

**Rising in Scorpio:  
Adam Fieled/ Abby  
Heller-Burnham**



## Preface

The motivation of this pdf is to collate and consolidate what I deem to be the cream of the Philly Free School's artistic achievement. I have taken into consideration what I have not taken into consideration— that this judgment is mine alone. If other artists would like to argue for other placements/arrangements, they are welcome to. Nevertheless, for me: what do Abby's "Nine Paintings" and my "Apparition Poems" have in common? I have been stunned by the parallels (and parallelism) between the two— I've already addressed many of the key motifs. They include: a certain approach to depth and complexity involving multiple and multiplying themes and potential meanings; a sense of "queerness" or oddity which is intermittently sexualized (for Abby, the application is more literal); an urban, rather than suburban or pastoral orientation, which is often site-specific to early twenty-first century Philadelphia (which, by not being New York, builds another level of queerness into the construct); a lack of indigenous American aesthetic influence, and a mistrust of twentieth century art in general (bloodlines running from Abby to nineteenth-century France, Ingres and David; from me to nineteenth-century England, Keats and Wordsworth), while the work does thematically engage contemporary America; and a generalized ambience of darkness, moodiness, the eerie and the haunted.

The difference between Philadelphia-via-England and Philadelphia-via-France (and the twentieth century largely being passed over) is rather pronounced; my approach has in it many levels of directness and earnestness which could comfortably be called English levels, and an adjunct to English Romanticism; Abby's lateral sense of perversity and absurdism, her inability (thematically) to be morally or ethically earnest, is quintessentially French, while the French sense of darkness has a perception of absurdity built into it, and English gloom can be just plain gloomy. To bring the male/female dichotomy to bear on "Nine Paintings" and "Apparition Poems" is even trickier, and more lateral; Abby's approach has some feral energy and some tenderness to it; it is as androgynous as the highest art tends to be. About "Apparition Poems," it would probably be inappropriate for me to comment on. I will remark that I call these two collections together "Rising in Scorpio" specifically because, in this context and in 2013 America, it seems to me that the darkness, depth, and complexity of the two collections will be experienced in many contexts as more feral than not, with many "stings" built into it, for lazy post-modernists and semi-comatose centrists. Good art has always been capable of stinging mediocrity to death, if properly placed and contextualized at the correct moment; for the Philly Free School, the time is now.

It is also my idea (and, honestly, it could be called a pretense) that, if the Philly Free School plants the right seeds, the twenty-first century might be more germane for serious art than the twentieth was; even as our politics, sexual and otherwise, import the best of what the twentieth century had to offer. The higher connotations of the Scorpio archetype have to do with depth, complexity, and the darkness of unsparing truthfulness— the imperative towards unsparing truthfulness (against "eerie" effects which are easily generated and can be superficial), primitive though it is, was important for Abby and I. Even more than myself, Abby suffered in her life from a desire for absolute purity on all levels. "Nine Paintings" and "Apparition Poems" show Abby and I at a point of maximum and precarious balance— able to be truthful and artful on profound levels at once. To do so was, for both of us, in the America we inherited, an act of almost foolhardy bravery; but we did it anyway.

Adam Fieled, 2013

# **Nine Paintings by Abby Heller-Burnham**



## Preface

In the continuum of visual art, an oeuvre of nine paintings is not particularly significant unless the nine paintings happen to be masterpieces. With Philadelphia painter Abby Heller-Burnham, this appears to be the case. The limited oeuvre here on display encompasses a dazzling array of formal and thematic material— precise attention to painterly nuance and detail balanced with an idiosyncratic (intermittently “queer”) vision of urban life in early twenty-first century America. A painting like “The Skaters” embodies this vision— the moody chiaroscuro of the scene, its ambience of desolation, which is a specifically urban (in this case, Philadelphian) ambience; balanced with meticulous formal execution which is nonetheless skewered against conventional painterly representation; create a complex construct which is too formal to be aligned with post-modernism, but also both too dark and too strange to be aligned with middle-of-the-road pictorial art.

To be short; “The Skaters,” and Heller-Burnham’s other masterpieces, are something new under the sun. All are illuminated by the painter’s keen and quirky sense of multiple meanings, of representations whose import multiplies when observed closely and carefully. “The Walls Have Ears” presents a maze of possible meanings and levels of interpretation— the most obvious level concerns sexualized love between women; but the picture finds many ways of being queer, as the games it plays with identities and perspectives are blisteringly intense and complex. It’s a complexity which doesn’t disavow absurdist humor and irony. Compared with what is typically seen in New York galleries, it’s a narrative feast. Many of these paintings are narrative feasts— “The Lost Twins” could be taken as an art-related allegory, or a critique of allegories; a humorous indictment of the process of artistic canonization, or a humorous portrayal of the artist’s vulnerability in the face of time and canonization; a self-portrait, or a parody of self-portraits; or all of these things at once.

This is what Heller-Burnham’s paintings have which has frequently been missing from New York art; a sense of absolute formal and thematic richness, and of boundlessness in richness, resultant from the exercise of intense (newly, American) imagination. “On the Other Hand” is a narrative feast in another direction— the social mores of American “indie” culture meeting the transcendental religiosity of Renaissance painting. The juxtaposition is bizarre, and uncanny— it collapses many centuries together in a novel way, to lampoon hipster culture; but this lampoon is executed with the absolute technical authority and mastery of the Renaissance masters themselves, and so winds up transcending its status as a

lampoon. Not since Picasso has a visual artist fulfilled this many imperatives at once— that the painter is female, and queer, is a triumph both for American art and American feminism. Yet, Heller-Burnham's scope as an artist is too broad to be tied wholesale either to formalism, the American (in its novel Philadelphian form) or queer politics— as with all superior artists, there is a universality to her creations broad enough to align her with the most durable humanism. If the oeuvre of her masterworks is small, it is a smallness which the paintings themselves belie— each painting represents an incision into the aesthetic consciousness of the West in 2013. Like Picasso, Heller-Burnham has her way of enacting phallogentrism— and her uncompromising originality is as brutish in its sharpness. Heller-Burnham not only enacts, but is, an American artistic revolution.

Adam Fieled, 2013

## “The Lost Twins”



**“The Walls Have Ears”**



**“On the Other Hand”**





## “Learning to Dance”



## “Frozen Warnings”



“The Skaters”



**“Ghost of Day”**



**“The First Real Top”**



## “Meeting Halfway”





# **Apparition Poems**

## **Adam Fieled**



## Apologia

Though no sustained narrative buoys it up, “Apparition Poems” is meant to be sprawling, and epic. An American epic, even one legitimate on world levels, could only be one made up of disparate, seemingly irreconcilable parts— such a state of affairs being America’s, too. The strains which chafe and collide in “Apparition Poems” are discrete— love poems, carnal poems, meta-poems, philosophical poems, etc. Forced to cohabitate, they make a clang and a roar together (or, as Whitman would have it, a “barbaric yawp”) which creates a permanent (for the duration of the epic) sense of dislocation, disorientation, and discomfort. This is enhanced by the nuances of individual poems, which are often shaped in the dialect of multiple meanings and insinuation. Almost every linguistic sign in “Apparition Poems” is bifurcated; either by the context of its relationship to other linguistic signs in the poems, or by its relationship to the epic whole of the book itself. If “Apparition Poems” is an epic, it is an epic of language; the combative adventure of multiple meanings, shifting contexts and perspectives, and the ultimate despair of the incommensurability of artful utterance with practical life in an era of material and spiritual decline. It is significant that the poems are numbered rather than named; it emphasizes the fragmentary (or apparitional) nature of each, its place in a kind of mosaic, rather than a series of wholes welded together by chance or arbitrary willfulness (as is *de rigueur* for poetry texts).

