

Sonnets

Robert R, Bowie, Jr.



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Sonnets

City Snow	1
The Order in things	2
Six days without cigarettes (August 10 1996)	3
Stone Monuments	4
Belief (Visit to Mayan city of Tikal, November 29, 1995)	5
Late Life Lust	6
Sunday Night Dinner	7
Domestic Discord & My Fear of Dying Alone	8
Vacant Buildings	9
If They Define The Issue They Will Always Win The Argument (Why I fear the 21st Century)	10
Life is a Bic	11
High School Crew	12
Death Penalty Defendant Waiting for his Verdict	13
Esher's Chessboard	14
Father and Daughter	15
My little Stone Buddha	16
1967 Sleeping on the Porch	17
With this Loss of Love	18
Buddy Reports	19
Spotlighters	20
My Airport Conversion	21
San Jose, Belize 2/13/97	22
What Is On?	23
Sunday Accidentally Spent	24
Think You've Been on the Beach Too Long? (Little Cayman, March '03)	25

The Parking garage	26
The Present Creation	27
I Could Justify Anything (Boston Debutant Parties of The Early 70's)	28
Predawn Swim 7/5/03	29
Circe laughing at her swine	30
Lessons From Prior Addictions	31
How Much I Love You	32
That Party In My Head	33
Iris Versicolor	34
Summer Thunderstorms	35
Gettysburg	36
Returning to Tikal with Alice	37
213 West Lanvale Street	38
The Heron	39
The First Spring	40
My Father	41
Great Teachers	42
The Marathon Man	43
Lust and Love	44
Past Girl friends	45
My Love	46
The Janitor in the Classroom	47
The Poet's Job	48
Santa	49
The Blue Hole in Belize	50
Walking To Work From Bolton Hill 1979	51
The Fireplace	52

City Snow

From a four o'clock sky the first snowflakes fall
To settle down on trafficked city streets.
Each snowflake falls separately, till all
Conspire to hide the city like a secret.

The last street lights go on, and the snow reflects
Upon the domiciliary landscape.
The more snow falls the less you really expect
The city to be what it's supposed to be:

It becomes a beautiful blinking shape;
An image of slowing inactivity,
Slowing into snow drifts. It snows very late.
A pronouncement of peace subdues the city.

The drifting snow controls the city violence
With a voice made entirely of silence.

The Order in things

The last swallow flies low over the lake.
The thick fir trees become the first darkness
Gathering along the shore. Leaves cease to shake.
The dusk foreshadows the lake's silence.

The deep quiet is its own diversion.
The world is peaceful. My thoughts my own.
I change places but not location
As the mind takes in the scene and is alone.

Standing cold on the dock tonight
I think about the fish roaming hungry
Below while the preying birds in their flight
Circle above. Held in tranquility

Is the bird above and the fish below.
There is order in these moments that come and go.

Six days without cigarettes
(August 10 1996)

A big broad smile opens across his face
And his eyes are wide with new confidence.
He's a six year old boy who has found his place.
Sleep has released a house that was once tense

And now he sits with his father, together
Up late, a victor in the game of hearts.
We exit into the summer weather.
We both have agreed to play a thousand parts,

Man and boy, each in the welcome dark.
Up on my shoulders as we walk the dog
The reservoir calls like an amusement park
With its thick vines, deep water and rotting logs-

Trouble? I'm six days without cigarettes.
It's all for him — I'd kill without regrets.

Stone Monuments

Perfectly placed in the restricted space
Roger Brook Tawney, now deep green in bronze,
Divides the traffic in Mount Vernon Place.
Around him each night the streetlights go on

And cast him in ageless, shifting shadows,
While he's stared down by headlights that turn and go
Past his park. Not so very long ago
He was the master of his age, but shows

Of daily disrespect; urinating dogs,
The bums drinking from bagged bottles below him,
The unconscious passing traffic and fogs
That come from the harbor to roll on in

Around him, confirm the indication
That our past is just an aberration.

Belief

(Visit to Mayan city of Tikal, November 29, 1995)

The stars over Tikal are frightening and bright.
I am here, on sacred land, in the jungle
Before dawn in the Guatemalan night.
The moisture and pre-morning has its smell

But I modernize the scent with smoke
From a little match to start my cigarette.
Cesar comes through the door drinking a coke.
He says he knew the others would all forget.

