have, like a transmission,  
given up reverse.

Then a flash  
of plumes & festive  
rags -- a mummers parade  
snakedances uptempo  
up the street  
stringband music

AllegroAllez

I can't keep myself  
 from jumping in,  
 from picking up  
 the steps & forgetting  
 all the appliances  
 left behind.

I have, like a banjo,  
 no regrets

(but the suitcases:  
 they at least had handles.  
 I could have scattered them  
 out  
 against the world.)



## NOBODY KEEPS ANSWERING

I want to call you in New Jersey  
 from a phonebooth in Duluth,  
 Minn. but the phone doesn't work.  
 I don't know how to fix it  
 so I drive non-stop to East Orange.  
 There I call again, from a diner,  
 but nobody keeps answering.

(If you were trapped inside a Frigidaire  
 out in the backyard where someone  
 had ripped out the handle & I  
 came along & heard your cries  
 you'd freeze to death before  
 I could deliver you.)

Walking to your house in Tenafly  
 my shoes get muddy so I tramp  
 in through the backyard.  
 Your old man thinks I'm a drummer  
 & gives me the brush-off. I ask him  
 for a glass of lemonade.  
 He goes to the refrigerator to get  
 some & you're nowhere in sight.  
 I ask if I can use the phone  
 to call Duluth, but it's still ringing.

FROM THE MOTHER'S BIRD  
 Grandfather I am  
 your skin the breast  
 from your lips surrounds  
 my tongue.

# FANTASTIC VOYAGE

my mother had no  
 furnished like a room (her  
 reflected the curve  
 of our blood)

but I remember you outside  
 at night, your hands

shivered on the wall  
 caught between your legs --

my sure stroke  
 you needed to win but  
 hesitated between

I told you  
 a better the best competitor  
 the world.

Wer sich als Quelle ergiesst,  
 den erkennt die Erkennung ...

Rainer Maria Rilke  
Sonnets to Orpheus 2.xii

## FROM THE MOTHER'S SIDE

Grandfather I am  
your skin the breath  
from your lips surrounds  
my tongue.

From the opening round  
my mother had me  
furnished like a room (her  
residence the nexus  
of our blood)

but I remember you outside  
at croquet your hands  
withered on the mallet  
cocked between your legs --  
one sure stroke  
you needed to win but  
unexpected pipsqueak  
I beat you  
& became the hot competitor  
she needed.



## AFTER JOAN IN THE BATHROOM

Today you're her child.

Your mind's a cripple

stuck fast one side

grapples the quick edge

for balance.

Today you leave the house,

leave her tipsy on a teeter-totter

like a night visitor searching

for her sign --

But I left the door

me, I'm a lost Swede

tasting mystery

tasting the sweet nectar

of Frigga's Newfoundland.

No way to hold back.

On our mandala we

pass through pipes,

and nature calls to

order the journey:

it insists that we go.

## AFTER JOAN IN THE BATHROOM

Needing to piss  
 something wicked I followed  
 after you in the bathroom:  
 you left behind your  
 smell like a cactus  
 burnt in an elephant's belly.

What a gift!  
 But I left the door  
 unhooked and your fragrance  
 fled toward heaven  
 leaving me leaking  
 my own stale fumes.

No way to hold back.  
 On our mandala we  
 pass through pipes,  
 and nature calls to  
 order the journey:  
 it insists that we go.

## DECREASE OF A GERMAN GRANDFATHER

The news struck in the middle  
 of a crawl stroke, my arm  
 poised in chlorine, as a fly  
 with its wings pulled, become flyless;

as in the sport of poaching  
 the location of the body fixes  
 the location of the guilt:  
 here the flailing semaphore of limbs.

"Heute Herr Josef Grawe Stop"  
 stopped in the stomach,  
 an iceberg, concerned  
 (with the good manners of a paraplegic)

that it had gone to Norway  
 and coasted between the thin  
 fiord's crack until the black  
 stones captured it --

This was in fact his lifetime  
 dream, left over in the bile  
 of two world wars, left  
 unfulfilled, an angler's cancer.



## TOWARD A NEW MYTHOLOGY

I asked her simple questions, such as

"When are you going to sleep with me?"

-- not yet, she said.

-- and why not?

-- because it is still October.

-- so what if it's October?