This is the dichotomy of “Apparition Poems”— epics, in the classical sense, are meant to represent continuous, cohesive action— narrative continuity is essential. “Apparition Poems” is an epic in fragments— every poem drops us, in medias res, into a new narrative. If I choose to call “Apparition Poems” an epic, not in the classical (or Miltonic) sense but in a newfangled, American mode (which nonetheless maintains some classical conventions), it is because the fragments together create a magnitude of scope which can comfortably be called epic. The action represented in the poems ranges from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the heroic to the anti-heroic; there are dramatic monologues set amidst the other forms, so that the book never strays too far from direct and directly represented humanism and humanistic endeavor. The American character is peevish if not able to compete— so are the characters here. Life degenerates into a contest and a quest for victory, even in peaceful or solitary contexts. Yet, if the indigenous landscape is strange and surrealistic, it is difficult to maintain straightforward competitive attitudes— consciousness has to adjust while competing, creating a quandary away from the brazen singularity which has defined successful, militaristic America in the world.

Suddenly, American consciousness is beleaguered by shifting sands and multiple meanings— an inability, not only to be singular but to perceive singular meanings. Even as multiplications are resisted, everything multiplies, and often into profit loss, rather than profit gain. The epic, fragmentary narrative of “Apparition Poems” is a down-bound, tragic one, rather than a story of valor or heroism. The consolation for loss of material consonance is a more realistic vision of the world and of human life— as a site of/for dynamism, rather than stasis, of/for multiplicity, rather than singularity. “Apparition Poems” is a vista into “multiple America” from Philadelphia, its birth-place, and a city beleaguered also by multiple visions of itself. No city in America has so much historical heft; nor did any American city suffer so harsh a demotion in the brutally materialistic twentieth century. Yet, as “Apparition Poems” suggests, if a new America is to manifest in the twenty-first century, it might as well begin in Philadelphia. If the epic focuses on loss followed by more loss, rather than eventual,



fulsome triumph, then so be it. And if “Apparition Poems” as fragmentary epic imposes a lesson, it is this— the pursuit of singularity in human life is a fool’s game; the truth is almost always, and triumphantly, multiple. If multiple meanings are difficult to assimilate, there can still be no recourse to anything else, for the scrupulous-minded and cognizant.

Adam Fieled, 2013

## Credits

As/Is— 534

blue & yellow dog— 1249, 1261, 1339

Cricket Online Review— 1558, 1571

Denver Syntax— 1343, 1473, 1497

Diode— 1089

Great Works— 1065, 1066, 1067, 1068, 1069, 1070

Jacket— 1345, 1476, 1480

Listenlight— 1511, 1514, 1516

moria— 1519, 1520, 1524, 1529

Otoliths— 1549, 1580

PennSound— 1067, 1121, 1145, 1223, 1241, 1288, 1316, 1327, 1335, 1345, 1476, 1480, 1488, 1509, 1511, 1512, 1514, 1520, 1529, 1536, 1546, 1552, 1562, 1576, 1584, 1602, 1603, 1607, 1613, 1627, 1645, 1651, 506, 508, 521, 522, 524, 533, 545, 552, 555, 564, 562, 565, 567

PFS Post— 1602, 1603, 1607, 1613

Pirene's Fountain— 536

Stoning the Devil— 1103, 1134, 1145, 1168, 1241, 1281, 1288, 1313, 1330, 1335, 1488, 1491, 1533, 1536, 1538, 1562, 1573, 1574, 1576, 1638, 1642, 1645, 1646, 1647

Tears in the Fence— 1083, 1084, 1085

The Argotist— 1323, 1326, 1327, 1328

13 Myna Birds— 1080

Trunk of Delirium— 528

Tyger Burning— 1550, 1553

#1065

Black-shirted,  
bright eyes in  
dream-blues,  
parents dead  
of a car crash,  
I kissed her so  
long I felt as if  
I would crash,  
South Street  
loud around  
us, lips soft—

#1066

A patch of white light  
appeared on my wall  
late last night. It was  
no shadow.

I thought  
it might be a cross, I  
thought it might be a  
sign, but by the time  
I turned my head, it  
was gone.

I thought

#1067

I want to last—  
to be the last  
of the last of  
the last to be

taken by time,  
but the thing  
about time is  
that it wants,

what it wants  
is us, all of us  
wane quickly  
for all time's

ways, sans "I,"  
what I wants—

#1069

There comes a time  
history's viability in  
impressing us goes

out our mind's eye,  
we are ghosts then,  
we join the "rest of,"

until someone's lips  
hips us to secrets, in  
case we forgot, that

nothing ever happed,  
nothing ever got writ.

#1070

I said, "I can't  
even remember  
the last time I  
was excited, how  
can I associate  
ideas?"

She pulled  
out a gun, a tube  
of oil, and an air  
cushion,

and it was  
a spontaneous  
overflow,

powerfully  
felt, in which we  
reaped together—

#1080

If I had Neko Case  
for one night, I'd  
dip her red hair in  
red wine, suck it  
dry, bathe  
her in  
honey,  
dive  
into what's  
pink and blue,  
roll out the red carpet.

If I had Neko Case  
for one night, I'd  
part the Red Sea  
to make her  
come, come  
pangs,  
needles,  
she's  
stiff from  
ecstasy, I'm  
freckle-fucked.

If I had Neko Case  
I would never  
leave my bed  
again; I'd lay,  
awake to  
music,  
voices,  
ether,  
never doubt  
Heaven exists  
on Earth, between  
  
throats, notes, legs.

**#1083**

Is art slightly less  
stupid than every-  
thing else?

    I am more  
    moved by  
    flesh, and  
    stupidly,  
how easily  
some skin  
peels off  
    layers of text—  
“company of blood,”  
Lucy on a bed  
    with diamonds—

**#1084**

Poems are train-wrecks  
    that move— to stand  
on tracks, to do so solidly, is  
    suicide of a high order—  
  
to die by force of wreckage—

**#1085**

Metaphysics of Facebook—  
how many pictures can one  
woman upload?

    She sits on a  
shag carpet, or, in a leotard,  
dances, or drinks a beer, arm  
around a disheveled mate—  
    all possible selves  
    captured for Net  
    priceless and free  
    discrete but not—

**#1089**

I love you,  
I love you,  
I love you—

clouds are  
moving in  
behind us,

storms are  
forming in  
front, blue

sky purple,  
green grass  
yellow, all

things pale  
to this dark—

**#1103**

As a child, I  
reached up,  
towards my  
Mother; as

a man, as I  
reach, I am  
deep down  
in earth, or

I reach out  
to find air,  
nothing to  
mother me,

emptiness,  
soot & ash.

#1117

Sometimes you write  
from ocean's bottom,  
blue waters bury you,

an octopus comes to  
give you ink, tentacle  
words, fortitude for

battles to get back on  
the surface, where you  
must fight to get past

jellyfish blocks, tears—

#1121

How I wanted her!  
Everything pointed  
me into her—

gossamer silk  
over her belly  
black panties  
head turned  
towards me—

I nailed her to my wall,  
I nailed her—

she never forgave me



#1134

It is by dint of great labor  
that lines heap up on one  
another (enjambé or not),

it is by dint of great labor  
that they take on the cast,  
die, substance that sticks,

it is by dint of great labor  
that poets must forget this,  
because to stick means not

to stick, it means to loosen  
perpetually out of grooves,  
let things topple into place,

let shapes manifest slowly,  
let life meander, be rolling—

#1145

The Tower of Verse  
is a Babel, no one pays  
their rent, many leap  
from windows to sure  
death, many leave, yet  
there is a strange sense  
of satisfaction given to  
those who stay, and it  
is merely this—

clean windows  
allow us to see  
wisps of smoke,  
(grey, red, turbid)  
rise from ashes—

#1148

September sunlight,  
  
elegiac as collapsed  
ruins, festival ashes,  
  
nooks where hidden  
lovers laid, tasting  
  
wine on one another's  
breath, piercing silk  
  
layers, springing up,  
ruddy, fulsome, like  
  
little flesh harvests—

#1155

September leaves hang on—  
  
    loads about to be blown  
into black concrete wombs  
  
fretted by windy displacements

#1168

The essential philosophical question  
    is incredibly stupid—  
why is it that things happen? You can  
    ask a thousand times,  
it won't matter— nothing does, except  
    these things that  
keep happening, “around” philosophy.