He won't take me into the ruins alone.
Down the dark path, I follow my flashlight
Into the past, to where time has made its home
And into the temple and sacrificial sites

Where people of belief played their cosmic part
And reached through ribs to hold high a human heart.

Late Life Lust

Late in life lust comes so indiscreetly
After the blind routine kills everything
In its smooth odometer clicking way.
The time becomes years of weather changing;

The pendulum of steady windshield wipers
On the long way there and the long way back.
I lost my wife to kids and dirty diapers.
Most men do. I smile. She doesn't smile back.

Anyway, in the prison of my days
A phone call came. An old girlfriend's voice singing.
Her song was full of our old reckless ways
And my mind filled with bed headboard banging.

I love my wife and I will do what I must
But still I linger with this late life lust.

Sunday Night Dinner

Off with the lid of the fast boiling pot.
With white wine in a glass in my left hand
And with its tail clenched in its repeating knot
And feeling the steam, which it understands,

Is a lobster, tonight's dinner, in my right.
But all along its thrashing tail and legs
Thick, fresh and glassy in the kitchen's light
Are thousands upon thousands of her eggs

Expelled as her last act of preservation.
Now above the boiling water she lies,
Claws forced shut, on her back, in my occasion.
Far from home her children cannot survive.

Hungry, interested as an observer,
Like a God, beyond hope or help, I hold her.

Domestic Discord & My Fear of Dying Alone

Late, now in the last few days of my death
I packed my desk and drive through the leaves
And cannot sleep and cannot catch my breath.
No oxygen in a world of leafless trees.

My children are safe at a neighbor's home.
The hospice workers come in and unpack.
They tell me when I die I will not be alone
But they won't leave until I can't come back.

All those things I will never see again
In this life of long days and short years.
Now distant lightening hits. I feel pain.
Is it rain? Is it thunder? Is it tears?

Is the suffering unique? Is the fist uncurled
With my last breath as I inhale the world?

Vacant Buildings

Tonight these vacant buildings torture me.
My flaws are like random burning light bulbs,
Left burning by construction men. With the
Last lock latched in every door a great bulge

Of light increases with the coming night.
The workmen all just don't care and leave their
Error to be recognized. It's black and white.
It's wrong and right. Darkness is everywhere.

I am darkness when darkness is disturbed.
Talk it out? This is how I know my flaws:
Silent buildings with lights left on for words
As my hollow head holds darkness in its jaws.

Forgive me what I do not say to you
As I window my inexactitude.

If They Define The Issue
They Will Always Win The Argument
(Why I fear the 21st Century)

The low down my landlady has on me
Would bring a low life alive, and it does.
My endless paper reading stacks up. She
Sifts through my trash to find out what I was

Last week. She has a passkey to my mind
And does not hesitate to use it when
Her geriatric legs will pain to find
Three fights up, in my room, a better life than

She can understand in just one visit;
So she comes again, creaking up the stairs,
Or lifts the lid, finds a letter, and wonders if
It will put the puzzle into place. Where

I live, I lease from her; but I will be
Always different than what she thinks of me.

Life is a Bic

Within the four corners of the blank page
Lives the life's work of a ballpoint pen
And the untranslatable language
Of its beginnings and of its end.

Its play at drawing portraits of doodle-faces,
Or stringing words to make a thought brought pure,
Or working the architecture of spaces,
Or just displaying the ego of a signature

Is to have enjoyed its universe.
Even if it's just dotted "i"s or crossed "t"s
And is the full slave of its handlers
Does it feel blessed that it does not breath?

How entirely unlike your life or mine
Is a single thin line as a life defined?

High School Crew

In the early spring, when I was just fifteen,
My choices were baseball, tennis or crew.
Between Boston and Cambridge I had seen
Rhythmic oars of singles, eights, fours and twos

Beneath the bridges of the Charles River.
I was appointed Stroke. I paced the boat.
Our strokes made the running water deliver
Us forward. We would stroke and stroke and stroke

Lifting ourselves out of the brown water
Again and again. The coxswain pounds out,
On the gunnels, the rhythm of my order.
Tin cans and prophylactics float about

And then the rhythmic silence of the contest broke
In echoes beneath the bridges. Stroke. Stroke.

Death Penalty Defendant
Waiting for his Verdict

“You be in this box of artificial light.
It feels like a hot house where nothing blooms
Under this neon ceiling that burns all night.
Where is the daylight in this damn courtroom?

