

Spd.

Mark Navarro

*An Honors Thesis  
for the Creative Writing & Literature Program  
in the Residential College  
at the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor*

*April 2011*

*Advisor: Lolita Hernandez  
Readers: Lolita Hernandez and Laura Thomas*

# CONTENTS

<i>Dedication</i> .....	iii
<i>S</i> .....	2
Crise de la Vingtaine .....	3
Isabella .....	8
HAIKU .....	8
Our Gyres .....	9
Scena Nostra.....	12
Andromeda .....	13
Out of the Cracks.....	14
Talk About Compassion.....	15
<i>P</i> .....	17
Rivers Poem .....	18
Fourteen Ways of Perceiving My Own Death .....	21
Is and Ares.....	24
Gigantium Humeris Insidentes .....	24
Wilderness Love Poem .....	25
Fashion Model.....	25
Olivia .....	26
Ode to the Puerto Rican Girl in the Flowered Dress .....	26
Persimmons .....	27
UNTITLED.....	27
ELEGIACS.....	28
<i>d</i> .....	29
Thieves.....	30
Seeing Ralph Williams Outside of UMMA.....	31
A Dream about Laurence Goldstein .....	32
Anti-Ode to Jack Kerouac.....	33
Someone with a Glitch.....	34
Sparrows.....	34
Kings .....	35
Sand Spilt on the Ground.....	36
Ode to Robert Frost .....	40
Crush.....	41

Siddhartha.....	42
.....	44
THE SEPTEMBER SONNETS.....	45
UNTITLED.....	50
Les Quatre Nobles Vérités.....	51
Unromantic Poem.....	57
Ode to the Dead: Madison St. in Ann Arbor .....	58
UNTITLED.....	59
<i>GRATIAE</i> .....	61

*For Adrian:*

there are no sparrows;  
only crows.

*Poeta omnibus spd.*



*s = salutes: "greetings"*  
*noun: F, accusative, plural—direct object of "dicet"*

the object comes first:  
how it all begins with ink scarred upon a white page  
so that you know what my mind wishes  
to greet with my lips, my hands,  
my eyes, and my allthelikes.  
before i know what i will strive for,  
i have to greet it; introduce myself  
so that all will know who i am  
and what i dream

*Crise de la Vingtaine*

## I. The Rise

the bitter grind of the sun's turning  
 spins 'round to sourness falling from my thick tongue  
 where rocky-flick language escapes my mouth—  
 my eyes are wide upon a black-ash desert:  
 a landscape overrun by smoldering nightshade hearths,  
 charcoal dunes, and dead shadeless trees  
 where even birds are afraid to fly—  
 their wings become entangled in the gray;  
 my sight enchanted by their wings.

i back up,  
 hoping the grayscale photograph shrinks  
 smaller and smaller until a silver frame appears  
 around the land and the gray sky fades out  
 into a white plaster wall—  
 but the desert gust expands farther and farther  
 and my eyes wider and wider  
 until the ash overtakes them.

temple columns where a faceless statue stands:  
 the shape of supple breasts, twisting thighs,  
 and a swollen belly—her hands caress her sweeping curves.

i reach out mine and place them on her.  
 when my fingers touch her unborn babe,  
 the columns crumble; a swarm of black ash and dust  
 booms around me. her belly breaks apart  
 and a smooth stern face appears  
 with closed eyes and firm lips—a clenched jaw.

the ash settles, the gray returns in my sights,  
 her body still there—once again i back away  
 slowly  
 until a silver frame and white plaster walls appear.

i close my eyes.

II. *Tempus Fugit*

a cup of Columbia and a roll of Drum—  
 a leather-bound notebook and a dying pen  
 resting on a white saucer; a sip

and a puff, fire in my lungs and on my tongue  
but none upon this glaring page.

i straighten my necktie, sit up,  
run my smoke-stained fingers through my oil-smooth hair;  
my ticking silver watch should be my meter and rhyme—  
the band is tight:  
i can feel the blood pulse through my fingers  
as they run over my neck and down to the table.

i have a sonnet made of coffee spoons  
and a *terza rima* of rolling papers—  
if blankness made verse, i would have an epic by now.

### III. Snowfall in the Summer

i've heard my sisters giving birth  
while outside hospital doors:  
my father sternly watched a television screen  
while i cringed with every howl  
from my sisters' protruding lips (which we share)—  
i watched my father, unmoving,  
for he has heard it all already:

three times he heard my mother wail  
under a haze from a needle—  
my birth is lost in swirls and sounds:  
not my mother's shrieks  
but of the winter whirling in the room.

i was born in whiteness, inside and out—  
my father drenched my birth  
in white noise.

my nephews were born in wailing  
and i wonder if it causes their own—  
i was born in white noise  
and i wonder if that causes my silence.

### IV. Twenty-First-Century Love Song

i am not Prufrock—i am not half-dead  
with rolled-up pants and thinning hair on my head.  
i am still too young to face the dread of tea  
sipped from flowered porcelain cups; i am free  
for i have only lived half as long



as the man who Thomas depicted in his song.

i know not of beaches; i know more of sleet;  
 mermaids were not the visions that would keep  
 my lust wincing through hells and tomes  
 in a series of ranch-style homes.  
 my visions of beauty were tinted by rains  
 from ugly smog, from gray, from jobless pains—  
 so any girl who could take the water  
 was one who flamed poetic fodder.

i do not scuttle—i tread where i walk;  
 but still i prance more when i talk.  
 i am here—i cannot come and go  
 for if i die, my gravestone will let you know.

because i've got a mane so thick upon my head,  
 i am not Prufrock—i am only quarter-dead.

*V. Para Mi Madre*

for you, God, i give a face and voice  
 because i was told you have none.

how sad, truly, that i see Mary or Christ  
 on engravings above the door to my childhood bedroom  
 but i can only speak to You through a German  
 in gaudy silk robes—

i would hope that You would not want a Hitler Youth  
 to speak for You—for Your sake i do not listen:  
 i am an archaic layman and i want to hold  
 only You in regard—i'd kiss Your face if You had one,  
 but my mother said i'll have to kiss my grandfather's cheeks instead.

she told me Your face appears in the blue sky  
 and Your voice in the flowing streams—  
 but in the winter i see overcast  
 and the streams are frozen over.

i see You in the faces of certain men  
 and i hear You from the same—  
 i sacrifice my words to them  
 because i have no lambs or sons.

i wished You not to be a specter:

my Father cannot be a ghost  
because i do not believe in them.