#1180

I went with her on  
a daytrip inside her  
head; there were kids'  
toys, storybooks, red  
monsters, fire trucks,  
silver streaks, stairs,  
rooms everywhere, it  
was a funhouse, but  
in each mirror she  
looked different, and  
I couldn't see myself—

#1209

Poems with “I” and “she”  
are older than the galaxy,  
have power to rivet me,  
because there is no “I”  
for me without a “she,”  
even if I feminize this  
highly vaginal computer  
screen, my seminal hands—

#1223

She was seated at a desk,  
giving a dramatic speech  
(pronounced with acidic  
bitterness), glaring at me,  
I was punching a telephone,  
trying to reach Dominique  
who had given me a phony  
number, while two young,  
androgynous sprites made  
love in a chair, Leonard  
joined my committee—

she was seated at a desk,  
her voice rose to a pitch I  
couldn't tolerate, but also  
it brought me to the verge  
of orgasm, because she was  
sucking myself out of me,  
doing it psychically, when I  
woke up, she was updating  
her Face about lost sleep—

#1241

Why does no one tell the truth?  
Because the truth is (more often  
than not) absurd. No one wants  
to look absurd, so no one tells  
the truth, which creates even  
more absurdity; worlds grow  
into self-parody, systems grow  
down into gutters, whole epochs  
are wasted in perfidy; Cassandra  
finally opens her mouth, no one  
listens, they want her to star in  
a porno, set her up with a stage-  
name, she learns not to rant,  
visions cloud her eyes, cunt—

#1249

Despite what I write, there's  
not much sex in the world—  
walk down Walnut Street,  
take an inventory— how  
much sex are these people  
getting? This one fat, this  
one ugly, this one old, this  
one a baby, a couple married  
twenty years, or ten, or five—  
not much sex in these lives.  
But media, movies thrive  
on representing this tiny  
demographic: single, young,  
promiscuous. Crowds come.

#1261

If I were a rock star, I'd  
take a flight to Singapore,  
hoist you up to "Imperial  
Suite" in a swank hotel,  
turn on a Jacuzzi, order  
up some caviar (which I  
don't even like, but no  
matter), we'd take our  
clothes off, conceive a  
child right there, which  
we'd raise from Imperial  
Suite, and my World Tour  
would begin right there,  
would go on forever—

#1281

You can take for granted  
lots of God-awful garbage  
in places deemed important  
by fools; this goes for every  
thing, including poetry. Why?  
Because the world runs (has,  
will always) on mediocrity, so  
safe, so comforting, like a mug  
of hot cocoa on a winter's night,  
or a mediocre simile, people want  
others to be mediocre, to be fools,  
that's just the way things go, people  
are nothing to write home about, or  
(if you are writing to God) nothing to  
write about at all, the world is no mystery,  
all the mystery is in the night sky, looking up.

#1288

Times you get bored  
with the process, but  
  
worse are times when  
words are little deaths,  
  
wrung out like sheets,  
draped over hangers,  
  
out in a damp yard on  
a cold autumn day, as  
  
wind rises to pin them  
to your hopeless breast.

#1303

Philly: I duck punches,  
land them from a pink-  
flesh moon. Fists don't  
know me, hung like an  
Exit sign. This city hell  
I write against, windows  
shuttered up, visionary  
deadness, decayed tufts,  
I'll ride it out in needles  
poised on waves, poison  
apples bitten into like so  
many razors in disguise,  
silver. Tumble into light  
shafts, ratty entrances out.

#1307

She hovers above planet  
Earth, making strategies  
for safe landings, but not  
able to see that she is also  
on planet Earth, watched  
like a crazed cat, a maze-  
rat, or a tied-up mime, I  
cannot save someone so  
high up or far down, it's  
like a black thread about  
to snap, as it strains past  
breaking point she reaches  
for champagne, to celebrate—  
bubbles lunge up to break.

#1313

we can't stop trying to conceive,  
even though our bodies are dead  
to each other, and nightly deaths  
I took for granted are razors in a  
    part of my flesh that  
    can never live again—  
certain possessions possess us.

#1316

Hunters get smitten with their prey,  
but to kill is such an amazing rush  
who could possibly resist, I'm into  
these thoughts because you dazzle  
me away from words into your red  
pulpy depths, which I resent, but I  
can do nothing about, because you  
have nails in your cunt and crucifix  
in your mouth, when I come I'm a  
perfect personal Jesus, but the gash  
is all yours, did I mention I love you?

#1326

Before the sun rises,  
streets in Philly have  
this sheen, different  
than at midnight, as  
the nascent day holds  
back its presence, but  
makes itself felt in air  
like breathable crystal—  
    no one can tell me  
    I'm not living my  
    life to the full.



#1327

She said, you want Sister  
Lovers, you son of a bitch,  
pouted on a beige couch in  
Plastic City, I said, I want  
Sister Lovers, but I'm not  
a son of a bitch, and I can  
prove it (I drooled slightly),  
took it out and we made  
such spectacular love that  
the couch turned blue from  
our intensity, but I had to  
wear a mask because I'd  
been warned that this girl  
was, herself, a son of a bitch—

#1328

The girl on the trolley  
had pitch black hair,  
eyes to match, I got  
her vibes instantly—  
    so, what do we  
    want to do? Do  
    we want to do  
    this? Is it OK?  
took her back here  
took her clothes off  
took her not gently  
    I'll never take the 34 again—

#1330

When the sky brightens slightly  
into navy blue, “what’s the use”  
says the empty street to parking  
lots elevated four stories above.

#1335

terse as this is, it is  
given to us in bits  
carelessly shorn  
from rocky slopes,  
of this I can only  
say nothing comes  
with things built in,  
it's always sharp edges,  
crevices, crags, precipice,  
abrupt plunges into "wants,"  
what subsists between us  
happens in canyons lined  
in blue waters where this  
slides down to a dense  
bottom, I can't retrieve  
you twice in the same  
way, it must be terse  
because real is terse,  
tense because it's so  
frail, pine cones held  
in a child's hand, snapped.

#1339

house with ivy  
wooden door,  
yellow kitchen,  
clunky dresser  
on which she displayed all  
kinds of tricks, nights were  
young, strong, climactic in  
this place, sex,  
green buds, all  
this here, I'm a  
kid, as a man, I  
look at this, can't sense  
much who I was, why I  
ended this, if it is an end—

**#1340**

Arms folded over chest  
(as the man on the four of  
Swords), she paints inside  
a box-like carved space,  
(dank edges only seen on  
the outside), light filters in  
from small square windows,  
I hover over her, I'm this  
that she wants, but what  
she needs is to once again  
feel what avalanches can't  
reach this head so full of  
color, ribbons, blueness.

**#1341**

Secrets whispered behind us  
have a cheapness to bind us  
to liquors, but may blind us  
to possibilities of what deep  
secrets are lost in pursuit of  
an ultimate drunkenness that  
reflects off surfaces like dead  
fishes at the bottom of filthy  
rivers— what goes up most is  
just the imperviousness gained  
by walking down streets, tipsy,  
which I did as I said this to her,  
over the Schuylkill, two fishes.

#1342

What's in what eyes?  
What I see in hers is  
mixed greenish silence,  
somewhat garish, it's  
past girlish (not much),  
but I can't touch her  
flesh (set to self-destruct),  
anymore than she can  
understand the book  
her cunt is, that no one  
reads directly, or speaks  
of, there's no love other  
than "could be," but I  
think of her throat cut—  
that's her slice of smut.

#1343

This process of leaping  
happens between lines,  
like a fish that baits its  
own hooks; heights in  
depth, depths of height,  
all colliding in a mesh of  
net cast only for a fish to  
bring it down on itself, so  
that others swim out past—  
I don't mean myself in this.

**#1345**

Two hedgerows with a little path  
between— to walk in the path like  
some do, as if no other viable route  
exists, to make Gods of hedgerows  
that make your life tiny, is a sin of  
some significance in a world where  
hedgerows can be approached from  
any side— I said this to a man who  
bore seeds to an open space, and he  
nodded to someone else and whistled  
an old waltz to himself in annoyance.

**#1470**

I leaned out into the breeze (no  
cars impinging on any side), did  
not spit but let myself be blown  
back, knowing that vistas opened  
when I did so, appreciating what  
was infinite in this small moment,  
an old song on the radio, a breeze,  
a moving car (me at the wheel), all  
simple, succinct, clear, crisp, cutting,  
what blood came out was nourished  
by the open air, came back in again.