-- because the snow has not yet formed in the sky.

So I answered

"Why?"

-- because birds cannot know it is cold until  
they float against snow.

-- and why not?

-- because wings are something that we lack.

-- and why don't we have wings?

-- not yet, she said.

So I took her further

"Will I know when you have answered me?"

-- probably you will not, she said.

-- because I have no wings?

-- no, you have wings, but your bones are soft  
like peaches.

-- because we are different, but still both people?

-- yes, because we fall together like wet salt.

"Is this something well known as love?"

And before I tried to touch her, I asked

"Can we dissolve from these crystals?"

"No, as 'crystals'.

-- no, I am a window and you are a cloud.

-- but can't we meet somewhere?

-- not until fire is cold and burns in darkness,

-- its flame horizontal.

-- but is that to happen soon?

-- not yet, she said.

"But when, when?" I begged

as I slipped into the forest.

-- when life turns into the sea, and the sea

becomes a cornucopia.

-- and what will be inside the cornucopia?

-- perfumes from the mountains, sadness from the

desert, a painting of heaven done by Renoir,

several kinds of cheeses, many nails and insects

still as birth.

-- just these and nothing more?

-- no, there is something else, but it has no name.

There, in the pine needles, I put her beside me

and spoke into her ear

"Is this something not known as love?"

-- no, it has no name, though some flowers know it  
as 'seeds'.

-- you are not easily seduced.

-- only the devil is easily seduced. My name  
is not devil, but Giovanna.

-- and does this name carry its own secret?

-- no, she said, not yet.



## LOOKING OUT FROM NAHANT

She is not the salt water  
 arrayed, all rags,  
 or what should be turned to,  
 but what has turned into  
 herself.  
 Her lips -- caked with use --  
 plasmolyse us both.

We talked the way of  
 the tern's path,  
 sometimes setting down  
 on what she meant by  
 "If the seraphim wished it,  
 would there be rain today?"  
 or yet more  
 perverse -- darker sands --  
 she skipped above me.

What if then I had wanted her?  
 She would have given  
 freely her muted  
 stones -- too heavy curse alone --  
 and we'd have danced for hours  
 in fresh water.

## REINCARNATE REIFICATION RAG

I escape flying  
First Amanda appears  
over the coffee & the coffee  
shop talk  
her voice an oracle  
that streams the vapor  
a tornado that fits  
its center  
over my eye.

Amanda swallows the last  
My hands rub the cup  
& it's Jennifer  
way back from high  
school, offering  
her trick box  
with a hand  
inside that turns  
us both off.

& it's Susan the pre-teen  
movie monster  
metamorphizing  
me to an artichoke  
says artichokes are  
her favorite food &  
my hands strike out  
midnight.

I escape flying  
     an unfinished tapestry  
 warped in time  
     a stewardess harem  
 shuttles me  
     back & forth  
 tightens my  
     strung out threads.

Amanda swallows the last  
     sip of potion  
 ties a knot  
     forms a handle  
 & packs off her boredom:  
     together we've woven  
 a synonym  
     for getting lost.



## TRYING TO GET BACK TO ITHACA

-- for Joan Simon

Trying to forget the frozen  
 fingers which scrabbled  
 through your topsoil & left  
 nothing to plant corn in  
 I thought of those crevices  
 trembling tics of life --  
 some grape, some grain,  
 some pasture.

Trying to get back to Ithaca  
 New York I got as far as  
 New Jersey & no further:  
 my car was waxpaper,  
 a comb in the wind  
 bristling songs of wet weather.

Trying to understand your letter  
 written in the heat of  
 a late & drunken harvest,  
 printed like a book  
 of poems set by hand,  
 I rubbed each character, each  
 dark edge of ink --

each semicolon disappeared (ONE) LOVER  
 under my fingertips  
 into the whorled furrows.

spurred yellow crescents.

Your mouth said "your idea

of an affair

must henceforth be scrapped."

I said the idea

will remain as long

as time remains

as each morning I get up

off Omelette, cross the Coastal

Plain, the Piedmont

and Appalachians

I count the minutes, the degrees

we ought to have in common

I speed through your heartland

your reservations until

to the manifest destiny

of still gray Pacific water

my mission ends, unaccomplished.