VI. Alive, 1997

my heaven (if real) shall be fourfold—  
a quadruple outlay of my new and old  
within my mind, the culmination  
of my boyhood dreams that maturation  
decimated in its bursting wake—  
i hope this four-pronged heaven exists for my sake.

first, a heaven full of sprouts and buds  
of grasses laced with differing muds  
from Spring—a blooming tree atop a hill,  
and, through my acts of playful will,  
i hear the canto; i climb that mound,  
close my eyes, and listen to the ground.

then i stand atop the hill, look out, and see  
my second heaven—another realm for me.

i trek across the plains of lively Spring,  
approach the sands where tides sing—  
a crisp-blue chorus with soothing song  
upon the shore—so warm, so white, so long.  
i see the horizon: the sun is bright, unbland;  
it rises and falls with word of my command.

across the beach, i gaze and rise again,  
approach a wood, untouched by hands of men.

a beaten path, the axis of the Autumn grace  
where gentle breezes kiss my face;  
each branch above sheds itself so bare  
as each little leaf rides upon the air.  
the path is dry, leavened not with life,  
but i thrive in Autumn's brutal strife.

i tread along the beaten path, unbright,  
until i see the bricks covered in white.

alas! the fourth begins with paved streets—  
so slick and black with ice on my uncovered feet.  
the lights from windows illuminate the flakes  
as they fall to the ground for Winter's sake.

in the middle of the town, a Christmas tree stands  
that i reach out and touch with chilling hands.

i trek the streets with every note i sing  
and walk around until i re-enter Spring.

### VII. Epitaph

i'll pay my debt to the earth in lilacs  
that sprout from my buried body—  
i shall let my self be carried in their stems  
and through the leaves until my body sees the sun  
yet again.

i want to be buried without a coffin so that my flesh  
can be fed right to the soil  
and each little flower around my grave  
will have a bit of me  
within its core:

i want to give the little worms a place to play.

*Isabella*

you are  
feverish, straining to leave  
the confines of my sister's  
constricting, blooming  
womb

you are  
restless, unruly,  
turning upside  
down  
pumping your legs  
and stretching  
my sister's skin  
until it pops

you are  
a wild thing  
as you make yourself  
ready to pluck  
like a soft  
summer  
plum

*HAIKU*

you are an orange-rind  
that i must dig my finger  
nails deeply into

## *Our Gyres*

the gyres swirled you and me around  
in a spiral hourglass.

\* \* \*

before we knew who Christ was,  
you and i raised our chalices  
and had bulls slaughtered for Apollo;  
for his blessings to write  
our poems in dactyls  
where we spoke of the sea and fallen Troy  
as Hector lay beaten bruised and dead  
around the city walls.

time swept us up like our fallen hero,  
round and round,  
until our arms and eyes melded into one:  
a fusion sealed by our lips  
until our bodies were pressed against one another's  
in the dire force of the vortex  
where we fell.

\* \* \*

each dimension in its dualism  
built upon itself,  
spinning down down until a point busted open  
and we dropped below into a new era:  
the hourglass turned upside down;  
the sands began anew.

\* \* \*

the sands of Israel—our new home;  
but instead of writing in dactyls  
we kept it simple: four beats because those  
in fields with sheep only sing so many melodies  
(they have to be able to remember it all  
like children: David had it right  
when he made his sing-songy words The Word).

we followed Christ around like scribes—you made perfumes with Mary  
and i washed His feet (covered in dirt and mud)—every day.

at night we snuck away from the camp  
 to write poetry for ourselves: four beats  
 were never enough for our bodies; four beats  
 were never enough for us to sing praises  
 to God for giving us these forms  
 to play with.

\* \* \*

we thought we knew pain  
 until we saw those nails go through His wrists—  
 those points that pierce into His blood—  
 we once again fell through the middle  
 of the double cone  
 and fell through new sands in time.

how appropriate was it  
 that we saw His death and now  
 all we could yell was His name  
 in our plunge?

time turned upside down yet again  
 to let us fall back to our original position:  
 we saw the moon overhead wax and wane  
 until it vanished from the sky  
 and we fell upon the point  
 of blackness.

\* \* \*

there is no metre now.

there are only words.

the moon is barely waxing—only a sliver:  
 how cruel is it that we saw the turning over  
 of dimensions?  
 we have gone from seeing our history captured  
 in glass and sand  
 to simply waiting.

we have one thousand nine hundred eighty-nine years  
 eight months and four days  
 until we see the gyres again.

now we have no Apollo,  
no Hector,  
and no Christ (despite what our mothers say):  
there is only you and i  
and almost two thousand years of anticipation  
for the next swirling caving gyre.

\* \* \*

let us make our own—  
not of time and place,  
dimension and space;  
but of lips and hands,  
breasts and chests,  
tangled limbs and lovely words  
and swirl them all together  
in a mixture of love.

Yeats never said that we had to wait  
for the next gyre—  
we can make our own.

*Scena Nostra*

at the bottom of hills we set our stage:  
we stand without purpose while unruly olive trees  
behind us sway in summer  
winds. our tunics rest upon the worn and empty  
slab; under the silk your body waits—your  
curves rest tucked under violet patterns swaying  
on your breasts like the breezes blowing from the  
seashore. platforms surround us—  
stones that our fathers' slaves carved in the hillsides  
so that men and the gods could see us play so  
well and wantonly. clouds are curtains, falling  
for us. masks that now sit so neatly hide your  
Carthaginian skin—the men would throw their  
pomegranates and figs if darkened skin graced  
Zeus' stage. in the Grecian summer, maidens  
come to play with their flowered crowns and dear flutes  
for Athena. the chorus men shall sing, their  
inklings bearing their faceless masks across the  
pits to petrify man with droning voices.  
hide your curves, my untimid darling: gods do  
not want women to take their stage; but play your  
legends boldly with candid subtle acting—  
lest Poseidon uncover doomèd sweetness  
and send Easternmost waves to thrash our stage. but  
let us radically take control on stage while  
our tongues lap the delightful words of poets—  
before men and the gods, before we go back  
to kiss well as confessions bearing our love.



*Andromeda*

i saw Andromeda as i turned my head skyward  
 and gazed upon her open thighs with my pupils wide,  
 adoring the milky swirls around me from her suppleness—  
 dripping from the birth of her daughter, now a black hole  
 from which blood cannot escape. the specks dotted on my face as the  
 clouds

parted, and her hips lay still in waiting.

i saw Andromeda twisting about to the hum of white dwarves  
 and the melody from the quasars as they radiated absurdities  
 through her darkened skin—she bathed her bruises  
 in celestial particles, soothing them from the burns  
 of the red giants; their murmurs were bold, deep,  
 undertaking the solar winds—burying them in atoms.

i saw Andromeda, chained to the rock

by the celestial seas, leaving her hands still and bound with shackles—  
 rusted, burned-out like the future sun; they were worn from the mist  
 of a thousand stars—solar systems where stellar dust formed the sands  
 that coated her pale feet, worn from treading upon the earth—  
 that day was hers, as she stood weeping for more: more from the foam  
 that kissed her face; more from the hero who claimed her womanhood—  
 whose body and muscles rippled beside her in the sky. i saw Andromeda,  
 stern as her empire crumbled—her feet twisted

below the rising tides: her monstrous streaks of morphing hair  
 rose like autumn wheat and fell like a meteorite finally landing  
 upon the hollowed ground; her sweat gleamed upon her ripened face  
 when the clouds came to cover my view—her eyes whirled about  
 in a daze of humid emptiness—something cold yet burning like hellfire  
 from the Sun again, rising to take her from my sights  
 and bury her again below the still horizon.

