

**I Come Back on a Day
That Is Always Today**

I Come Back on a Day that is Always Today

I come back on a day that is today,
always today.

I missed the joy of running
and the sound of the wind.

I laugh and jump like a little boy
when company comes –

that way leads to heaven.

I Come Back on a Gray Day

I come back on a gray day in January,
the holidays over,
not much happening.

If I had the choice

I might have come back on a hot day in July,

savory BBQ,

the children laughing,

all the family here.

But I hardly notice,

because the day on which I come back

is today, ever today.

Look, Look Again, Gone

At 20, standing out on the rain-beaten bow of the
Vashon ferry hot black coffee
of a mind to be a poet
pushing toward Fauntleroy grayblue workday
morning
riding rough water combed by the fir-thick hills
I did not notice myself, 20 years older,
walking the Lincoln Park shore
toward which we drove through the dark rain
a solitary businessman, homeowner,
grave as a gray suit,
nor were either aware of me now,
16 years further along
looking in through the window of the mind.
Look, look again, gone,
the grebe dives beneath rough waters
the gray rain drives over. Quick glimpse, self, gone.

Today My Death Has Relented

today, my death has relented
somehow giving me
one more day
on which to be alive.

When Will I Be Light-Hearted in This World Again?

when will I be light-hearted
in this world again?

granite cracks erode
eons-long
the concrete overpass
where the fault lines give way

all that rock
held from falling
massive tension
unending repose

we wriggle through
that.

Aging #2

those things that seemed so important,
so special because they happened to me
are now some country I visited once,
from which I have brought home souvenirs
that I no longer recognize,
and a vague memory of a view from a hill
toward a tiny medieval walled town
through the mist of a morning
that was perhaps in some other country
on another trip, after all.

How Memories Come to Us in the Stream of Time

They come sledding down a lengthless Iditarod Trail,
mushing through a lonely wilderness whose vastness
can only be called human.

And what if on that trail (that is made of nothing
more than its many connections) the sled overturns? –
dogs dashing out of sight, the red parka marking out
a series of snow-embryos as our intent rolls
slowly to a halt at the foot of some slope
made important only by the fact that it is here
and nowhere else in all eternity that
it has been forgotten.

Found

a hard rowing that beaches on
an island rising abruptly from the sea,
undiscovered, unknown

fate.

your breath.

dim light coming on

dim light and morning coming on
the high branches loud in souging wind
the trees all in their scattered limbs
dipping as high seas
all these dim soul
I find I find

heartsick afoot come stumble adaze
heartsore of travel mileless inways
the far searches grimpen and moor
heart-wrenching this life unstopping poor
thundering the smallest stream
sluice siwash swept on
or left behind
the heart the heart grave
what little grace there is has
guttering gullied the wind
gullied the heart
gullied life

Early Morning

rise up, disappearing into early
the blue-
 gray horizon –
yes you human dawn
slender the breathing
sheets of mist blowing down –
rise to lift between the fingers
the fruit-
 covered seeds.
solitude?
yes, or pip of blackberry or
 pomegranate,
do you follow
its quiet call –
so come you to prayer
becoming the one whose life prays –
because I cannot, I cannot
only my life can do it
only lived that why.

Autumn Tomatoes

*The road is jumping with little frogs
that hop out when the rains come*

Little frogs are in the tomatoes
summering in the damp –
now the rains have come
spattering off the drumming roof
black rain on temple roof
black aurochs leap in their thousands
galloping bulls cross Old Europe
the Great Black Cow fades
on the cave wall
this rain a flicker fire shadow
above the brain's roof
mind diffused in all the streaming runnels
that cut channels down the empty sky
interrupted
by this roof.