## PARTING WORDS TO A RED-BLOODED LOVER

Your round glasses held  
upturned yellow crescents.  
Your mouth said "your idea  
of an affair  
must henceforth be scrapped."  
I said the idea  
will remain as long  
as time remains

as each morning I get up  
off Ocracoke, cross the Coastal  
Plain, the Piedmont  
and Appalachians

I count the minutes, the degrees  
we ought to have in common

I speed through your heartland  
your reservations until  
in the manifest destiny  
of still gray Pacific water  
my mission ends, unaccomplished.



Someday after parting  
 we may catch on,  
 synchronize orbits, fly into  
 intemperate zones as yet  
 only imagined.

Someday when you land  
 I'll turn out from turning in  
 and find you waiting, terminal.

For now  
 what remains: the idea  
 like an old Pontiac  
 scattered over the hillside  
 of our compact geography.  
 Its exploring days are over.

## REUNION FOR PORT ARTHUR

-- for Janis Joplin

There was gravel  
in your voice

gravel in the granite  
headstone marking  
the remains of Bessie Smith

blue gravel in the heroin  
in your arm

what remains is unmarked  
diamond: dull rock

a needle scratches  
the cuts from your life

from my life perched  
on the porch  
on its edge

listening to you  
I loft pebbles up  
to crows.

## JUNG'S DREAM

I felt so good  
In the attic I waxed  
baroque, while  
somewhere below you  
undermined my house;

After years of analysis  
so I circled  
down staircases bent  
on extermination,  
into rooms laced with  
doric piping  
and crypts full of Amon-hotep's  
steles.

You were still mysterious

until the book-  
case opened  
and I passed into your  
prehistoric  
cavern, its walls covered  
with animal scratchings  
and leavings,  
with two skulls on the ground  
decomposed  
at dead-center.



I felt so good

I had a dream:

I was Carl Jung

and you

my first patient.

After years of analysis

you tell me I'm cured.

As integro scelerum maxime  
ordo...

Virgil  
Æneid IV.5

## GEOGRAPHY LESSON: NORTH CAROLINA

## 1. The Piedmont's Golden Triangle

## A. In Greensboro

## 1. watch out for your brains

## 2. the town plays Russian roulette

## PIEDMONT PAPERS

## like needles in your

## B. In Winston-Salem

## 1. keep an eye on your balls

## 2. men have been found in the streets

## 3. missing missing hours

## C. In High Point

## 1. hold to your sins

## 2. no hole in your pants

Ab integro saeculorum nascitur  
ordo ...

## D. In the West

## E. the mountains

## F. when Zelda Fitzgerald died

## G. just outside of

## H. Asheville

## I. the east side of the mountains

## J. the mountains

## K. a hole in your pants

## L. the mountains

## M. the mountains

Virgil  
Eclogues IV.5

## GEOGRAPHY LESSON: NORTH CAROLINA

## I. The Piedmont's Golden Triad

## A. in Greensboro

1. watch out for your brains
  2. the town plays Russian roulette
- like marbles

## B. in Winston-Salem

1. keep an eye on your balls
  2. men have been found in the streets
- aimlessly knocking doors

## C. in High Point

1. hold to your sins
  2. no nadir of virtue can penetrate around.
- the zoning restrictions

## II. to the west lies

## A. the sanatorium

in which Zelda Fitzgerald died

just outside of

## B. Asheville

## III. to the east lies

## A. Ocracoke

B. a thin spit of land

C. a tongue

stuck out at the sea



## WYCKOFF LIONS CLUB CARNIVAL

I drove my Comet to the Grand Union parking lot.  
Jeani was in the front seat with me.  
Lisa Linda and Nancy were in the back.  
We found the Lions Club Carnival in full swing.  
There were big rides and junior rides.  
The big rides were all lit up in reds and blues, flashing.  
Lisa went on the Psycho Bounce.  
Nancy rode the Tempest.  
Linda took me to get some cotton candy.  
It was the first two-toned cotton candy I'd ever seen.  
Lisa Nancy and Linda took the Psycho Bounce together.  
They bumped up and down and mostly around and around.  
Their wild orbit concealed a mechanical order.  
Everything stopped and stayed the same and they got off.  
At that same instant there was a tremor in Peru.  
The Peruvians bumped up and down and mostly around.  
In Vietnam a GI thought he was eating a candy apple.  
He choked and everything stopped and stayed the same.  
Jeani and I sat on the asphalt waiting.  
Linda Nancy and Lisa ran out of money and we all went home.