*Out of the Cracks*

you can't peel her off the sidewalk.

she sticks as if her blood pumps right through it.  
her veins: roots penetrating deeply in the concrete  
—nothing can pry her out; you can't pick her  
eat her or even taste her: she'll just hold on tight  
and prick you with her fleshy thorns.

she clops along like a camel in the deserted city:  
there's a time and a place for it all and her time is now.  
her hands are still leaves in the Indian summer  
as if glued to the boughs that are her arms.

she does not rot: she ferments like California wine—  
she's Nappa's daughter, with smokiness and a good bite  
(more like a beer than a stiff Chardonnay).

i got too drunk from her fruit  
and too full from her condensation.

## *Talk About Compassion*

i have to believe that the world is pretty for you  
 to take a picture; to light a candle and mourn  
 for the amber rays pulsing through your eyes,  
 over the haze, above the Thames—death is so humid  
 when it crosses the air; when it leaves the skin upon  
 God's knees. i wonder when the time will come  
 when you know nothing of time—only of inspection,  
 retrospection, intellectual makings, and only things made  
 which matter so very little. the silver chair in which  
 you sit sings like a portrait with a thousand words,  
 millions of atoms compressed into a poem that only we  
 —the keepers of metapoetics—can translate from slim volumes.  
 the dead lay their bodies down; the living leap up like feathers  
 caught in updrafts and thermals from the summer in the city:  
 our imagination drove this home; framed  
 you and made you sing with greasy guitar strings  
 and two cracked voices—tenor and alto; boy and girl;  
 dead and alive. i carried you in my temporal womb  
 and waited for you to grow up, out, into.  
 i will not pluck from overwritten gardens; i will not sob  
 over unrequited love; i will not rupture with wine and salt  
 to dry your lips, then use them to polish these poems.  
 i vow that someday your hands will grace my neck,  
 your hands will lie still on my chest and i  
 will keep my hands tied up with honor and vigor. what comes  
 from crisis leaks through adverbial relative clauses; it says  
 “goodnight” to long adjectives and irregular verbs. it all rolls down  
 grassy hills, past empty beer bottles through the stones  
 where our feet made little crunching noises. why o why  
 do i say such lovely things to you?: the one who let me sleep  
 without any such answer or dilemma? i make Athenian drama  
 when i lie awake mulling your words over like the smell of brandy  
 in the glass i swirl around in my crinkled hand. kings, queens,  
 jesters, and subjects lay down their arms, pick up their ears  
 to listen to the court's tantrums through decadent tongue lashes.  
 hear the one whose tired eyes seek answers; seek aliveness;  
 seek parallelism when reading anything but Dickens: Mr. E is  
 a mystery—Mr. C is not what i call Mr. Me. are you there God?  
 it's me: the fool who sailed over the English Channel on  
 a cafeteria tray. will she ever kiss the boy and breathe snowflakes?  
 will she ever mind the poems prancing through the airwaves?  
 will she ever mind when my eyes cross the street? not i nor anyone else  
 knows. what i know is that i must make the world pretty

so you can take a picture; and i can write a poem while walking away.

*P*

*p = plures: "many"*  
*adjective: F, accusative, plural—adjectival modifier modifying*  
*"salutes"*

my mind has in store  
many solid and wobbly wonderings  
sitting idle, waiting still for a motive  
or a likeness to keep them flowing,  
pumping, moving on through my hand  
to have etchings engraved through space  
and onto white happenings from the pit of my belly,  
through the cramping of my loins,  
and back down to my swift hands  
for the sake of Making

*Rivers Poem*

I. Cuyahoga

this is where the river went wild  
and the fennel seeds came in,  
spilling oils on the shore;  
this is where those damned gray suits

stood and smoked their Cubans  
and lit the whole damn thing up:  
the flames were green and the smoke  
moved up into the already-cloudy sky.

the rain stings. the faces melt  
when the river blazes and our fathers  
from the north look on, wide-eyed  
and bent-kneed, waiting to see

what will happen after the flames subside  
and the man standing over the bridge leaps  
off, thinking that his leap will plunge him  
into greasy Hellfires.

II. Raisin

my father floated logs down you  
to construct a railroad that now runs  
through my backyard, where diner cars  
and cars carrying gasoline chug through,

making my dogs crazy with sound.  
when the automobiles come back  
there's only one way to go: that rusted steel  
contraption under which the desolate currents

flow. the flora reeks of lagers,  
which i'm sure my father enjoyed  
after his labors were complete, after  
my mother's labors, her shrieks shaking the water

and the cattails and high grasses on your shores.  
i was born on you, baptized in you;  
your waters still crawl over me  
and my still-laboring father.

### III. Kalamazoo

the waters are still;  
the waters are swirling with colors  
like a twister over the farmlands  
which you now irrigate with poisonous

vittles. there's no place to walk  
without seeing blackness; there is nowhere  
to swim, no rocks to beat tattered clothes against.  
she looks deeply at me and her mouth

curls up like the river bends, her eyes  
fall smoothly from her face like the oilslick  
over the surface. her words are crude  
and coat doves with thick soup

and resistance. the drums are easier  
to pick up than her pleasures;  
they're easier to haul away; to make  
the people reclaim their moment.

### IV. Huron

too many poems from my own fingers  
praise your unclean rushing waters  
that drown the bougainvillea buds  
with acid rain. the treetops rustle

as your thick white foam pushes up  
against their roots. a centaur lives somewhere  
in the lushness surrounding you.  
the ravens overhead cannot see their reflections

in the brown that deludes you.  
i tread along you but i cannot drink  
because Ypsilanti takes her gears  
and dips them in your waters:

they run down to Ann  
where the sun is just as hot;  
but the boys sweat longer because they have  
no place to bathe.

V. The Stream Across from the Bay

concrete shores  
and an old man on the ledge  
enjoying his dinner  
while two walk along

in wanderlust—a step down  
and a hand over my slacks  
until we see a runner coming.  
a kiss before we think of somewhere

we could go, something we  
could do. we can't hear the bay  
over the rushing river; i can't hear  
anyone say *STOP!* over the rushing

in my mind. we can return tonight  
and feed the river and ourselves wine,  
curl up, fall asleep naked  
to the sounds of the flowing waters.



*Fourteen Ways of Perceiving My Own Death*

FIRST QUATRAIN

LINE ONE

a step that this girl takes when she sways  
over the sidewalk booms—  
she strides to abandon  
the one who lurks behind her.

LINE TWO

when reading a story,  
the phrase *I was born . . .*  
means that the story will not end well.

LINE THREE

how many times have i dreamed of dying  
with her thighs over me  
and my body under?

LINE FOUR

whether in a painted urn  
or a carelessly-dug plot,  
or even under a pile of fallen rocks,  
i wonder where my pale cold body  
will finally dwell.

SECOND QUATRAIN

LINE FIVE

when slipping the ring on your finger,  
someone in my family will undoubtedly yell  
*welp, he had a good life while it lasted—*  
*am i right?*

LINE SIX

i often think about a blaze of glory—  
then i realize that i am afraid of fire.

LINE SEVEN

i have too often had those  
*i'm-going-to-die-right-now* moments;  
and then i wake up for the third time  
that night.

LINE EIGHT

i am a crownless king:  
my enemy will plunge a dagger into me  
to steal my power away  
and in so doing will kiss my cheek  
and lovingly call me "sire."

THIRD QUATRAIN

LINE NINE

my love will open the letter  
from my commander and weep  
because her love will not be coming home  
to the empty bed.