**#1473**

Passages that shudder between  
blackness between legs between  
what moves (taps head) between  
us like this (taps head again) hints  
she may not be the animal bride I'm  
looking for (by this I mean seed carrier,  
not the same as mother-for-kids, almost),  
what's between what used to be between

us, what now is, is between her, others who  
have more claim to be animal brides, but she's  
here, that's the key, here now, actually, which may  
be all that matters, if to matter is to lie back, legs  
apart, between being, becoming, moving, removing  
all barriers, fences, boundaries, expenses to move again.

**#1476**

Days follow days off cliffs—  
do these things we do have  
any resonance, do they rise  
into the ether, or are they to  
be ground down into pulp,  
briefly making earth sodden,  
then dissipated dust scattered  
over plains too vast, blasted  
with winds, rains, storms, to  
be counted or harvested?

#1480

How horrendous, to realize there  
are people in the world with no  
soul, walking zeros, hollow spaces,  
dead end interiors, permanently  
frozen faculties, how horrendous  
to watch how they borrow words  
of others to sound profound, but  
each echo reveals there's nothing  
behind it but the kind of charred  
silence that comes after a corpse  
is burnt— how horrendous, how  
it makes some of us cling to what  
we feel, how we feel, that we feel,  
and that everything we feel is so  
precious, specifically (and only)  
because it is felt, and stays felt.

#1488

liquor store, linoleum  
floor, wine she chose  
    was always deep red,  
    dark, bitter aftertaste,  
    unlike her bare torso,  
        which has in it  
        all that ever was  
        of drunkenness—  
to miss someone terribly,  
to both still be in love, as  
she severs things because  
    she thinks she must—  
    exquisite torture, it's  
    a different bare torso,  
(my own) that's incarnadine—

#1491

To wake up in frost,  
ineffectual sun up in  
blue sky bruised gray,  
is to huddle into these  
words, burrow down in  
them until you hit a spot  
of warmth, like memories  
stuck like bark to roots,  
of this or that, of she or  
her, if this trope is over-  
worn so be it, I've had  
enough of pretending  
this crux isn't one, so  
I'll lean into it, again—

#1497

nothingness grows vast,  
nothingness tastes sweet  
only for ten seconds— of

this, depth without depth,  
crass substitute for realms  
of total glory she effaces

(once spilled milk cries)  
like a chalk-stain on blue  
jeans, a just-smoked joint.



#1506

New Years Day—

sky is same as its  
been, perched in  
perfect beauty in  
search of a better  
place (power lines  
cut it off), it hurts  
to know all other  
places exist than  
this, visionary as

this deadness is.

#1507

The importance of elsewhere,  
Larkin wrote, but didn't name  
money as the reason for none  
(no elsewhere), iron brutalities  
forge fences around my words—

these buildings are neuroses, I  
can't see them without a desire  
to take pills, drinks, anything to  
free me from ugly hegemonies—

**#1509**

Myths are made of us, we  
who spin myths from this  
happenstance life, which is  
hewn of rocks, books, lies,  
truths, loves, hangings of  
all these things, in myths  
we are heroes, braggarts,  
martyrs, rogues, angels,  
murderers and assholes,  
but myths go on sans us,  
who only wanted slightly  
more than Gods gave us,  
& so made ourselves Gods,  
bugger any odds against us.

**#1510**

Sky of mud, what we  
have placed in you is  
much more rank than  
any rapist ever put in  
prone woman— like  
a race of rapists, we  
have prowled earth in  
search of womb-like  
comforts, sent vapors  
into ether just to get  
someplace sans loss  
of time, expense; for  
us, no defense, death—  
as rapists, caged, gored.

#1511

steps up to my flat, on  
which we sat, tongues  
flailed like fins, on sea  
of you, not me, but we  
thought (or I thought)  
there'd be reprieve in  
between yours, for us  
to combine, you were  
terribly vicious, this is  
our end (here, amidst  
I and I), does she even  
remember this, obscure  
island, lost in Atlantis?

#1512

Do you  
know I

tried to  
reach, I

did, but  
you're a

far away  
planet, I

can't, its  
rings all

around, I  
can't see

surface, I  
want to,

can you  
change

orbits  
for me

once?

#1514

You can't  
get it when  
you want it,  
but when I  
want it I get  
it; she rolled  
over on her  
belly, which  
was very full,  
and slept; its  
just shadows  
on the wall, I  
thought, dark.

#1516

I climb over  
you, onto me,  
but me is not  
the "I" I want

it to be, climb  
down, rafters  
heave, wood  
slats, fences,

all this is you,  
already over  
& beyond, is  
this fairness?

#1519

She says she  
wants babies

from me, she  
sends this to

me, nudging  
my body in a

straight line I  
recognize for

its blue streak,  
I'll give her a

baby, I say, it's  
part of a plan,

indecipherable—

This posse wants “success,” in  
all the wrong ways— down by  
the old corral, I had a shoot-out  
with the leader, who gave his girl  
black eyes, battered thoughts, but  
she’s devoted, because she counts  
“success” on the wrong fingers, I  
hated to see her get trampled by a  
buffalo herd— anyway, ten paces,  
I nailed him right in the heart, but  
wasn’t bothered, that part of him  
never worked to begin with. Eat  
dust, I said in parting, write about  
how it tastes, you might “make it”  
after all, but keep it in your mouth.

**#1524**

Poems: do this every day, it  
becomes like roulette without  
being (or seeming) Russian; if  
you go here what happens, if  
you move your knight onto a  
new square can you take all the  
pawns (at once, even, why not  
be ambitious?), not everyone is  
simpatico, the knights often say  
they're kings, the board is clay.

**#1529**

I'm having a better time now,  
I told her, its unfortunate that  
you were happier fifteen years  
ago, but you certainly had your  
chance, those days we sat next  
each other different places, and  
of course your best friend the  
idiot, Queen of Sheba, now here  
you are back hot to fool around,  
suddenly I call the shots, I'm a  
real hot-shot, there's a shot we  
might actually shoot each other,  
because violence is what you want—  
she unzipped her dress, frowning.

#1533

So much gets involved with  
this that isn't this, that what  
this is gets lost, whatever it  
is, which no one knows, but  
that "I" is in it somewhere  
(no one knows where), there  
must be a "you" (if it's art,  
as it may or may not be), so  
two bases are covered, like  
two breasts of a mother  
weaning her young, and  
whether or not we are made  
young by this is another good  
question: we may be, maybe.

#1536

Facebook girls commit  
acts of virtual adultery  
every day, wanton acts  
of exhibitionism, sucks  
of minor stars in tiny  
firmaments, I've got  
them (Facebook girls),  
in virtual corners in  
virtual states of undress  
virtually shagging my  
arse off— stick it in,  
like a screwdriver into  
a keyboard, in & out,  
in virtual light & heat.



#1542

“This art game is funny, it’s  
all about staring at walls at  
night, connecting blue dots  
of consciousness, fitting in  
pieces to your own puzzle  
that may or may not be at  
all comprehensible,”

I didn’t wait for him to listen  
I was watching the walls

#1543

What could be more crass  
than a round-trip ticket to  
Los Angeles? Nothing but  
beds of starlets, flawless in  
perfect color harmony but  
vomit stains in the toilet, I  
don’t know what could be  
more crass, in fact I don’t  
know anything anymore, I  
think the sky is marvelous.

#1546

What a tussle it was, I  
could only see her eyes,  
tiny bits of red above,  
stark, blank blueness, I  
felt animal fear between  
us, but a poltergeist was  
pushing our bodies into  
one another, dead flesh  
inhabited by spirits, for  
the time nothing came  
from our mouths, dead  
liveliness, deep into the  
wolf’s hour this went on—  
our eyes couldn’t close.

#1549

Think of these in terms  
of vertical movements—  
what goes up or doesn't.

Does this go up? It may,  
if it creates something I  
feel is not "in the world"

yet, but it must also have  
solid roots in the world  
to be something else, it

must acknowledge what  
can be called horizontal.  
The best poems are zig-

zags, lightning bolts, that  
go from side to side, up  
at the same time. This is

a meta-bolt, but whether  
it "goes" is up to you alone.