Easter Skirt

rose-flowered skirt
vibrant swirls
yellow rose, red rose
the red splashing over
onto the yellow rose –
the yellow goes bleeding,
bleeding petals,
laughter falling
a dying rising universe
fresh, young face, breast
the Easter strategy, the abundant
invasion of life in surrender

to Life

Not Naming

My life has escaped from me.
The knots in the plank facing me
in the soaking tub
look like kitty paw prints.
They too are leaving.
I have learned to keep silent
when clearing evil,
because speech is a form of commerce
and I have not done well in the barter.
I travel after my life through
a silent landscape of heavy fog
that conceals even speed itself.
If something is coming back to life
my only hope
is not to name it.

Lust, Wrath, Greed

primordial potency
whirling tremendous gusts
fathomless yielding,
 spending
anger, money,
sexual passion –
but you draw from me
a deeper note
as if crystal struck

Poverty of the Soul

This wrath an insecurity
a poverty of the soul

This lust a starvation
a poverty of the soul

This avarice ravening to control
a poverty of the soul

This torpor a denial
a poverty of the soul

This gluttony a secret loss
a poverty of the soul

This envy an impoverishment
a poverty of the soul

This pride, outraged to be overlooked
a poverty of the soul

This poverty of soul a hunger
unfed through a thin throat

How to Eat Chocolate

This breath to which I turn again
has never stopped.
This body I have inhabited all my life
sends its senses to mind without pause
however infrequently I attend.
The body compliantly eats (the breath
quietly continues) – the mind knows chocolate.

Body is breath, mind is body
body and breath and mind are one,
sitting on this cushion, eating chocolate.

Burnt Finger, Spitted Salmon

Swimming upstream against the river of things –
so much to grasp, I get no purchase
I don't want to just get buy – where to place
all these potential possessions occupies me
constantly.

Coming at last into shallows sun-streamed
coughing out my life spawning such bastard
half-formed
thoughts if just one or two of these escape
 into
the gravel and are fertilized carried down tail-first
at first before turning at last into that same
river flowing constantly in and through
and all that I once tried so desperately to have
and be
 swept into its one great
graveyard of rotting spawned-out carcasses
that do not pollute the purity of what I do not now
and never will have so much as endlessly
become.

Consciousness No More Exists Than Time Does

Consciousness is created by configurations
of matter and energy,
as are space and time.

I cannot say I had an hour's pleasure,
reading in the study. Rather,
reading and the study, together with
my body and its leisure *created* an hour of time.

Because consciousness is formed and expressed
in every shape, stage, combination
attitude and action of matter and energy,
the entire earth expresses consciousness
anew in every moment of its history.

We walk through huge yards of consciousness
unaware of what vast and mighty presences
we intrude upon;
our bubbles of – not mere ignorance,
but a deafness, an insensibility.

We go about like the many small insects
we observe crawling about,
completely unaware of our observation.

Looking

study the eyes in faces in photos, one late-worn
one early, fresh
the two look at different distances, one near
one far
one troubled by all that's difficult in life
the other
has found a peaceful adjustment
the one
sees too far into shame, disillusionment, broken
promises
and all that in life is not what it seems
but the other's
a youthful outlook that makes
whole

Song on an Early Morn

Ah how nimbly each leafy frond of the thousand-handed cedar
reaches into the disappearing streams of mist
and is gone like the thousand-caressed life this body
carries disintegrating forward.

He loves her and
She loves him and
We love it and
All loves me

All must pass and gather ye flowers while ye may
but I saw how the tall-armed firs reached into
the swaying gray mist at first light

and the stocky little Calico did not miss the quick flit –
fast the black shape swiftly flew over the slant of the roof
her small orange head swiftly tracking.

He loves her and
She loves him and
We love it and
All loves us

Ah must it drain away all so soon? Then
let me carry with me as little as I may
let me go light-handed on my way –

I saw how sturdy the limbs O swayed disappearing
into dawn, the consuming mist
and I don't need to see anything else.

He loves her and
She loves him and
We love it and
All loves all

The dream images drained
the edge of night and day passed beneath us –
that one will never be seen any more –

the moments of this sitting trickle out
but I have seen morning coming into day
and I don't need to see anything else.