LINE TEN

my son (God bless him)  
wonders what i will leave him  
after i die  
(besides another shitty poem  
like this).

LINE ELEVEN

i have monsters under the bed,  
but i like to think that they are there  
just to keep my fears in-check.

LINE TWELVE

i was born in winter's frigid death—  
i at least deserve to die in summer's humid bliss.

FINAL COUPLET

LINE THIRTEEN

i suppose it's the luck of the draw  
that keeps me walking here  
for now; for years to come.

LINE FOURTEEN

someone once asked me  
*how do you think you will die?*  
why, i have many ways, my good man;  
let me tell you some!

*Ifs and Ares*

when the ifs become ares, Aries will become Taurus;  
 the sun will set over Arizona for the last time;  
 Juno's thighs will open up and Hercules will emerge  
 like she wanted, and he will be stronger.  
 the twenty-four-hour day becomes three days longer;  
 the electric wind does more than singe and surge;  
 pentameter will give way, and sonnets will remain unrhymed—  
 and all the dactyls and spondees will become glorious.

when the ifs become ares, love will become a game of chess  
 where every move is tested with the brain and fingers;  
 the moon will slip and fall from the night sky down to Earth;  
 the ocean will ignite from an oil spill into a roaring hearth  
 as the smell of slick dead birds upon the breeze lingers:  
 when ifs become ares, my heart shall cease its pounding and rest.

*Gigantium Humeris Insidentes*

the white lilies born from the ground are for me  
 (i hope and think and feel so) and i carry their leaves  
 on my back—the gusts wander over my bones,  
 trickling over their stems—my spine and the flowers'  
 are one, breaking breaking from bending too far—my burden comes  
 from bearing such sweetness.

there's a garden on my shoulders: sprouts erecting  
 and rising like cranes; the stringy matter torn  
 by prying fingers, unjust hands, and anomalous motions  
 that pick and pluck the green until it fades  
 to white.

my vertebrae are steep, curling under resting flowers  
 with my back hunched forward over my ribs: the tomato stands  
 transformed to hold a tasteless enigma for the eyes—  
 the flesh 'round my bones cannot hold up to ripe tomato vines;  
 the fruits are seedless, unable to drop down to the earth  
 and spread their lovelies across the soil: our mouths will instead  
 be filled with the bitterness of lily stems, moist from the summer heat  
 dripping off of my back and down to the ground,  
 feeding the only sweetness the earth can now bear.

*Wilderness Love Poem*

the sound is like birds nestling in the bushes  
over these hushed common grounds  
where Summer sparsely lingers—

the breezes grab the twigs  
and thick looming boughs while forest berries  
let their juices graze the prickly leaves.

a garden laced with temptation,  
waiting for our simple depletion—  
we shall feed our soiled pleasures to the earth.

the buds are spontaneous awakenings in moonlight  
when tall redwood trunks look like Roman columns  
that hold the night sky up above us—

this is why my hands seem brittle as i reach up  
to capture one of God's tiny flames  
for you as we rest our heads in this August night.

*Fashion Model*

don't tug on your sweater.  
don't let the taste of your bosom fall short  
of tender lips; don't let the inclination  
of a startled mind keep you awake.

the elastic sheath in which you parade  
is uncanny. the way your hips form  
a dire canyon makes my fingers move

over walls, bottles, and glass boxes that make me tired  
and weary; make me breathe softly  
under your breath; under mine.

*Olivia*

she wakes up laughing every day  
at the boys who keep their hands at bay

her name's Olivia: a dirty-eyed redhead  
who will kill their thrills in her own bed

when she brings her hips about  
and uses her tongue as a whip inside her mouth

—her smile a sign of distress

for the boys who wish to caress

her pale thin thighs; her empty womb  
that makes a thousand boys bay at the moon.

her breasts remain pure, untouched by hands—  
she refuses to feed a boy; make him a man.

her name is Olivia: a dirty-eyed redhead  
who simply smiles and lies alone in her bed

*Ode to the Puerto Rican Girl in the Flowered Dress*

you thought my name  
was Dave  
and you were ashamed  
that you were wrong.

you weren't even close  
except that  
both names have four letters;

but knowing your Protestant background,  
i can see why you would have trouble  
with four-letter words.

*Persimmons*

this is not one of those evenings when my fingers picked your breasts like persimmons, when my hips stampeded over your fortunes and i stumbled upon your vials of womanhood in a toosmall bed: this is where the crispness of perfection stood while it crumbled at bay from your hips and where your skin sagged and molded itself around my hands—where you stretched out your neck and told me to dig my nails deeper and deeper into it; to pound the flesh above your thigh; to make your wails echo off the white plaster wall. this is where our breaths were thick and panting with my legs perfectly still while you arched your back and slid down past my knees and onto my roots where you drank the liquid that i stored for a drought of such. we forgot our raincoats but the water soothed us just right and the storm was no concern.

this is not one of those evenings: all of them died with the persimmons in summertime.

*UNTITLED*

(though i have never seen the ocean) i dream of one day bathing you in saline waves and letting the foam collide and dissipate on your back; the little bubbles poppoppopping until nothing but a glimmering sheen slides down your smooth pale flesh

my hand rides over your body; the water graces all of the little flecks of skin and the stiff peaks of your breasts: they form a valley through which warm crisp waters flow, a canyon traversed only by your fingers and mine

your dripping thighs will caress mine; rubbing over one another's as the ocean breeze cools them down from their carnal desires, burning and shaping over one another's—the rocks between our toes are nothing compared to the firmness of our passion

our lips are one with the waters: the moistness blending and mixing until we do not know whose waters are whose; still we wait to see how long it takes for our lips to fill the ocean

ELEGIACS

*in honore Catulli:  
Anna mea est Lesbia tua—  
sed scio solus quam Annam meam mihi esse.*

86

Anne is so lovely to girls; to me, now, she is long and erect, pure—  
these (i confess) are all true—broken and torn, as they've seen;  
these (i declare) i deny. men quiver when placed on her torso.  
curves all elide from her form. lustless is she in her sex.  
Estlin is pretty in forms more sickly than Anne's—they are full of  
playful insistence and charm, stolen from the Muses and girls.

83

Annie denies me with curses—she speaks no pleasantries of me;  
but her unwise man comes, wantonly, when she projects.  
imbecile! can't you believe me as Annie remembers us poorly?  
silence shall keep her self sane; shrieking and thrashing shall soothe.  
we are remembered as she squirms, touching her matters of fuck-lust—  
angering Annie who burns, thinking of others while still.

92

Annie projects to me sweetly, but daggers impale my untuned ears.  
writhing, i say this now: hate me she does when i love.  
how do i know? there are similar notions i conjure while thinking—  
chillingly speaking i cry: hate her i do when she loves.