## A GALILEAN ORRERY

i.

I don't care what you say.

I won't live in fear of Halley's Comet

Like Samuel Beckett,

Or wish my mother were the Big Dipper.

Though it sometimes comes to this

When you laugh

They pound spikes into you

Swirling their holy water or

Check your tires,

Call you unbalanced.

What's the matter?

I suspect death of a kind

Salvation, also

Birth performed con brio.

ii.

Earth mechanics:

A thin wire connects here to the moon

Which Admiral Byrd attests to have seen  
Injected from pole to pole

-- Even from earth to sun, from sun to star,  
From star earth to star earth moon.

Everything goes round except the shape of eggs.  
I tried to bend these wires

But caught a hernia instead:  
O my mouth stuck wide open.



# JUST ONE SPANIARD WAS KILLED

One Spaniard was killed  
 ripping the dress an American  
 girl distracted  
 by a bull  
 gored  
 informed sources  
 learned  
 the first such fatality  
 an accidental nature  
 since 1947  
 the date of my birth  
 in Pamplona.

The defense scrambles to no avail.

He's off like a shot and it's all over.

The siren sounds.

The fans lie injured in their own zone.

Soon the referees come to take them away.

The home fans slip back to their haunts.

The President sits up in the locker room.

He calls on the hot line.

He wants to see the instant replay.

## THE ALL NIGHT FOOTBALL GAME OF RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON

The President gives the ball to the Patriots.

They drop back, trying to pass into the wind.

He puts on a safety blitz.

The big bomb falls empty handed on the field.

Another down: the Patriots' general drops back.

This time the President rises to the occasion.

His rush is brutal.

The Pats look desperately for daylight.

Too late.

The President dives into the pass and intercepts.

First down and goal for the commander in chief.

He keeps it, and starts to sweep.

The defense scrambles to no avail.

He's off like a shot and it's all over.

The siren sounds.

The Pats lie injured in their own zone.

Soon the referees come to take them away.

The home fans slip back to their hamlets.

The President sits up in the locker room.

He calls on the hot line.

He wants to see the instant replay.

# THE THEORY OF HANDBONE

Hypothesize.

Take your hands.

Fold the fingers, overlapped  
over the pressed palms:

Here's the church.

Here's the steeple.

Open the doors.

God is dead.

Save a life!

Changed your mind?

Shake tigers.

Nothing works!

Your feet have moved?

Open your book.



O NO YOKO ONO

Open your toes:

Find dry rot?

Your feet have moved.

Drain the gutters:

Your intestines shrink?

Cannibalize bananas.

Kiss a statue:

The cracks creak?

Walk the double line.

Save a life:

Changed your mind?

Stalk tigers.

Nothing works:

Your feet have moved?

Open your toes.

## HAT POEM: #2

The lady with the green  
hat stood  
underneath the sun so  
long her hat  
turned green.

MARY

Life is a communist plot.

My wife dreams

It is fucked by a stallion.

Devote her I eat sardines

# THE PIEDMONT MANIFEST

A plant explosive.

Our cells die discretely.

The only remedy is to begin a world  
of two; in two there is hope of  
perfection, and that in turn  
may spread to all ...

Anais Nin  
The Four-Chambered Heart



## PARTY

Life is a communist plot.  
My wife dreams  
& is fucked by a stallion.  
Beside her I eat sardines  
& plant explosives.  
Our cells die discretely.

## WINDOW

She plays sleep like  
a piano. Sheet lightning:  
steam irons crackle  
through the all night laundry,  
silk scarves unfold,  
my breath, dry leaves.

BUZZ

When she wakes  
an alarm goes off.  
Midnight  
at the sawmill.  
Her eyes lie  
open like switchblades.



## VISION

What she sees  
when her eyes see  
my palm  
pressed to the back  
of her neck  
is the blackest

## PIECE

The cracked handle  
of her pitcher  
is  
like a pelican's beak  
skidding through ice  
water.

ANTIPYRES  
TYMPANY

The door to her heart has  
a flap I can swing on  
& jump off, out over  
her rich blood  
into a fierce closet  
with no hangers.