#1550

I'm in your house:  
your husband, kids  
not home. A voice  
(yours) follows me  
around, playing on  
my body, until I'm  
in your bathroom,  
smoking butts on

a sunny spring day.  
Your body doesn't  
appear. It seems to  
me you're suspect,  
Steph, it seems to  
me you want too  
much. Then, you  
always said I was

a dreamer. What  
do we have past  
dreams anyway?  
What else is love?

#1552

Your name grows, as it grows  
your fame grows, as it grows it  
becomes clear you're not who  
you are, you exist in people's  
heads as something Other, I  
heard this from someone at a  
time when I did not exist, now  
that I exist I exist as something  
Other, but I can see into some  
people's heads, and the "I" that  
I am is amused by the "you": an  
otter (might as well be), ox, fox,  
dragon, dog, pig, jackal, hyena,  
anything but an actual human.

#1553

I see her head, not yours,  
on my pillow, dear, but I  
don't really see either one  
of you except as you were  
when you had no interest  
in my pillows: isn't it sad?

#1557

Since you are a scorpion  
that stings herself to death,  
after so many stings, redness  
never leaves my joints, I feel  
zilch. I call this *your* passionate  
time, as I have no intent of  
tempting the scorpion again.  
I've seen nests for you all over  
Philly, from Front Street right  
up to Baltimore, and you know  
what? You might finally get the  
death you want. A sultry night,  
desert all around, legs akimbo.

#1558

This is meant to be  
level on level, layer  
on layer, like insides  
of mountains, but I  
only have so many,  
& when something  
takes over, I drop a  
little lower, my guts  
drop too, and days I  
could reach out for  
you have gone. Well,  
I call that level hell.

#1562

“In Your Eyes,” the song goes,  
“the resolution of all my fruitless  
searches,” only what I see in your

eyes *is* fruitless, and what Shelley  
might have called “luminous green  
orbs” look like turbid wastelands,

capable of ruining any day I might  
have you nipping at my heels. This  
is what I think about her, but don’t

dare say, she’s too young to know  
anything about wastelands, I’m an  
old scorpion with mud of my own.

#1563

If poetry makes nothing happen,  
there is no “great political poetry  
tradition,” so I yawp no “O any-  
thing” to anyone who is not my  
captain, and whose position is not  
in any way tenable; no one (that I  
know) has any excuses, we forge  
ahead regardless, Nero’s fiddle is  
sounding in the distance, personal  
habits of Romans have entered our  
lives, but I have this time to write  
this and if you like it, is it enough?

#1565

Since no one  
wants to eat  
shit, we give  
our shit to  
the Earth,  
it's still shit,  
to eat it  
means  
that's what  
we think  
of Earth  
(less than  
us), Earth  
is more  
God to  
us than  
anything—  
who wants  
to hear  
the truth  
of this?

#1571

To cut right to the bone—  
there is no bone in this,  
it's mirrors, echoes, bits,  
more than play, less than

life, but anything limiting  
this needs to be chucked  
like fruit rinds into a bin,  
any arbitrary signifier that

knows itself to be arbitrary  
can *work* as mirrors, echoes,  
bits, if you have faith that  
what's ineffable counts, is.

#1573

This guy thinks he knows  
what's really real, writes a  
book, I do the same thing:  
but whoever says this is in  
a chain of unreality which  
reality will quickly undo: I  
know whoever says this is  
lost in a maze of illusions,  
which must be stymied: it's  
something you only say if  
you're deluded; but then it  
means you know you're in  
a maze of delusions, which  
is what's really real: a bitch.

#1574

There you are: towel-headed,  
toweled, milling through large  
crowds, slightly self-conscious  
but convinced of your uppity  
superiority— this you is me, I  
push through crowds (antique  
book stores, solicitous clerks, I  
can't tell if they mean me when  
they speak), stumble up stairs,  
nobody notices the freakishness  
of my appearance, as I am you—  
having lived your life, I'm past  
your death— cogs cut, dusted.

#1576

Who told poets to be poets?  
Nobody tells anyone things  
like this anymore— Poetess,  
she comes to me with “this,”  
it’s all wine and roses for two  
nights, but I’m left dizzy— is  
this the end of poetry? There’s  
a war between poetry & sex, it’s  
always sex’s dominance we fight,  
she tells me this, but we still make  
love. And it’s good & hard. I’m  
pure in this, I tell myself. I know  
what I’m doing. I do, too, in ways  
limited by perspectives, of which  
this is half of one. Is it enough?

#1577

The poets around me say  
one thing repeatedly: “not  
enough,” and with force I  
used to not be able to take,  
but what their enough is is  
all pride, prejudice, lies, all  
sorts of cowardice, dying  
limbs, fried brains, the lot  
of Satan’s syndromes, and  
I (being lowly wise), stay as  
low to the riverbed, listening  
to sphere-music they can’t  
hear, but who cares about us?



#1580

“Waiting for the heavens to fall,  
what can I do with this call,” this  
asinine pop song was written by  
me in a dream of you where you  
called me (obviously), took to be  
already granted what I haven’t  
given to you yet, but experience,  
my love, is the only thing worth  
giving, and I’ve got that from  
you in spades, so when heaven  
falls we’ll catch it, lay it between  
our sheets, dirty as they must be—

#1582

To send bodies up into ether  
(what does this no one knows)  
all flesh become hands that can  
clasp (ecstasy of joining things),

to be joined to a part that you  
suspected evil of, but is really  
only love, is to give thanks for  
raised curtains which (sadly) are

doused in your own blood, & as  
I join this exultant spirit, doused  
in white light, I’m steeped in my  
own darkness, death, excrement.

#1583

I was on Pine Street outside  
the Drop, I looked, saw this  
girl (maybe nineteen, twenty)  
in black (not morbid black,  
just normal clothes), I turned  
for a split second, then when  
I looked she had disappeared—  
this (for once) was visionary  
life, but the Drop was still  
the Drop, I walked out with  
the Yeah Yeah Yeahs on my  
I-Pod, as I grow richer every  
thing, everyone deteriorates:  
I wore black the next day.

#1584

“The condition of being kidnapped  
by angels: that’s what good art must  
impose on a willing audience.” Who  
was this guy talking to? Are we meant  
to believe this Romantic bullshit? Ah,  
who cares, it’ll pass. He was walking  
his dog, thinking. It was a sunny day  
in suburbia. The concrete really was  
(and I mean this) concrete. But this  
is the thing: I do believe what this  
guy says, his Romantic bullshit. I  
see things, you know what I mean?

#1596

I was talking to a dude  
I knew from school, I  
said, "I see the levels  
from sleeping with  
psychopaths, that's  
how I get them," levels  
were (I meant) places  
between souls where  
spaces open for metaphor,  
"but when I carry them  
over to my bed, every  
psychopath levels me."

#1601

What words get sent up  
on sharp frequencies are  
fractious, bent from pain,  
Hephaestus in iron-groans,  
what goes up sticks around,  
so that base/top get covered,

all things resonate like pitch-  
forks, tweaked by conductors  
before their final, triumphant  
performance for a hall empty  
of bodies, filled to capacity.

**#1602**

I stepped like a mantis off this ship  
of fools, felt around for prey, found  
a plate of ants to put in a microwave,  
I saw how they scurried briefly, put it  
into text that had the heat of ovens in  
it, shipped this text across vast oceans,  
it preyed on suspicions, was placed on  
plates, now that I have prayed, I am (or  
may be) redeemed, but every step I take  
feels like a scurry, as the fools are more  
numerous than I thought, just like ants.

**#1603**

“Be careful what you handle,”  
I told her, “you can get to me  
even if you touch another,” it  
happened in an office shaped  
like the foyer of a huge hovel,  
built of mud, etchings of bugs  
on the wall, perfect perverse  
kids scampering among clods.

“You know what I want, and  
how I can get it,” she replied,  
as she took another out, put  
me in, but only inside a brain  
used amiss to find a level that,  
shaped like a foyer, was past  
office, into brick, sans mud.

**#1604**

Here's where shifts (red shifts)  
happen in perspective, I thought,  
slopping dark meat onto my plate,  
here's where angles converge to  
put me past the nest. General  
laughter over pictures, womb-  
like spaces, but I was in hers as  
I was in with them. It hurts, but  
he's dead, I never met him. It's  
a shame, I never met him. Blood  
moves through air: between her,  
me, them— leaves on concrete.