81

nothing but hate and a love undermine my delusion of lust's will:  
sweetened obsession is still; waters must flow when distilled.



d

*d = dicet: "he/she/it speaks" (in this case, "he speaks")  
verb: 3rd person, singular, present imperfective active indicative—main  
verb with "Poeta" as its subject*

finally a speaking:  
not a speech but a speaking—  
a constant waving of the self through mindful mindlessness:  
still this speaking is not on high,  
on a lofty pedestal from which my voice  
resonates through valleys and over streams—  
instead my voice, unheard of,  
and my words (strangely enough) made  
for men, for women, for this speaking for them

## *Thieves*

my poems are thieves:

they are not murderers, beating the life from you  
through spondaic tramples and stampedes of blows  
from a blood-thick rash undertaking stamps and stomps  
until you are left wincing as your eyes glance my page.

they are not adulterers, groping you firm until your skin  
breaks in backrooms and closets  
making you the other something or other in your self-trick-  
dead-lust from something you still love.

they are not false idols to be adored when God fails you  
or when you need a shrine to look at with wide adoring eyes—  
they do less than shine and instead you should scorn them  
closely to fight their any urge to be above humanity.

instead my poems are thieves: i send them in to pick your pockets  
of praises and batting lashes; of embraces and kisses and to bring them  
to this poet, so that your heart becomes a token around my neck,  
piece by ever-beating piece.

*Seeing Ralph Williams Outside of UMMA*

today the LORD appeared to me again:  
 how Adoshem did float above the ground  
 while seeking holy children which to pass  
 His blessings; Nature laid a path for Him  
 of roses, cattails, dewy grass, and sun  
 the flora cushioned both His leaping feet  
 and rays moved on to kiss His aging face;  
 although His face grew old in dire time,  
 His hands made gusts that underlined the shear  
 untidy winds that reap the Earth of seeds  
 which He then put inside the ground to bloom.

an angel there accompanied the LORD;  
 she spoke to Him to understand His Word—  
 the flailing pleas to His sweet babe and all  
 to never let His beauty willingly  
 become a corpse while at the hands of Man—  
 she smiled as His lips begat the praise  
 of what His men have made in grueling sweat  
 and thought, which understanding leads throughout  
 the world that He has made in booming voice.

His grin denied the sins of mortal Death  
 which tempts His children with its brutal means;  
 but when He bore His teeth to tempters' eyes,  
 the Evil saw the World Utopian—  
 a paradise created within time  
 that Adoshem has made with every verse  
 and every undulation from His tongue.

resisting urges pulsing in my soul,  
 i strolled on by, pretending not to see;  
 pretending not to want to run and kiss  
 His face by means of holy praise and love—  
 instead i placed desires to my lips  
 and kissed my Love, His best creation.

*A Dream about Laurence Goldstein*

i awoke aching to remember that poem  
that you boomed throughout my slumber:

those distinguished gray snarls on your head  
stood still as your fist came pounding  
upon a podium of pine—thundering  
with your stomping spondees (dripping with  
little “uh”s here and there)—your breath  
drawing in deeply, commanding the air  
to push out from your lungs  
in your stampede of photographs; in your words

your eyes gazed up into the florescent lights  
that illuminated your crinkled forehead and left  
a deathly glare within your thick bent glasses;  
your teeth showed vigor as your lips gaped to free  
each muddled noise from your piercing tongue

a slow-motion depth pricked my ears  
with deafening claps of monosyllabic pride;  
a cacophony that made the throats of those around you  
bleed from their nail-like echoes; you are a hammer  
with your SoCal pretension (not at all a bad thing)

as my chest thumped with each of your words:  
i listened with my ribs rather than my ears—  
so (i’m sorry but) i can’t remember your poem:

only the beauty of power that we have discussed

*Anti-Ode to Jack Kerouac*

drink the still. keep the oblivion  
close, keep the matters of the matters  
shaking like my fingers. i've skimmed the blood

and shaded the denial—silver, beaming.

take the pillars, take the beacons: make them  
skip a beat like a hundred notions  
over the hill and under the clouds.

days of sweat and vigor, weights of seventh chords  
and staccato. i'm wailing, my head cranked up

as the coyote: the wild dog a-brewing  
who bears his teeth and sinks them into  
dry, chewy flesh. what goes up

must be my envy; what comes down must fall  
into my drooling mouth.

*Someone with a Glitch*

i have these bare-boned fingers  
that crack when they grasp for air  
and scrape up nothing. i roll up  
my sleeves, wait for the song  
to belt from my lungs and my straining  
throat—my chest is burning  
with every daunting breath. my skin is the guru  
sitting on the ground, waiting for  
someone with a glitch  
to seek out wisdom and unwind  
from the perils of drought. days alone in summer  
reap this for me:  
all days converging, congregating  
to make one long blood vessel.

*Sparrows*

as sparrows' wings flutter  
they blow the humid air  
into the Earth:  
it breathes deeply,  
sending its undying bliss  
into the atmosphere  
and above the stars,  
above the little sparrows' heads.

they point their eyes  
to God and Jesus Almighty  
who look down on them  
with satisfaction:  
their creations nesting  
in the endless clouds.

*Kings*

if there will be a moment when kings fall, i will reap their spoils.

i will be there with my knees upon the cobblestone waiting for coins  
and trinkets, scepters they grasp, white-knuckled until they hit the  
ground.

their silk robes—now tattered and caked with mud—will kiss my hands  
as i seize them from their plump backs. the gems from their crowns are  
mine

when they skin their foreheads and let the ruby drip, brighter than the  
jewels

that adorn the tacky caps grazing their mortal heads.

as they lie there, i will climb upon their marble thrones and steal their  
beds—

wives and all—and i will speak of their nature as gaudy fools  
who are the product of some unholy being's eternal patriarch design:

i will bind myself to the tops of concrete columns with leather bands  
and wait feverishly for the hooting calls and cheering sounds

of those below me. i will be a deep-seeded burning tussling in their loins.

i will rise above these dreaded kings and take their earthly toils.

*Sand Spilt on the Ground*

*for T. S. E.:  
it is the heat that melts the March snow  
that allows those dreaded April lilacs to bloom.*

I

their faces are long, thin,  
covered with brightness  
from fluorescent lights;  
kissed with dire breezes from silken bottles  
whose liquors stream over premature breasts;  
how these figures blossom within gaudy togas—  
the making of queens if not for the ideals  
of the princes: rogues whose simple trends  
come from bulky arms, untamed tempers;  
and ever-pulsing hips. when once again time relinquishes their  
simplicities

their complexities remain blank and unmoving.  
ignorance bolts down into wondrous nothing,  
their eyes widening not to the sites of spring flowers,  
harvest moons, or even worms: they refuse  
to bend at the knees and look at the ants marching  
over the sidewalk and onto the seasoned mulch.

i see the cusps of buttocks yet i do not reach:  
my hands only tremble, my blood only shakes:  
i know these figures die as they become mothers—  
the thought stiffens my flesh, widens my eyes,  
and depletes any notion of lusting tact within my sex.  
i only see sparkling cups and plastic coffee spoons.

any crown not fashioned from gold is a crown of thorns.

i am no martyr  
but my eyes are open.

when the summer beats still, i want to toboggan down caps  
and sift through the beads and diamond rings:  
i will hold my breath through the bitter wine  
and let their stumbles befall only them.  
when i see cotton clinging to their untouched curves,  
i will only listen to the hush of the heal-alls  
and await the spiders to nest upon the petals,  
ready to tangle boney fingers in silken webs,



ready to keep their knuckles from clenching, seizing  
 themselves over tempters; the rapture sits  
 and calms itself as a storm before the hail.

brightness, gleaming,  
 native tongues tripped-up and bruised  
 by three-, four-, one-lettered words;  
 saliva fermented, born of stills. i wonder  
 if they have ever seen a silo; ever seen a blossom;  
 or even a branch reach out from a brutish trunk—  
 the ground will become to them the most pleasant of pickpockets,  
 taking only their footsteps and using them to make  
 cobblestone paths.

how will they tread without their evening shoes?