Why doesn't the jury already know?
My lawyer says 'let them deliberate'
And then goes out with the D.A. for a smoke.
I heard them laugh about 'it getting late'.

Tell me, what is a crime against the State?
The guy bitch slapped my girlfriend and took her hat.
Trust me, he had this death wish that couldn't wait
But my lawyer never told it just like that.

God I want to leave this room and be free.
The jury enters but does not look at me.”

Esher's Chessboard

Am I atoms and DNA that begets
The consciousness in the collected cells
(That aren't conscious of what they will forget)
And were born in cold tidal wishing wells?

At the edges of these worlds and my heart,
Past the farthest boundary of my reach and grasp
Where ideas cause worlds to fall apart
Is where we live and love and cannot last.

Dust is it and is not really it at all.
Do cells dance like dice in a gamblers Hell?
Is God just outside the sound of his own call
And all of this his accidental spell?

We guess, speculate, conclude and grow old.
So "Belief" answers what we cannot know.

Father and Daughter

I swam, back then, with some father's daughters,
Back stroking only slightly out of touch,
Out to the raft in the starry waters
And never thought of their fathers all that much.

Alice, don't judge me till you're fifty-five
But there were midnight visits to "Ice House Pond,"
In my misspent youth, when I was still alive,
Where couples would strip, and swim and then bond.

And Alice, this I know for sure is true:
At seventeen we both were born to be free
But 'cause I'm your father and I love you
Please consider this seasoned advice from me:

As you lust for life avoid the crudity
But don't miss occasional sponti-nudity.

My little Stone Buddha

Like a glass eye looks into the abyss,
My little stone Buddha, on the bookshelf top,
Sits as a “symbol” of “inner peace” and “bliss”;
But as “symbol” is he what he is not?

Is he not just my sculpted end of pain?
The mirror looks back into my wild eyes,
And my old eyes look back at me insane.
Tonight, the pain is deep. Can't the glass eye cry?

Is everything just a symbolic meaning?
Sure, why not? Probably even for him:
Crosses, numbers, alphabets for reading.
Is he not made from me and my dark within?

Does not the self, not the Buddha, hold the bliss?
We make much of nothing, which is all of this.

1967
Sleeping on the Porch

I sit in a screened in porch in Oxford
Maryland as the hot summer evening comes
With western colors that fall on docks for
Commerce and docks for lucky rich born sons

Who laugh as they lower sailboat sails.
A storm is gathering over the Bay.
To the west long languid clouds trail
In the sunset, like soldiers who walked away

And rested in the fields not knowing war
Was just about to come. A cool wind picks up.
Two girls leave and once inside, shut the door.
At last, the thunderhead's attack is abrupt;

It laces the sky with long deep bright lightning.
I wake to see eastern water brightening.

With this Loss of Love

With the cold and the first of this new year-
I've always been out of season and late-
I felt soft roots go down. I felt this fear
Of change that I did not anticipate.

Before, I didn't know I was a seed-
Although I did know I was self contained-
Before I rambled dust blown in my need.
Before I was perfect and self explained;

But now I have become my own belief.
It's odd that my thoughts can have gravity.
I'm relieved with out looking for relief.
My pupils dilate to amity.

Reborn in the dark September of the man;
How odd that I have become who I am.

Buddy Reports

With the first of three violent punches
I laid him out in the fresh long green grass.
The laughing crowd left in laughing bunches.
I pulled the crying boy up off his ass.

In the first two weeks of our ninth grade year
We were exposed to wilderness and "Buddy
Reports." Buddy Reports were to be feared.
For two weeks it rained cold and was muddy.

We suffered at our chores and in our tents.
One boy trapped a raccoon and took it to where
He drowned it in the lake. The lake's suspense
Broke as its hand reached up and gripped the air.

Buddy Reports shaped our society.
We told on each other so easily.

Spotlighters

I find a seat without making a sound.
In the dark the old air conditioner
Cools this amateur theater in the round.
I wait and become the listener.

I've had three plays performed here years ago.
I know the sound even before the lights
Come up and the actors begin the show.
They act their lives out on weekend nights.

They give up what they have, forsaking plans
To find real loved ones or a cause...
The hand holding breaks into clapping hands
And though it cannot gather into applause,

It still resounds, echoes and repeats
In this little theater of empty seats.