**#1605**

This killer wears a tight  
black shirt, glasses. There  
are noises of digging happening  
from the bathroom, she's in  
bed, hands over her mouth,  
frozen upset. Then, the mirror  
is dug through, his face appears  
in a wall with a square cut in it.  
The face is there, hovers there,  
just sits, it has the promise of  
action that kills. This is the  
tableau I watch every time  
I'm in the bathroom while  
she's in bed. And smile.

**#1607**

Every live body has a dialect:  
to the extent that bodies are  
in the process of effacing both  
themselves, what they efface, I  
move past dialect to the extent  
that there are no no-brainers  
here, what's moral in this is the  
belief that properly used dialects  
emanate waves to hold bodies  
in place. As to who's saying this,  
I heard this on the street last  
night after a few drinks with  
an ex at Dirty Frank's. It was  
a bum who meant it, it worked.

**#1613**

Follow Abraham up the hill:  
to the extent that the hill is  
constituted already by kinds  
of knives, to what extent can  
a man go up a hill, shepherd  
a son to be sacrificed, to be  
worthy before an almighty  
power that may or may not  
have had conscious intentions

where hills, knives, sons were  
concerned, but how, as I watch  
this, can I not feel that Abraham,  
by braving knives, does not need  
the one he holds in his rapt hands?

#1617

Philosophy says that poets want to lose.  
What are conditions of losing: to whom?  
The conditions (to whom they concern, to

unrepresented phantoms, mostly) are colors,  
which, to transcribe, require a solid core of  
nebulous necromancy which philosophy calls

(for its own poetic reasons) "loss." I took this  
from one strictly (which necessitated looseness  
towards me) for himself, took several median

blended colors and painted a razor on the roof  
of a red building. Then I fell off. But I lived.

#1620

I'm looking  
at the sky, writing  
like a man writes  
when the sister  
lives in an apartment  
with a husband  
three blocks away,  
casts her body over  
here to do what  
cannot be done  
ad infinitum;  
and that the evil  
I saw in this family  
was hers, the scourge  
who ruined my life.  
That night I had her  
in summer's sweat,  
what it should've  
been, what it was,  
the sting of it lingers,  
all in the sister, & for  
once I don't dare  
bifurcate myself,  
they do it for me,  
naturally.

#1622

Poor Schopenhauer's axioms:  
all in the will is a fight to beat  
other wills. I see him in his  
meager room, his will bent  
not to do much, save himself  
the trouble of fighting these  
ineluctable battles, but not  
able to refrain from eating,  
breathing, shitting, fucking,  
all those simple acts that are  
will-to-survival, but Arthur  
casts himself into a future of  
power, not knowing when it  
arrived it was to be a crass joke,  
ended with face in turtle soup.

#1625

The "I" that writes cannot be  
(he told us, perched on a hill of  
flowers which he crushed, but, of  
course, incompletely, and not all of  
them at once) strictly for-itself as it  
has no substance: a student walked

up, pricked his forearm (the back side  
of it) with a small razor, he cringed but  
only briefly, leaning forward so that a  
row of buttercups doused him yellow.

The "I" that writes has a relationship  
that is very much for itself, but it has

a strictly independent existence, so that  
what constitutes a human "I" has no  
meaning for it. Now, you need to know  
this: I was not the student with the razor,  
but I supplied the razor to the student  
that cut the professor's forearm, but you

will never know how I got it, or why.



**#1625**

I ask you this here, while I look down on you, as  
you look up at me, and the different ups & downs  
of us play themselves out, so that if, while being in  
this state, we are in and out of each other, all streaks  
of blues, grays, blacks can be edited out, and voice-  
overs take the place of our raw voices. Voices that  
I trust, cherish, but these voices are too crude that  
around us cast nets, so that we become crabs in and  
out of ourselves, so that I remark to you (you're on  
top now) that things that need to be asked can only  
be answered with skin, redness, pinkness, dots, this.

**#1626**

If it builds, she thinks, I'll  
do this, I'll get out. Is it that  
she's so stuck she can't move?  
The baby needs looking after,  
but, she thinks, so does her  
soul, and to the extent that it's  
not being fed, she needs a new  
bed somewhere. But the money  
isn't hers, it just isn't, and she  
walks the dog thinking these  
thoughts in loops. And this is  
where I intercepted her, in this  
alley, with the dog, with fallen  
traces of one who falls. That I  
didn't acknowledge her speaks  
to the places I've fallen as well.

**#1627**

He says that these have an “aura.”  
To the extent that words on a page  
can, they do. He said these things,  
but then they were up on a site that  
has its own aura, the poems become  
composites. Whatever, I thought this,  
not out loud, these auras only work  
in three dimensions, and I’m already  
in three dimensions, I’m already art  
to begin with. Besides, who cares? I  
quickly made a left onto Broad, the  
radio was turned off and I opened  
the window, it was a cold, breezes  
danced around my face, in words.

**#1628**

Mrs. Trellings was in bed with her husband of  
fifty summers. Now, it was winter, & the smell  
of his farts, the sound of his snores, all these  
things took her on a soul’s journey to Pluto, in  
a deep freeze of no sleep she would linger. It’s  
a story (Mrs. Trellings thought) of reverse things:  
reverse providence, reverse encounter, all things  
that should culminate ending in anti-climax. But  
it should be noted that Mrs. Trellings was quite  
intelligent, it was a week before Christmas & she  
saw turkeys everywhere. They had five kids. She  
thought of them, left it at that. And didn’t sleep.

#1629

This party was too much, she  
was dancing, she moved away  
from me, she wanted this other  
guy, they danced, I sat watching  
guys go into the bathroom to do  
blow, I looked out at the palms,  
realized we were all caught in a  
net of perfect safety, circular  
perfection, getting what you  
want when you want it, why is  
it that from Pascal to Hollywood,  
perfection kills? Then he felt he  
was already dead, headed for the  
bathroom himself, cold & comforted.

She was eating lunch, I was watching her eat lunch, I started having all these thoughts about how people reveal themselves, even just how they eat their meals but it was such a nice day and I had a few drinks and I just kind of got lost in it all, the food was really good but there was this sense that nothing could really last, everyone has these great cars and these great lives but nothing really lasts, and I start to worry even just about eating lunch like this, isn't there something better I should be doing? Isn't there something more important than this? I don't want to get all existential about this cause it happens all the time, but I'm telling you this cause I know you have these feelings too, and it doesn't matter how we communicate as long as the basic gist of things comes through, in fact I'm kind of eating lunch right now and kind of having the same feelings, I get depressed in the afternoons here because everything is so still and perfect, so even though I have to live in this perfected state (some people say it's exalted, I don't think it's exalted, I don't even know what exalted means) it just doesn't work. I guess the lesson is that we should all skip lunch, I know it's completely absurd but it might be better just to eat breakfast and dinner, but you know, people in this town have to do certain things at certain times which is why I treasure this, but hold on a sec I just got a text from somebody, do you mind if I call you back, if not today tomorrow, I really want to hear your thoughts on this?

Look, it's not like I could've raised you any other way. The rules are the rules and you know the way this town is, I don't want to see you there sitting there sulking like you don't enjoy these things. My deal is over, I'm an old bitch whose worn out my welcome on every conceivable avenue, my tits sag, my breath stinks, the guys I have left can't get it up half the time. You have to use it, kiddo, you have to use what you've got, and if I push, it's just because the reputation you make now is going to follow you around forever, and yeah, you don't have to use eyeliner just to cross the fucking street, you don't have to wear fur to buy cigarettes, but I've given you all this shit specifically to use, and I don't necessarily mind (though I'm tempted to barge in and steal some of that cock for myself) hearing your bed-springs creaking at five in the morning cause it means you're doing good business and that's the whole point of living here, you do good business or you don't, and you'll see what it's like when you're doing this, you go straight to hell and have to live through the little cunts like yourself, but you're *my* little cunt and I'm not going to see you waste *your* little cunt while you still have all that juice running between your legs like I use to have, and this needs to become a family tradition because family is all I have left. So just keep going where you need to go, but don't complain to me about love, there is no love, there's only skin, blood, cum, spit, phlegm, & lots of it.