## II

depths and moves. skills unset,  
 drawn-out and beaten until the traffic lights hide what the blues are  
 thinking;  
 we can only keep from shaking while their breasts jump up  
 and down with each cunning stride;  
 or their arms reach and grope more shaking moves.  
 no hips should sway as such unless children in them grow.

out out out  
 up up up  
 in in in

chanting

motives; moans;  
 cries; screams;

unknown.  
 bring it out.

lake waters are not brick walls: you can dive  
 so far until you squirm.

you'll find me on an engine, revving,  
 setting up a game of backgammon slowly while waiting outside your  
 bedroom door.

you always forget about the dice when you play;

and you never remember that it takes two, and player two  
always gets to move. sometimes—i suppose—you keep rolling doubles.

i'll teach you Latin if you put the French aside.

all of the Rs deep in the back of your throat have made you think  
that bearing more into your lungs is alright. remember to protect your  
jaw.

### III

the notion is bliss:

the deep pride stuck over thrones  
makes us still; it finds a way to exhale  
and strip away the flesh of flower stems.  
nails pricking  
one

by

one  
until only one Delilah is left  
and Samson reaches down to find a barren patch of Earth.

this tale is unheard  
when candles nestle their flames in Christmas tree branches;  
instead  
the stillness of autumn days becomes more elaborate  
than summer storms: when gray becomes the Heavens' paleness  
and raindrops are merely beating.

Christ's tale becomes a nothing  
when strewn, gutted, and mixed with that of the city,  
the way the concrete forms itself around stumbling bodies  
is more than the Magi: our Wisemen bring gifts  
of demons, lusting, and blood.

### IV

do you have  
more? can your hair stay bright  
and in-place? when do your arms become  
shelter? when do your palms rest in your  
pockets and not on  
untainted flesh? when do you keep  
your eyes from bulging from their  
sockets like a cartoon wolf ready  
to howl?

your chants are not of Buddha  
 who breathes eternal life into the Earth:  
 i see you more as Franciscans  
 who dwell in the doorway of our rapture.

when all is taken, i'd rather your seed end up spilt  
 upon the ground to feed the Earth,  
 to breathe,  
 than to simply bloom. i'd rather your vigor take the form  
 of a jolted fist than temptual glaring. i'd rather you  
 an Onan than a David: i'd rather you  
 faithless than to hear your calls over thunder  
 as i lie in my rain-soaked bed.

take the June and make it yours,  
 for September is your temptress horse,  
 though you are no Trojans;  
 October becomes your Greek who burns your city to the ground  
 while you slumber, your arms around the girls  
 whose nakedness keeps your schemings rigorous.

i think when you awoke in the fiery blaze  
 and boisterous haze  
 you grabbed the wrong robes.

## V

*WHAT keeps the armies at will?  
 what makes them load their rifles and fire when they see  
 the whites of our breasts? what drives their insecurities  
 to be curious of our fertile drippings? it's time . . .*

it's time once again and the moon is low, easy for baying upon:  
 ravenous ribs compressing half-filled lungs from centuries of only  
     wishing  
 and not seeing—how (if when) the streams merge to make a flowing river  
 that carries armies through the gorge.

when i was a boy (twelve or so) i had visions, i had dreams—  
 though immeasurable in my hands.

we are not ready to howl;  
 only to wail—  
 we are always too hungry (like pups)  
 when the gammon hangs about on their budding breasts.

*Ode to Robert Frost*

i have the gall of woodsmen coursing through  
my bloodstream. dressed in flannel, drenched in sweat  
from morning harvests (birch and pine)—my axe  
is heavy; bones are cracking; muscles sore  
as dragged and fallen trunks upon the ground  
leave scribbles—poems read by goblins, spry  
and marking breaks in lines with apples. here  
my verse is etched upon the soil like  
a tramp without a pen; a page; a voice—  
just mud and sharpened sticks to write such verse  
that woodsmen like myself can understand.  
the silent wood protrudes the morning sky  
like columns standing proud and tall upon  
a marble landing; these reflect the dirt  
and grass; the green reminds me of the times  
when—gayly young—i swung from branches firm  
and unforgiving to my rocking dance.  
the apple orchards by the path will lead  
this man of nature back to pastures where  
the farmhouse remnants lie awake but dead—  
where tired hands laid lumber down but then  
(so sadly) left before the barn was built  
and crops were left unplanted, still as seeds.  
i weep for man's unsteady claim to fame  
among the grounds where cattle roam and wait  
for slaughter; still i weep for days when i  
could roam the wood and leave the lights of man.  
the rhythmic beat of axes from my guise  
is like a game of tennis with a net.

*Crush*

I

one day—  
a bolt  
gleaming

about; the mood never  
pure but  
Christ  
my hands

seems

itch to run  
over this

skin

II

the way my eyes  
are robbers  
is lovely:  
they keep my fingers

at bay—  
they are tethered,  
bound by my gazes,

fantasies,      thickness

III

thick  
stretched  
worn and constricting  
does this mean      pure?  
    does pure  
    mean white?

IV

up & out, over  
through—my eyes  
are demons, running  
    through—  
    through and through

## *Siddhartha*

keep the blood motives still—keep the dreadful mosaic open  
for the masses to find some nirvana as they rake stones  
from the base of the tree. like Siddhartha i wandered  
and ate the same undercooked fish from the Ganges  
where the dead lay—now us.

as the heat comes down, my bare feet  
stumble into the temple where i sat motionless for days  
with my mother above me, rosary in hand, saying the only part of the  
Lord's Prayer  
she can remember in Spanish. your mother above you  
with her stones in one hand and The Bible in the other,  
switching from Korean to her soiled English tongue. for days and days  
we abstain from it all for our spoiled flesh and bone;  
we hide the wine under the rug and the cigarettes in your bag  
because we know that clouding our minds  
hinders enlightenment or a round-trip to Heaven and back.

at thirteen i thought i would return to Earth a specter: something to offer  
light to the dampened life of my nephew whose eyes look mysteriously  
like mine. at sixteen i was convinced i could return as a falcon or a rabbit  
or maybe a woman if i really wanted to: someone pretty so the boys  
would wish to never abstain as i have.

### *Noble Truth 1: Life is Suffering.*

i wanted to be life in that ipsofacto manner,  
but now to be the death of those desiring would be something more  
lustful and sweet:  
i want blood to drip from my mouth like the sour juice from a  
pomegranate.

### *Noble Truth 2: Suffering is Caused by Desire.*

and i wanted to be Suffering. but now when the surface of the  
earth cracks open  
so that i fall in, i can't see myself in the forest or on the street  
corner.

### *Noble Truth 3: It is Possible to Relieve Suffering in One's Life.*

this does not bode well for the priest sitting cross-legged next to  
you  
while his chants ring throughout the temple, for he thrives  
on our Suffering; while that putrid fish makes its way

through my belly and my blood; while the sick fuck-aching from  
my hips sways  
back and forth in front of you like a piece of raw beef in front of a  
starving dog.