My Airport Conversion

“Your Loran or Celestial Navigation
Tracks only satellites or stars and provides
Nothing more than a physical location...”
Is this airport prophet changing people’s lives?

Two guys turn away from the bar T.V.
And stop popping peanuts to glance his way.
He’s “born again” and ready to set me free.
When I turn he tells me to “have a nice day”.

In the bathroom I relax into a wiz.
I smile at the thought as I flush and leave.
We’re really not that different. It is
Easy to become overwhelmed by the

Present day and it is such a relief
That much of life comes down to just “belief”.

San Jose, Belize 2/13/97

The cherub cheeked patrons of the local bar
Have watched me light the cigarette and breath
Deep-a break in the action-I glance out far-
Then back to the story... but they've all left!

That's how I imagine it now in dreams,
Which wake me from my restless nightly sleep.
The cigarettes will kill me it now seems,
And the disappearing company I keep.

No excuse will ever do. I must quit.
Now in the second day of quitting , again
I drink scotch and wait for myself "to commit"
To save myself. Why do I choose this pain?

The claws are in my lungs and my head aches
As I drink and pray that it's not to late.

What Is On?

Ah yes, I have this other place I live
Past the courtrooms and domestic disputes.
Don't you? Admit you do too. Don't you give
Blank smiles and dead eyed after work salutes?

My place comes alive late at night with scotch
And jazz C.D.s and books that others write.
A mind's life alive in an empty box.
I light fires and stay up to late at night.

Shakespeare got me through law school, that I know.
He told me sweet stories on weekend nights.
Here, these friends, who I don't know, come and go.
Shouldn't it die when I turn "off" the lights?

No, there are no boundaries of dusk or dawn
For we live in, and off of, what is "on".

Sunday Accidentally Spent

I'm by the pool on this sunny Sunday
With Ann and Rick and Alice off at church.
I've pulled the Bible off the shelf, on display,
From its front row center prominent perch.

I'll read it after the New York Times.
Midway through "The Book Review" I half see
A Monarch butterfly in the sunshine
Hold the book like a Christian "wana be".

Once you hold the Times its history.
Finished. Forgotten. Trash canned people's dreams.
But the Bible and butterfly as extremes?
The Ancient code and the fatally free?

Did the two of them touch by accident
And was my Sunday accidentally spent?

Think You've Been on the Beach Too Long?

(Little Cayman, March '03)

See, it all happened in the aqua bleach
 Of light, when, bright past all expectations
 I became the sunburned Buddha of this beach.
 Nirvana? Sure, I answered all my questions.

"Will everything around me be eaten
 Whether in the air or in the ocean?"
 "Why yes, nothing 'wins' here or is 'beaten'."
 "So' Impermanence' is 're-creation'....?"

The dive boats round the cut each day at dawn.
 I pass the time in my usual ways.
 The sun is like a light bulb that's always on
 And in time you start to loose the track of days

And come to see how "things" all die and breed
 And the "excellence" between these extremes.

The Parking garage

What if “form follows function” went too far?
Say, like take my parking garage. It seems
To inhale all of these exhausted cars
And then stacks them on levels A to Z.

How “Bauhaus,” in endless suburban sprawl.
Its Elevators speak mechanically:
“Elevator up.” “Elevator down.” All
So blind drivers feel no inadequacy?

This form is not born from a “designer’s fire.”
My key on level Z, which I can’t find,
Made the locks, like the roads make the tire.
Is this form and function born from our mind?

Yes, and like a lover’s arms, this edifice,
Cradles my engine in its man made space.

The Present Creation

The Tulip Poplars bloom block by block down
Beacon Street on this perfect day in May
And as we catch the lights and blow through town
The Cabby turns his head around to say:

“On days like this tell me there ain’t no God”.
The day and his tone demand you get caught
Up in his thought and listen. “Its real odd
How those Darwin guys so completely bought

Into “if the Bible got the timing wrong
There can’t be no creator. Just look at this!
Who cares if from some monkeys we were born?
Trust me pal, nothing here is hit and miss.

Its like they believe in chickens, but their heads
Get turned around so they don’t believe in eggs.”

I Could Justify Anything
(Boston Debutant Parties of The Early 70's)

In a tuxedo at a circular
Table sitting with a woman in blue
Who explained life as a spectacular
"Boom" that sent atoms out "so I could meet you"-

Brings me back to that clock universe thing
Where the Center is made and is making
Everything, and preordained has always been
The steps of the next dance-but my thinking?