## ANTIBODIES

A cold freezes pipes up  
from her nose to the nodal heartland,  
blocks irrigation --  
old bones unearth  
only to powder,  
grains like stale aspirin.

## CARNIVAL

Like an organ grinder who's kicked  
his monkey, she runs.

Her trampled nimbus trails behind:  
a balloon pierced &  
contracting, a tune escaping  
like a convict.

## INSOMNIA

In the dust in the hall  
a footprint in the light  
in the lamp near the door  
reflected in the heat  
in the hall a footprint  
her footprint in the dust



## RUMINATE

Each time the ribbon  
fell from her hair  
it left a knot.  
My fingers tie one on.  
Each of them folds  
into an empty stomach.

## MORSE

Underground *pe. I squeeze.*

fertile cheeses hang

as smooth as speech.

At last, her limbs unbend

telegraphing

the news of our extinction. *led.*

BUTTON

Her head drops. I squeeze.

Bobbypins fall.

A shower polishes

the sidewalk & her toes

curl out

& the sun eats breakfast in bed.



DOPPLER

Sirens shriek past.

We run out glass & fraze

searching the street

& dance between waves

of light -- flames

licking at time.

## SEMAPHORE

8 am: her elbows wake  
at right angles & frame  
her body. Outside  
bricks rise: the builder yawns,  
his arm wiping  
his brow.

Life had no time to waste  
then, should it waste on  
of everything else ...

Malcolm X  
Under the 14-14

AS THE WORLD TURNS

our marriage has lasted

a year. Its ratings

remain constant.

KEEPING IT DOWN

The TV informs us

the last of the talk show;

no more continuous reporting

by your children, by

the whisper fire of electrons.

Life had no time to waste. Why,

then, should it waste so much

of everything else ...

Life had no time to waste. Why,

then, should it waste so much

of everything else ...

Life had no time to waste. Why,

then, should it waste so much

of everything else ...

Life had no time to waste. Why,

then, should it waste so much

of everything else ...

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of everything else ...

Life had no time to waste. Why,

then, should it waste so much

of everything else ...

Life had no time to waste. Why,  
then, should it waste so much  
of everything else ...

Malcolm Lowry  
Under the Volcano



AS THE WORLD TURNS

our marriage has lasted  
a year. Its ratings  
remain constant.

The TV informs us  
a blackout has cancelled  
the last of the talk shows;

my insomnia continues unperturbed  
by your oblivion, by  
the sniper fire of electrons.

In sleep you are victorious  
over the paradox of capacitance  
and resistance,

your dreams surrender passively  
like iron filings  
to a magnet --

while I switch channels  
rather than fight.  
A renaissance is at hand

but the year, what would pass  
as an equation for apocalypse,  
eludes us.

The ship, the plane takes flight  
shedding the ground. We watch  
it throw a river of blue-  
edged wavelets, the air, then migrate  
to the moon's Japanese garden.  
We were good. In the plane  
we are known as.

We've come as far as this,  
the skyline lounge, only to wait --  
to watch the rising underbelly's  
red light evolve, the fixed  
wing red light watching it.  
At a distance they become  
one, pulsing and staying  
the same as once.

## CONJUGAL VISIT TO THE REGIONAL AIRPORT

A snake shedding  
 its skin, the plane takes flight  
 shedding the ground. We watch  
 it thread a river of blue-  
 edged wavelets, the air, then migrate  
 to the moon's Japanese garden.  
 We wave goodbye. In the plane  
 no one knows us.

alone

We've come as far as this,  
 the Skyline Lounge, only to wait --  
 to watch the rising underbelly's  
 red light revolve, the fixed  
 wing red light watching it.  
 At a distance they become  
 one, pulsing and staying  
 the same at once.

the same at once

the same at once

the same at once

the same at once

the same at once

the same at once

the same at once



## TWO POEMS SHOWING THAT MAN STILL GETS BY

## I. THE INFECTION

Each hour that  
the closed wound  
moved

the line up  
a red fraction  
closer

to his heart  
festering  
like a worm

eating  
its way through  
the good earth,

Marcia his sister  
her synapses crackling  
etched

his arm with  
a ball point  
pen

marking the poison's  
progress  
each hour that

Bruce and I  
watching the road  
waited.