*Noble Truth 4: The Way to Relieve Suffering is by Following the Noble  
Eightfold Path.*

sadly, i live my life in fours, and eight is two times four.  
i can't live two lives—it's too much for me;  
it's gluttonous, even.

so while you consider chopping the hair off your head  
i'll let mine grow. while you trim your finger nails to keep the boys at bay  
i'll throw a coat of paint on mine to be Suffering. i'll trek with Siddhartha  
and leave Jesus in the dust.

we'll wait to see where you end up: to see if you'll stick with Gautama  
or instead fuck him—remember the Precept of Misconduct; remember the  
Precept Against Killing;  
remember so you don't leave him dead: i'll be the one on my knees  
keeping him and you satisfied.



. = *period: endstop*

finally still, this end  
that makes one draw farther and farther  
from my inherent unseen pondering—  
where did it come from?  
only three can conjure up a four—  
there must these be three before this end.



*THE SEPTEMBER SONNETS*

VII

i am a dichotomy of steam and electric current:  
what you can see and what moves through copper wires  
without warning, without explanation,  
without even a whistle but just a low hum.

my voltage runs through a chain of command  
—from high to low, i'm Tesla's baby  
jostling through like a dynamo around the tracks  
of uncharted frightening lands.

this is what dreams are made of:  
what Mary pained through her labors for  
in the unlit gloomy manger where she lay  
and what Jesus died for so long ago.

i am the split of the sun and the lamp;  
i am what frightens the masses since crosses became cathedrals.

XI

sometimes  
i fall in love  
with words  
more than women.

words will never  
fall in love  
with anyone else:  
a noun will never

fuck a verb;  
never fall in love  
with an adjective  
or (worse)  
a number

words will never leave  
once you fall in love

XIV

headlong came the wind over the zenith  
of the stars and images made in the sky  
and above our heads—only our eyes can syn-  
thesize the turmoil going on inside  
the malnutrition of almighty God around  
our pupils and our backs against the shin-  
gles of this worn-out roof; what comes  
from tonight is a sight we bring  
into the future and into our homes  
where a blurry photograph takes it all  
and forms it into something we can relate  
to, an image made up of words short and tall—  
all one thousand of them floating in space.

the state of inflection as we look up  
and dream and drink our cursed wine from a soiled cup.

XVII

the earth comes back to us  
in this moment of pure starlight  
through our open window—there's  
a breeze rustling over our skin, bare  
and resting itself in twilight  
as the branches become the sky's truss.

we give nocturnal declarations our trust  
so we can embark on our feverish delights  
without concern for any man's cares.  
it's time for us to engulf the air  
as we—panting—harbor sights  
in our mouths—agape and frivolous.

let us breathe in all we know  
let us fall into the undertow

XX

while walking home the lights above me  
stood still and the street sounds hushed  
when the blaring came: the weary men  
halted their conversations and the girls  
(four walking in arm) left their soprano  
in the dust. the screech of the sirens

from three blocks ahead evaded me  
as i stepped out into the silent street  
thinking the world had fallen quiet  
just for my advance. then it turned  
the corner as my foot hit the ground  
and was nearly ripped away  
by an ambulance's uninterrupted path:

irony is almost being killed by an ambulance.

XXI

the church tower,  
slender,

fragments the night  
sky

with unpumiced  
stone;

the light: a second  
moon;

the bells: immense  
crickets,

hushing the sleepy  
city

with their blaring  
chirps

XXX

*for Ann Arbor*

1.  
what remains utterly still  
is the blustering wind  
on your stone platforms

2.  
through cemented clouds  
solitary beams kiss  
the tips of her hair

3.  
here the tulips wilt  
and cover up  
chrysanthemums
4.  
as they fly  
the newspapers crumble  
and tear
5.  
the autos become  
hellbent on  
dodging and weaving
6.  
in the night rain i see  
the dull glare  
from colored rain boots
7.  
in the middle of the grass  
puddles run down the sewers—  
the sound of falling water
8.  
in the night  
our ears and noses turn red—  
it's the only truth
9.  
the pollen rises into the  
moistening air  
and deep into our eyes
10.  
the branches tremble  
as the wind rustles them  
with no regard
11.  
when only needles remain  
we will stick our trifles  
on towering pines

12.  
out and about the squirrels  
are, burying their  
acorns in the yard

13.  
here is the stature  
that Fall commends  
when saluting the world

14.  
here is the city  
that Autumn calls  
his one-and-only girl

UNTITLED

out of the dawn a train horn breaks

the hush in October, breaks

my slumbering breath  
burdened in the rib cage  
bellowing from crisp autumn wind—

the sunlight and leaves are one shade,  
both scattered on my lawn,  
ready for the ruddy feet of schoolchildren

whose hair jumps through the wind,  
tangling in bare branches—their laughter  
and the rustle of the leaves

more daunting than the Kol Nidre;  
breaking me more than a requiem  
looming through a hollowed cathedral.

the shattered flattened sound makes  
this a temple—the children and the leaves:  
a choir garbed in rusted robes.

the smell of brittles, the sound of beaten sidewalks,  
the cantor of a Godly season—  
for what keeps the kindred kindred

more than the meeting of death  
by teared eyes?—blusters through,  
shatters window panes

as a train whistle shatters

the prayers for winter's slumber.

## *Les Quatre Nobles Vérités*

### I. *Dukkha*<sup>1</sup>

August heat and aerial moisture  
drive us to the river; to jump in  
and drink its amber liquor—  
a calming haze and a cigarette after.  
the foam shimmers, this sunlight deludes  
in slick industrial passage;  
the water's cold.  
nearby the bitter dry grass and shrubs  
are ready to kindle; to feed the flames  
birthed from the swelter we breathe—  
the water reaches not so up to it.  
above us only rollers paint the sky—  
not sponge dabs or brush strokes,  
but it's utterly smooth:  
i need to see roughness to know i can rattle  
i need to see roughness to sooth it out with my hand.  
up is endlessly slick—  
here is jagged and brutal.

when we lie out naked  
the vittles cling to us as we roll;  
when we rise the desolates prick our feet  
where we stand: our blood is all the moisture  
these barren morsels shall drink today.

this strip of Earth is barren,  
but the air surrounding us is so fertile  
that even to feel it against our faces  
makes our minds wander:  
as a swarm of sweaty palms  
the river currents rush over the riverbed  
quenching the eroded rocks below,  
and they smooth out like the tampered skin on our backs.  
it's all part of a vision  
—sacred, perhaps, is  
what the LORD commanded of us—  
where we can swim with the gushing current;  
and we can feel the foam pop against  
our torsos and our loins.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sanskrit, "Suffering"

all this makes me thirsty,  
all this makes me know that no rivers flow in this building  
where we sit,  
side-by-side  
hoping for a slice of air to cool us,  
and for, if anything at all,  
a way to ease the burning on our skin  
and on our flesh—  
it's too much to handle right now  
without a glass of wine in my hand  
and a bottle of champagne on my head.

this land is of dying, suffering;  
we are of dying, suffering.