I'm guilt free in a predestined universe?
The music picks up and she is so hot.
Her hips are moving and what is much worse,
I am thinking to myself "why," then "why not"?

For who cares if I remember and regret
I'm dancing these steps as a marionette.

Predawn Swim

7/5/03

The fireflies burn out well beneath the stars
And leave the shadows of the trees around me,
Naked here, in a galaxy at war.
Poolside, in my moon reflection, I will be

Dropping out of this humid world down to
The unexpected. Guillotined to cold;
Feet first with the water closing over you
And then shoving off the pool bottom, old

And stretching out as the new world runs by
Drifting utterly empty, my life gone
In my underwater wake and my eyes
Closed till I hit the wall and stand alone

In the shallow end and I am reborn,
Baptized. I rise, with the coming of the morn.

Circe laughing at her swine

Circe mans the cash register and smiles
And says: "Everything here is now on sale".
Inch by inch the local mall spreads for miles
Across the country on a grander scale.

"I own them when they spend more than they've got
For nothing will satisfy their hunger
For what the T.V. tells them they are not.
Look, they'll buy anything to seem younger

But soon they hate the face in the mirror.
Your Puritan ancestors take it hard
After they came for God and nothing more."
She laughs as she takes my credit card.

"You fools forgot as you turn to beasts
That enough is as good as a feast."

Lessons From Prior Addictions

With the top down speeding toward the Harbor
Tunnel, in the Baltimore mid-day heat,
With Philip Glass blasting his sound, and more
Overload than the brain can make complete

My unresolved mind has made itself up
Concluding in patterns all of its own...
But uncertainty comes to interrupt
The logic of the highway headed home.

I slow to pay the tunnel toll and speed
Up into the tiled darkness and its sound.
Is all our logic governed by our need?
The drink and junk sure turned my head around.

The tunnel kills the scream. It's true. Once you
Make your mind up, won't any reason do?

How Much I Love You

While waiting for a single engine plane
By a grass runway at the edge of Hell
I feel the evening come and watch the rain
And when the last flight is at last canceled

I feel the breeze through the airport window.
It gathers and it recreates its self
Perhaps from its beginnings, I don't know,
In that primal place which remakes its self.

How much I love you is what you must know.
It gathers and it recreates its self
At the center of my own cold zero
In that primal place which remakes its self.

Comfort comes only from my loved ones sounds
When eye meets eye to pass a smile around.

That Party In My Head

I woke up this morning in the darkness
And I woke with the need for morning light.
All night my mind made people that I guess
Were made up for the dreams I had last night.

Maybe my brain is like some bag lady,
Controlling, hallucinating, so smart;
Gathering bits and pieces on her way:
The Greek Oracle with a shopping cart.

But what if she flunks her own quick quizzes,
Creates some life that isn't and never was,
And I'm caught between my life as it is
And her dreaming and what her dreaming does.

Her creations are having to much fun.
I'm just damn glad they head home with the sun.

Iris Versicolor

Here, self-preservation is metaphor:
Two dry riverbeds that run the water
From my neighborhood to the reservoir
Hold the water when it rains, in order

That a semi-septic self-made swamp pond
On two grandfathered acres, that won't perk,
Might be the birthplace of this flower on
This shallow marsh. Each spring I watch her birth.

The "Blue Flag", out of the Iris family,
Has a throat of spectacled gold, and grows tall
On a solid single stem; fun, friendly
But at her roots she's poisonous to all.

Self-preservation, as final duty,
Creates its own narcissistic beauty.

Summer Thunderstorms

As with the generations long since dead
The fire and brimstone of the status quo
Wakes him up from the safety of his bed
And lightening frames him in the window

And photographs him in its afterglow.
Tonight he feels his present and its past
As the summer storm also comes and goes.
Conclusions are foolish in a world so vast

For at the edges of his world and heart
Far past the farthest boundary of his grasp
Where ideas cause worlds to come apart
He lives in this place that will not last.

He loves his life more than he can explain
And leaves the window open to hear the rain.

Gettysburg

This grey old battlefield is so lonely.
It's thoughtful atmosphere refines with time
And ages in random eternity.
Not all that long ago Lee's double time

Drove his troops to battle some sixty miles
Ahead of him. July heat collected
On Gettysburg. Five wide, the single line
Of Union Blue, unsure, but connected,

Stretched like an artery from Baltimore.
Two blind armies collided at this town,
And bled their blood on rocks all piled for war.
After three days of all this, dusk came down.