People need to understand that you *can* make a difference these days. Alright, so the system's trash, we make a new system. Or, if we don't, we change the system. People don't realize that there is a "we" but I've seen it with my own eyes, this really is still (no matter what anyone says) the greatest country in the world and you have to be a part of it and you have to try and change things. It's not like I condone all my own methods, but I'm a woman and you have to use what you have, and when you see these guys with their pants down (and I've seen all kinds of guys with their pants down), you really get a sense of the humanity of America and Americans and how all the threads really do tie everything together and my methods work for me, there is no judgment though some may insist on judging. You have to understand what the important judgment really is: are you an American or are you not? Do you care or do you not? Not everything I do can be as perfect as I want it to be but the important thing is, I'm building, I'm going somewhere with this. There's a place for me somewhere in this administration and I just have to find it, and I'm a determined American woman with a big heart and it's not like others don't do the things I do. There are times when I'm in the middle of these things and all I can do is visualize the American flag because it still means something, that red, white, and blue is woven into my entire body and my whole brain and everything else. The times where anyone can say *screw it* are over and done with, and it's time for the real Americans to stand up and do what needs to be done so that the red, white, and blue don't fade into the kind of blackness I see all around me in Washington. To think, I could've wasted my life.

**#1645**

The father's gaze (depending which gaze you happen to be referring to) is panoptic. It goes in without leaving traces. So if you have several fathers that leave no traces, &

merely invisible gazes, there is or maybe a sense in which you have no fathers. I saw all this happening to me, along with every thing else, many years ago, before I could

visualize the cell I was in, before I knew how the walls stank of fresh paint, or saw that I was getting smeared at any juncture. But, as I saw this, my father who was my

father turned, spoke down to me in such a way that I listened. I took what he said, gazed at my cell, and watched the paint dry deep into the night before I busted out to

watch the dawn break over the Delaware.

**#1646**

A ring of retards, she said to herself, a ring of retards. It was her turn to speak, speak she did, but she watched herself the whole time, thinking how dumb the whole thing would look to one of her old friends, in the days when she (and they) ruled the world, because the world was so tiny and they could encompass it. She gets up to piss, and notices nothing. She's still gorgeous and she knows it, that's that. Yes, I saw this happen, I was down there with them. But then, you don't know who I am, do you, and does it matter?

#1647

She told me I love boy/girl poems, love  
scenes in them based on a deep degeneracy  
inherited from too much heat around my  
genitals, as manifest in tangents I could only  
see if I was getting laid. She told me this as  
I was getting laid in such a way that any notion

of telling was subsumed in an ass as stately as  
a mansion, which I filled with the liquid  
cobwebs of my imagination. There was grass  
outside being smoked in a car in which another  
boy/girl scenario played out in a brunette giving  
a fine performance of Bolero in her movements,

and I immediately flashed back to the deep  
genitals of my first girlfriend and the way she  
used to implore God's help at certain moments,  
who was certainly watching this. That's it, that's  
the whole spiel I have on boy/girl poems and  
why they are hated by the dry dunces who love them.



#1649

Oh you guys, you guys are tough.  
I came here to write about some  
thing, but now that I came, I can't  
come to a decision about what I

came for. What? You said I can't  
do this? You said it's not possible  
because it's a violation and not a  
moving one? It's true, you guys

are tough. You know I have tried,  
at different times, to please you in  
little ways, but this one time I had  
this student that was giving me head

and she stopped in the middle to tell  
me that I had good taste and you had  
bad taste, and I'll admit it, I believed  
her. She was your student too, maybe

you've seen her around. She's the one  
with the scarves and the jewelry and  
the jewels and the courtesy to give the  
teachers head who deserve it. Do you?

## #1651

What's this about making moves, said  
the apprentice? I've got irons in the fire  
with all these pieces, isn't that enough?  
'To have mastered how the fire works,  
so that each piece burns right down: it's  
not the only move that matters, but as  
I just made a line of rooks rather than  
pawns, what else could possibly get my  
goat? The master heard this, appearing

limber, but quite chained to the voices  
that were taking away the tools he used  
to put his apprentices in their places. I  
have nothing to say about this, he said,  
as he wiped beads of sweat from a brow  
that furrowed so intensely that all his  
enemies insisted he had dark ties. Just  
make rows of rooks instead of pawns,  
and you will find yourselves kings and

queens. They all left him that night, after  
dumping the ashes in a river that ran in  
back of the workshop, into a black sea.

## #1654

The traces of this woman, who *is*  
a woman, go all over the world, as  
I don't objectify what I have no  
need to objectify. Can you guess  
who she is? Can you guess why I  
would need to write in code so  
that all the little poets don't place  
me in brine vats? I heard him say  
all this, and let me tell you, it was  
sickening. Haven't we heard how  
bodies in text are obsolescent? This  
is where I jumped in, and I am the  
final eye, that sees all. Black and  
white impulse, red veins. Pleasures.

#506

I have seen  
something  
other than  
what I am

it is open  
as air, it is  
closed to a  
tee, it is a

picture of  
me as me in  
a movie of  
me that's a

vision of me  
as an "I" in  
a picture of  
an old movie

#507

I am is,  
in saying,  
like being

in woods,  
like leaves,  
like trees,

like a place  
to rest after  
you know

what I mean.

**#508**

O life, O time, dark dark dark  
& all that, that bit, where you  
confront all that won't submit,  
it's nobody's favorite bit, it's  
a bloody miracle we ever get  
anything else, yet you never  
hear talk of it except in art, &  
it's gone out of fashion, right  
from Milton's front page into  
the dark dark dark, but it's still  
dark as a mudslide, & as dense

**#509**

There are gusty showers  
    in Philadelphia, showers  
that beat up empty lots,  
  
down in sooty Kensington,  
    you could almost believe  
what the books say about  
  
being-in-the-world, I mean  
    being in a damned world, it  
really does seem that way  
  
on greasy days in Philadelphia.

**#510**

Whaddya know, she said,  
you've coined a phrase we  
can all use, just by keeping  
your mouth shut, just by  
whistling past the dust-bins,  
hat in hand, hand in glove,  
gloved from tyranny by a  
left-handed smoke shifter,  
a bloody miracle, she said

**#511**

It's all so  
anxious,  
this living,  
panting  
realizations  
of what  
isn't, could  
never be,  
sky doesn't  
care, earth  
doesn't care,  
mud-soaked  
leaves—

**#512**

as if I would strike you,  
as if I, myself, were pushing  
your face away, fists livid  
against yr soft, wasp-y cheeks.  
in some other world my parts  
bear nectar, my hands clasp  
your own like wanted shelter.  
in some other dream your  
eyes don't freeze but melt,  
sugar cubes smashed by light.

#521

It is in the thing  
that impels hands  
forward, what curls  
into fists, coiled  
laughter, shaded  
disclosures, every  
inflection of every  
emphatic shove of  
feeling into flesh.

It is consciousness  
behind, above, below  
me, only me, as I  
am writing an “it” that  
is me, that crosses  
arms in healing flame-  
lit gestures, that creeps  
down echoes of  
creeping vines, re-  
collected in affinity  
with an “it” that is it,  
being me.

#522

Your arms  
oppress me;  
my deep  
exhaustion  
plagues  
you like  
tax-forms.  
Think of  
waves of  
honey,  
tides of  
butter, all  
melting  
into a dense,  
impregnable  
bind—  
if this is  
the lease,  
I’ll sign.

#524

Dressed to kill,  
I go insane as I  
think of killing  
you in undressing,  
a sense of weird  
lightning bottled  
inside me wells  
up spontaneously,  
I'm tearing at my  
body's corners, I  
can't stop thinking  
of jumps into ether,  
memorandums, just  
love, whatever it  
means, whatever it  
is, whatever it  
wants to be inside  
us, a harlequin, a  
moose, a daffodil,  
a way of explosives  
going off in a row  
& corn being mowed in  
Iowa, Illinois, or "I."

#528

What will the poem,  
a wary protuberance,  
say to admixtures of  
green grassy gardens  
sprung sans respite, &  
hood winked dudes?  
Not to implicate you,  
but someone must  
choose, truly, when  
this linzer tart stands  
eating my plate, in  
spite of all spite with-  
held, beyond all dreams  
you can measure, near  
a fracas which seems  
risible. Not that I care.