## II. *Dukkha Samudaya*<sup>2</sup>

across the table, through the haze  
a streetlight concerto bears the night,  
holds the starlight steady  
under which we (tired from the drunk)  
leave our padlocks empty—  
it's been a long time.  
the vodka flows and the wine engages us.

burning chicken smells ground us—  
we are not in Eden anymore, darling;  
we are not surrounded by fertile hills  
and ramped plains. instead,  
we sit in a crowded bar and imagine what the other  
would look like sprawled out on the floor;  
i imagine you under my bedsheets,  
in a slumber that only exhaustion and strain  
can induce.

around the bend there's a car horn  
and once again we shake our heads.

*are you alright?*

*just okay?*

*i'm okay.*

*could be better.*

let me pour you another drink,

---

<sup>2</sup> Sanskrit, "Suffering's Origins"



let me wet your lips and you can wet mine.  
of course—who knows who leaps up—  
every word hangs in the air  
because i can't drink them in  
as i can drink this glass empty.

*are you okay?*

*another drink?*

she brings another; my hands tremble  
and my fingers curl around the glass.  
it's so cold but my hands give more moisture.  
my words should only be so chilling.  
when you brush your hair aside  
my throat dries up. you tell me to speak  
but i can only dream: what you would look like  
without these lights on; how soft your body is  
when i lay my bony frame upon it;  
how when you finally fall asleep  
i can finally fall asleep, too.

the bar is loud.

*are you okay?*

i could be better.

*i could be better.*

*could be better.*

*i'm fine for now.*

### III. *Dukkha Nirodha*<sup>3</sup>

light up;  
a light out  
from the tunnel—  
here's a way for us  
to shake off  
these feelings  
desires  
these  
in  
fa  
tu  
a

---

<sup>3</sup> Sanskrit, "Suffering's Cessation"

tions  
these  
*amores juvenis*<sup>4</sup>

a light now;  
a light when?

we need it  
to anoint us—  
by simply kissing us;  
rubbing our aching muscles;  
and not fucking us

—to tell us that it  
is there

#### IV. *Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Patipada Magga*<sup>5</sup>

##### *Prajñā*<sup>6</sup>

##### ONE

starlit echoes tantalize the  
skin; the pupils dilate; hands  
open wide. the water drifts to  
show the temp'rate kisses that we  
scorn obtusely. deadly symbols  
scare away our hands; they kill us  
dead with beauty—blinding us  
evermore with fleshy torches.

##### TWO

kisses always kisses; always  
aimed at lips instead of hips and  
bones. when minds align they cherish—  
hearts denied remember only  
hurt. but how does recollection  
make intention? understand the  
body, understand the mind and

---

<sup>4</sup> Latin, “Loves of a Young Man”

<sup>5</sup> Sanskrit, “The Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering”

<sup>6</sup> Sanskrit, “Wisdom”

think of double, not of single.

*Sīla*<sup>7</sup>

THREE

girls, rejoice! the boys are here—they  
want to play! and said they'll travel  
arm in arm to pick the flowers  
growing tall beside the river!  
boys, rejoice! the girls said *YES!*—they  
said that we could grab their hands to  
follow them and kiss them by the  
riverside! to pluck their flowers!

FOUR

Annabelle came home one day to  
find her husband naked. then he  
said, profusely, *are you my wife?*  
Annabelle conceded it; she  
then took off her blouse and skirt. he  
fell asleep but Annabelle got  
up to make his dinner; salty  
tears adorned the steaks she made him.

FIVE

stirring coffee; looking out the  
window; alive and well. statues  
still parade the park where  
girls and boys remember how to  
play. remember when you used to  
know to play? remember when you  
had concern for games and for  
making pawns of those in dresses?

*Samādhī*<sup>8</sup>

SIX

it's enough to put the bottle  
down; enough to put the light from

---

<sup>7</sup> Sanskrit, "Ethical conduct"

<sup>8</sup> Sanskrit, "Concentration"

cigarettes completely out but  
not upon the skin of dear ones.  
it's enough to steal the bottle  
'way from angry hands; enough to  
spray the flames with water while you  
count how many times you've done it.

SEVEN

girls, you must remember what your  
mothers taught you: boys always  
will be boys, and girls should always  
keep their hands outside their dresses.  
boys, you must remember what your  
fathers taught you: girls never  
know to put their hands on what you  
want; remember where you want them.

EIGHT

take these verses; pick apart their  
veins to find what makes them bleed. a  
hint and recollection makes you  
see the light before your eyes. now  
take your thoughts and keep them picking  
out the rivers, where currents  
flow about the land to quench the  
throats of rightly tired women.

*Nibbana*<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Sanskrit, "Nirvana," or "enlightenment"

*Unromantic Poem*

our date nights have the television on  
while we nestle on the sofa—  
*Arrested Development* reruns are our fireplace  
and Diet Coke our bubbly;

our love-making sings the kids to sleep  
(all those songs we heard in college  
are finally coming in handy: *Who's seen Jezebel?*)—  
our cuddling afterward  
has become paying our bills online.

our sporadic kisses are slices of pepperoni  
from last-minute pizza runs because we got too caught up  
to make a real dinner;

i will whisk you away in a minivan  
to our romantic destination: the State Fair,  
where our bottle of red wine is a corndog  
with just a dollop of mustard.

i want to complain about my prostate to you.

*Ode to the Dead: Madison St. in Ann Arbor*

i saw the other side—the walking dead  
lingering in Suburbia:

fresh-cut grass smells like embalming fluid  
dampening the concrete trails to the grave;  
the odor overtakes my nostrils  
and keeps me away from  
ghostly faces. strollers are coffins  
where dead dreams of lovers lie:  
a plastic rattle is more chilling  
than shaking bare bones  
and chattering timid teeth—  
crying for walked dogs,  
the beat-beat-beat of pick-up hoops in the driveway  
when sweat pants are the suit in which  
you will be buried. take this SUV  
to greet your final maker—wearing an apron  
or khakis while thinking of ways  
to make room in your ranch-style burial plot.

UNTITLED

if there is an am it is i:

am is more i than are  
and closer to me than is—  
a leap and bound over could  
and a tremendous height above should.

did is a splendid notion  
but remains such a braggart;  
be sits on high but just out of reach  
of am—

the only thing that outlasts am is will

*Valete.*



*GRATIAE*

*I would like to thank the following people for all of their support, inspiration, and love during my short life as a poet:*

**Ms. Robynn Wolf, Mrs. Angela Tedora, Mrs. Mandy Horwath, Ms. Cathy DeRemer and the late Mrs. Linda Rawlins**, for starting all of this madness.

**My Mother and Father**, for supporting their son's irrationalities.

**My Friends**, for dealing with my insecurities.

**Professor Don Cellini**, for helping me start my fights.

**Professor John Rubadeau**, for reminding me to scratch my itch.

**Professor Ralph Williams**, for reminding me to never let beauty willingly die.

**Charles Bright, Jennifer Myers, Charlie Murphy, Laura Thomas, and Others in the Residential College at the University of Michigan**, for taking me in as their bastard son.

**Ken Mikolowski**, for reminding me what I'm fighting for.

*Finally, and most importantly, Lolita Hernandez*, for taking on a young, idealistic, insane poet who was trapped in his ideals and reminding him of where he is from and what he has to do.