Within these strategies of rolling dice
Imagine, if you can, you as one life.

Returning to Tikal with Alice

The exchanging of colored currency
As soldiers lounged and smoked their cigarettes
While an old woman washed clothes in the stream
Should have been enough to never forget,

But I wanted to show her so much more.
We crossed the bridge into Guatemala
And into the land of the living poor.
Skinny dogs and pigs with hanging tits wallow

In the roadside brush as we both bus by.
Not even Tikal, ancient in starlight,
In its totalitarian demise,
Got the primal message exactly right,

But heading home, past pack boys with a load,
A twelve-foot Boa stretched across the road.

213 West Lanvale Street

—For Kathy Mangan

She created poems here some time ago
After I had packed up and left nothing.
I took the light. I left not a shadow.
I presume, thereafter, the phone didn't ring.

Her toothbrush is in the rack. Her hairbrush
On the table by itself. The one light
Burned all day and all night. Its constant rush
Of light through the windows, all day and night,

Has at its very center, the center,
Her. I too worked this misconnected dark.
A lock, a lease and the legal tender
Preserved that central egocentric heart;

But it was not hers and it was not mine.
It is an apartment long gone to time.

The Heron

A tall shadow controls my autumn pond.
It moves on long legs and will stare and wait.
After the late March ice had come and gone
And the exchanged songs of the frogs that mate,

The lily pads rise through the clear water
To shelter the colonies of black tadpoles
That are born as eggs, like pupil eyes, pure,
And, like the rest here, uncompromising souls.

The summer heat reveals the baby fish
Spawned by the survivors of last winter.
By August it is like my winter wish:
Blooming like some Eden, ready to enter.

The heron knows nothing of what I mean.
By noon it will have picked the pond all clean.

The First Spring

In my mind I can recreate the breeze
That gathered me and took me into Spring
While the snow melted after the last freeze
And my life as a boy was beginning.

Out the kitchen door, still eating something,
Late and half running as I pulled the books
On to my back and headed down hill, being
For the first time the product of my looks.

How could life have become so inviting?
How could the world warm with the thoughts of girls?
How could the clock of a planet spinning
Harmonize with these two so perfect worlds?

Odd that an autumn breeze would come my way
To cause such thoughts on this my last birthday.

My Father

In the end it is touch that holds memory.
The other senses are immediate
And defend the present territory.
The other four are there to navigate.

Tonight my father went under the knife
And I waited alone with my cell phone
To see what would become of this one life;
Together, separate, and both alone.

For an hour in the last waiting room,
I remembered him as sound and insight,
To perspicacious for the cool boxed room
That would contain him in his last night.

At ninety-four how could he have survived?
I kissed the forehead of a man, alive.

Great Teachers

Classrooms without students are so empty.
They are much more empty than just a room.
They're a place where learning is meant to be.
Without great teaching they become vacuums.

Walls are in danger that they may cave in.
Entire campus buildings may implode
As time rolls back into what might have been:
If no steps, then no path, and so no road.

In a hall, because no classroom will be
Open for us to talk about my daughter,
Mary Shoemaker sits across from me
And recalls the Whitman that she taught her.

She's a teacher my daughter brags about.
She lit the spark that blew her windows out.

The Marathon Man

In a world of educated guesses
About ones loves, integrity and health
It is my custom to keep promises,
Even if they are only to myself;

Still being a tenth of a ton and all,
With sacred dictates of my religion
Requiring to much food and alcohol,
What made me train to run a marathon?

I trained on a treadmill, March to July.
Got my first “runners high” at fifty-five.
Depleted my life’s endorphin supply,
And blew out both knees and I begged to die.

Ah yes, but to Hell with all of this fun;
Next year, for sure, I’ll be ready to run.

Lust and Love

His object of affection, (but not of mine),
A belly button, seductively displayed,
Below the shirt which hides nipple ring outlines,
That make both her breasts look like hand grenades.

He looks for the screwdriver he has lost.
His is the world of replaceable parts.
Unscrew her belly button, her ass falls off?
Still they both dress to win the other's heart.

The city's suburbs spread out around them both
As they skateboard the parking lots and clocks
Keep the time and administrate the oaths.
Is there no place left to think out side the box?

Is the message of the world we are part of
That we live so long as we lust and love?