## II. THE ACCIDENT

The windshield of  
the milk truck  
fell

like a body  
broken on the  
road

the milk homogenized  
painfully  
with the asphalt

until  
the ambulance took  
the driver away;

## MEADOWLARK

towards a shanty  
a shrunken figure  
desiccated

blue tipped fingers  
clutching a bucket  
dipped

into the wreck  
stumbles  
spilling white froth

into her hands  
into the thirsty  
earth.



## MEADOWLARK

The cows of delight  
 after twenty-three lean years  
 return to the barn  
 of original sensibility.

When the sun first rises,  
 Confounded I step out  
 into the nascent blush of nature  
 and stick to it.

You can skip them without scalding

but if you can't

scald them,

Scalded last longer.

Then they're ready for baskets

and I've made baskets.

Yes, I've made lots of baskets.

## MOUNTAIN EDUCATION

— acknowledgement to Arie Carpenter

& Foxfire

Aunt Arie says gather the willows  
long as they grow.  
When the sap first rises.

Put them in hot water  
until the bark pulls off.  
You can skin them without scalding

but if you can't  
scald them.  
Scalded last longer.

Then they're ready for baskets  
and I've made baskets.  
Yes, I've made lots of baskets.

## SWEETHEART OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES

She was a chemist,  
a physicist, a realist

commanding things physical, units of  
universe in obvious

complicity with poets,  
burglars, sinners, saviours ...

She washed test tubes til their hearts were  
on the whole

clean.

Such perfection generated a high  
mass of nerves:  
her hands, macromolecules, shifting  
from each other to  
vague points in space  
at random ...

Her Brownian existence drives her  
in and out and in and  
out --

Bunsen's brief flame.



JIM YOUNG STANDS UNDER A TREE

And where did all this lead  
her (and poets, and burglars)  
under these conditions?

is only

1) At nightfall: proximity to a bed.

when you call it

2) Upon resurrection: a well-documented report

hypothesizing that life equals

a specific period of time,

travels at the speed of light,

pour into the head

and -- given an unknown constant --

is capable of being

set up for large-scale production.

Discards

of color pour out

of the branches

of the tree

of the discards of his shirt

of the black & white shirt

His mind appears

an eloquent mixture of

Shakespeare & Shaw

William Shakespeare

## JIM YOUNG STANDS UNDER A TREE

i.

A tree  
is only  
a tree  
when you call it  
a tree

ii.

In this photo  
branches of lead  
pour into the head  
of my friend, Jim Young

iii.

He wears a lumberjack shirt used for chopping trees

iv.

Diamonds  
of color pour out  
of the branches  
of the tree  
of the diamonds of his shirt  
of the black & white photo

v.

His mind appears  
an eloquent mixture of  
shrapnel & Sherwin  
Williams paint

PLUG

& today in Vietnam

the war ends;

all over America

parents decide to make love;

all the hydrants

stand open;

kids vibrate like sperm

in the spray;

run like tear

gas through the streets.



## ODE TO THE DOORKNOCKERS

They come uninvited:

hands extended, through the screen door  
laden with folders, glossy photographs, calling cards;  
proffer goods, bonus benefits, tests of will --  
find me still half dressed.

i.

First the insurance men come knocking  
secure in tie clips  
gilded Greek on college rings.  
The odds at 3000 to 1, I calculate  
on death vs. life (on Saturday afternoon.)  
We huddle for five minutes: the call is  
my money down, death's favor.  
A tough decision --  
but I decline the premium  
pointing out "It's awfully early."

ii.

The latter day canvassers arrive with saintly touch  
glued to the doorbell;  
fresh scrubbed in Salt Lake, they itch  
to recite the scripted word --  
I let them go, fingering a rendering  
of "The Lost Civilization",  
learn the Bible is a nail  
through the arrow to Truth (it spins)

and this book is a second nail ...

I let them go, point my arm

the way across the yard.

iii.

On the porch all is offered and turned away

(and promoters of brooms, magic bulbs, perfumes)

-- until a final form remains,

appears in woman's guise with

free samples of her wares.

Patience gone, I accept

what she would have me use:

a small treasure that turns

toilet water blue.

At dusk collapsed against the stoop

I sit, dollar and cake of mauve held tight,

wonder if they could return en masse

in the night with me uncovered and nude --

beseeking again and again like

little devils:

"Choose! Choose!"