Lawyers I know do blow.  
Every line is crass. Books  
line their well-ordered flats  
that look out on views that  
might as well be New York.  
Amped up, 13<sup>th</sup> St. gleams  
like Central Park, Woody's  
like a petting zoo for fruits.  
I watch for lines of truth.  
Tomes, philosophy— queer.  
What would Marx say here?  
That jobless attorneys stave  
off ennui by nose-dripped  
ecstasy, made a commodity?



Oh, she was really cute,  
but she just doesn't get  
it. I mean, she has these  
perfect little blue eyes,  
and our feet were almost  
touching, but she kept  
talking about other girls.  
It didn't help that I had  
to hear her whole stupid  
life story about growing  
up in fucking Reading.  
Now she wants to open  
up a shop with sex toys  
and a café. I mean, that's  
fine, but it was all about  
her, I couldn't get a word  
in edgewise, and now I  
can't go into the bar where  
she works because I sort  
of don't want to see her.  
But I'm still attracted to  
her too. I swear to God,  
all these fucking hick girls  
come to the city and they  
can't handle it. I wanted  
to tell her, listen, sister,  
don't mess around with  
a girl that's been around.  
You're cute but I could  
fuck you over if I wanted  
to. I've got skills that you  
don't. What's the point?  
She'll learn soon enough.

#535

I was fucking this girl  
in the ass, late at night,  
and I looked out into  
the parking lot across  
the street and moon-  
light glistened on the  
cars, I thought, that's  
it, I don't give a shit  
anymore, you can take  
your America, shove  
it up your ass just like  
I'm doing here, that's  
when I came, and it  
was a good long one.

#536

I stood naked, a  
disappeared text,  
dissolved in more  
text that was done  
in French, smudged  
lines, heart-shaped  
erasures, crossings,  
a witch, not such  
a bluebird as she  
was when I listened  
to her in a bar,  
stoned in Rockford,  
letter stored in  
her belly, tugging.

Like the lamp by your bed  
with no shade and the Stein  
books you never read on  
your shelf and the sweat  
that rolls down the crack  
of your ass when we fuck  
(the smell of driven slush),

Like the granules these  
things are or may be, as I  
tell you what it is you like  
about me discussing in bits  
your bits that form a kind  
of trinity hovering above  
the places you place plants,

but it is not nor shall ever be  
like anything else again, as  
there is no simile for the  
marks of incredibly bright  
weakness around your eyes  
as you lounge around in your  
panties, two blues, guess which?

Angie did not  
arrive to white  
me out— alone  
in bed, 3 am, I  
smoked butts,  
blue lights, haze-  
like, spinning, an  
angel's halo— I felt  
dirty, upbraided by  
blueness, as if it  
showed me what  
I was past  
entanglements,  
redness in me  
atrophied— I  
would have been  
better, I thought,  
inside Angie,  
butt-fucking.  
That's what  
was in dreams  
once the haze left.

#545

Words are spirits,  
words wording  
through us like  
savored pulp.  
Words, strained  
or comatose,  
plucking laurel  
for some lucky  
fuck. Substantive  
spirit words, cored &  
pitted, wait to be bit  
like knowledge of  
good & evil, stems.  
Not a cask or a flask—  
some vessel from  
nether regions of  
Venus. Easy to be  
dispirited, cored,  
yet stem systems are  
permanent. Say them.

#547

Spirit melts, leaving  
butter particles strewn  
along leaf-veined avenues—  
how absurd, that it should  
be in poetry, hiding there  
like a cat in a dry bath-tub,  
like water in a drain, like  
so much dark moon.

#549

I'm conscious of freedom, how it  
flares against brick, how it stirs.  
Yellow backs of combatants, &  
chain-gang commerce in armor,  
mind-forged manacles scraped,  
muscle-displays in time's diaspora.  
Lastly, they turn away from facts,  
look instead at trunk-scissions,  
leafy morasses, all over small-  
town America, steeples chased.  
I'm conscious of this, of my own  
yellow writing it down, seated.

#552

Guns are connected to power; you  
want to shoot because you are shot,  
you want to kill because you are killed,  
you like nature because it happens  
to be easy. Your mouth, as you kill,  
is a waft of rodent-dirt, you rats. I  
see myself as a kind of tree behind  
all this, not that I'm solid or stolid,  
just that I can absorb the prickly  
twitch of your whiskered faces.  
I have no problem with ferreting  
out small animals. What if it turns  
out they want to be elected; hope?

#553

I'd love to  
enter you  
this way—  
go, stop,  
go; go, stop,  
go; until

I could fill  
your canvas  
w/ presence;  
I'd love to  
turn you  
onto yourself;

you, who,  
yourself, are,  
spatially,  
two-in-mouth,  
knees-at-hip,  
entered.

#555

Wood-floored bar on Rue St. Catharine—  
you danced, I sat, soused as Herod,  
sipped vodka tonic, endless bland  
medley belting out of the jukebox—  
you smiling, I occupied keeping you happy,  
un-frazzled— suddenly sounds behind us,  
the bar wasn't crowded & a patron  
(rakish, whisker-flecked big mouth)  
lifted a forefinger at beer-bellied  
bartender bitching back, soon a real  
fight, violence in quiet midnight,  
I, scared, got you out of there

but you had to dance, you said,  
had to dance so we paved Plateau, tense steps,  
found nothing, you started crying & stamping  
your feet like a child, I grabbed you & dragged  
you back to our room you stripped, curled  
into fetal position, beat your fists against  
the mattress, in this way you danced  
through the night, dozed & woke ready for more—

#564

in your “not-I”  
saying is sex  
phonemes go  
fricatives fill  
in space for “I”  
it’s all I said  
(was I saying  
anything red  
for yr blood in  
you at all for  
being me?)

#565

Battle for deliverance,  
struggle for salvation,  
Christ’s passion condensed  
into ten fluid seconds,  
sections of flesh leaving,  
sense of “Geist” overhead.  
Yet you’ve shrunk before  
Romance into “post-  
everything entropy,” so  
even the love of one’s  
life becomes another show,  
rigged like a government’s  
actions, glommed onto  
deadly ennui. Christ.



#567

Oh, to be half in love in New York—  
moments of almost caress in Union Square,  
almost embrace in Alphabet City,  
almost consummation on Brooklyn F Train—  
remembering confessions at Fez,  
Lafayette Place, eruptions of late-night  
mania on Broadway, lusts at  
Ludlow Street's Living Room,  
I wonder what half of us could've  
fallen— now, I'm half at ease  
w/ memories of half a love,  
half lived in livid, lurid Times  
Square, also smog-red Hudson  
sunsets spent on half-lit banks,  
hand-in-hand, hoping for an omen  
from doldrums of a half-dead city—

#571

Of course, there had to be  
a pretty nurse— this one was  
pale blonde, thin, always in  
jeans, fat iron cross affixed  
to breast-heavy chest. I  
couldn't ignore eye-teeth  
that made her look like a  
vampire. In my pill-popped  
dementia, I saw her kneel  
beside my bed, swill blood  
from my neck, nourish  
herself on my sickness.  
In swoons, a Christian  
vampire seems no weirder  
than enforced Twister,  
watched Monopoly, or  
face-painting forty-year-olds:  
she fit right in. That's the bin.

#572

On the bus to fifth  
grade, eleven years  
old, I couldn't breathe,  
they had to call an  
ambulance, put me  
on oxygen. My father  
arrived, shaking and  
crying; "First my mother,  
now my son." I loved  
him so much, it didn't  
seem strange that, upon  
leaving the hospital,  
he returned me to school  
in time for math class.

#562

I see you foraging through  
weeds in a field; it's spring,  
air streaked green. I'm with  
you in the field: I'm mud, or  
grass, I'm beneath your nails,  
held fast. Bark flakes off me.  
You pass on, satisfied. Branches  
sway, flecked by tongues—  
look at my garden's sprawl;  
do you see me here, or in the air?

#577

You can only transcribe by dying,  
the things you transcribe are dying,

the way you transcribe is dying  
by the time you transcribe,

so if you must transcribe,  
you must die, or die trying