Past Girl friends

Was it the loss of accidental love
Or real love and an accidental loss,
Both, or maybe neither of the above?
No matter, it ended, despite some cost.

Past girl friends are friends a lucky man will have
After mathematical random greetings
In a living generation that laughs
At any thought of predestined meetings.

They have families and their children
And they love their husbands so very much
But they are kind enough to meet you when
You come into town 'n ask them out to lunch.

God bless them all. They've done what really counts.
They've forgiven you completely, at least once.

My Love

Reborn again with this, the first beginning,
And so the universe begins to grow.
This time the "Big Bang" creates everything,
Some four point six plus billion years ago.

With its blast of atoms it made me such
Good friends that, by pure "accident" are mine.
For truly the accident of their touch
Is what for me, transcends this waist of time.

They say, spinning out through the atmosphere
Four billion years ago, this molten mass
Fell into the orbit that brought us here.
I know nothing in this universe will last.

True, but my love transcends this existence
And the consciousness of its impermanence.

The Janitor in the Classroom

I stopped to watch him clean the window glass
And wet mop the floor and make real sure
The day's questions, unanswered, or unasked
Were washed from blackboards and the doors secured.

"His kids", he calls them, who went home today;
They live the life changing experiment,
Which is to navigate the unknown way
To save the future which we have not spent.

An old man's mind makes orderly his past
But lives as the victim of his future.
He washes sinks and wipes the window glass
And prepares the classroom to make sure

The desks line up in geometric rows.
What they will learn will save him, this he knows.

The Poet's Job

"The poet's job is to bring a vision
To life. "The words rick-o-shay and rebound
Like a racquetball off my skull walls and one
Nano later all words returned to sound.

That was it. All worlds are only vision:
The totally imagined purposes;
Religion or kings, what ever reason.
But back to it. The words, more or less,

Split into two completely different thoughts:
Is it to bring a new vision "alive"?
Or the vision "to the living"? What's caught
Is discord. In harmony we survive.

The poet's job is to bring a vision
But it must be both of these two as one.

Santa

Like a massive multicolored parachute
His boxers have collapsed upon the floor
Slightly south of a wrinkled Santa Suit
That was left just outside the bathroom door.

A bunch of imagined elves in repose,
Smoke'n cigarettes, feet on the table,
Hang'n out and laugh'n 'bout Rudolf's nose
Are love'n life as only elves are able.

Another Christmas, is at long last, past
As the fat man shampoos in the shower
And thinks of golf and summer thoughts at last.
Who's this metaphor for redemptive power?

An old fat guy driving a sled with gifts?
A father at midnight is what it is.

The Blue Hole in Belize

Was I the fool of this sinkhole of the sea
Or a pupil in this aqua ocean?
As I fly home it looks back at me
Without memory or emotion.

Three days ago, while taunting me, Miguel
Said: "You dived it but not with me before.
I dive it deep. I dive it right to Hell."
He took my money but wouldn't tell me more.

Off the boat, with Miguel still behind,
We checked our gear and descended into cold,
Deeper, darker, to fear of a different kind:
Sharks. Hundreds of them. Darting from the shadows.

At the boat Miguel offered a helping hand,
Laughing." You understand? We chummed it man."

Walking To Work From Bolton Hill

1979

—*For Ann*

How I love our spring morning walk to work.
We meet and laugh and let the bus glide by.
The future's distant harbor skyline lurks
As we fall into our familiar stride.

Our meetings are always accidental.
Pure chance, that happens so repeatedly.
Each morning it grows more predictable,
This offer of sweet rolls and black coffee,

And more expected too. Crossing at cross walks,
Stopping at shop windows, we travel along
This same morning route together talking
Of everything. How could this love go wrong?

Our lives are drawn to a collective center.
The buildings are the highest when we enter.

The Fireplace

With two cords of hardwood stacked by the door
I'm ahead of winter again this fall.
All these years with no spark, no central core.
My art? To fortify'n avoided it all.

At Mount Auburn, my friend, Candice and I
Last winter, about this time, decided
To write a poem each week'n agreed to try
For e-mail delivery to the other by

Monday morning, coffee time. We would do
Fifty-two: Deadlines to keep us to it.
Miss Bishop and Professor Alfred too,
I hope these make you proud. Last night I lit

A new fire in an old fireplace
And dreamed I'd warmed your hands and touched your face.