He loves her and
She loves him and
We love it and
All loves me

Say where the spot of color was in all that landscape –
the yellow slide down which the children have long since
slid into disappearing memory,

the blue awning stretched over their fort into which they climbed –
only a moment ago and
are momentarily expected never again.

He loves her and
She loves him and
We love it and
All loves us

The green plant tape dangles that once upheld the young limbs,
the sturdy vines scorn to pay it any attention
having long ago climbed out of its reach.

There was never anything but color in all that landscape,
only color. I saw them all go,
and I don't need to see anything else.

He loves her and
She loves him and
We love it and
All loves all

Ah, how idiosyncratic we are, how passing
how precious each quirk, each unmistakable marker
that could be no one else.

I have seen it all disappear and the mist burn off,
and I don't need to see anything else.

Getting Down Low

getting down low on my knees
forehead to floor –
visible only from there

– the pale three-quarter moon
fading against a light blue
morning sky,
dissolving into sky-blue

last seen 30 years ago –
moon Kate
left.

Gr

it begins almost with grace
or would if only we would not grab
and ends it seems not in the grave –
that stands near the middle – but in the small grunts
that we make, grumpy and grumbling
over our gruel,
a gruesome clotted grume
that like the body liquefies into the ground. why
after grimaces and grime
go at the last growling above our grub,
a gruff, grudging gristle
that will not go on a half-page
not a half-step out of its way to its guerdon
but stays eating its gudgeon easily caught
knowing that gifts not guaranteed
should be guarded against?
grip failing we grapple the accusing gravamen
trying to turn it from the grim conclusion
that our grizzled life has become.
grouching any company, grousing
the groin of our grievance,
groggy and groping the halls of escape
we only come grouped into dead ends
when we could have run out through
the great open doors
into the grass, into the grain, under the grapes –
there we would find again
the grazing beasts the gregarious birds
the gravid birthing
the green that sweeps over the landscape
when the gray mist softly thins and lifts
and grief goes out of the heart
and gratitude rises

Groundwater

life passes like a subterranean stream
gone, gone
long before it was known
crying long, deep tears that move
the center of a life
reconnecting the old house to the buried spring beneath
foundations crumbling in the flood
no one there to hear.

The Moment of Death

what if it were –
not falling asleep
but the exquisite relief felt
at the moment exhaustion
is finally allowed
to take you,
the blessed relief
when all efforts
are let go,
the sharp relief
that bites off what was, finally
too much.

The Moment of Drowning

is it possible for the non-swimmer
to become a swimmer
in the moment of drowning?
how often has it happened?
that presence of mind –
the only difference is information,
and suddenly the thrashing and flailing
become long swinging strokes,
the incredible glide.

There is No Piece Missing

this sky is painted purple-brown –
among two dozen pieces, none fit.
searching through the hundreds of others
that lie scattered around the four sides –

a slow motion explosion run in reverse
will assemble them over the next two days
into the picture I chose on the box –
but now I need the missing piece

give up for a moment
the idea that *this piece* must go *there*,
the nonsensical repetition of the same trial
that I've made over and over
convinced that it goes *this way*

turning it – it fits! there is no
missing piece. tumbling into place
all of them now that were here all along
and a purple-brown sky is finished.

looking up at the woman with whom I've lived
20 years now, some pieces we've turned
over and over for years come to hand again
in a new way.

What's to Choose?

sun brightened by a brusque breeze
four ferryboats ride the cold Sound
blown clean by the long wind
the clear air brings the boats impossibly close
sitting impossibly high above the sharp water
urgent in the chill morning.

this woman, more precious to me
than blood
against whom I've risen and fallen
immemorial sea on her shore.

lament of old age
the seasons no longer hold –
in summer, I see fall blowing
in winter spring growing.

Whose Childhood are we Speaking of?

These bruises haven't healed.
The freshcut flowers torn from their baskets
thrown to the floor
trampled, wasted, squandered – your childhood
our lives. The petals show a dark line
where they have been bent. I did not want
you to have an armful of bruised flowers from me.
There is no repairing them – they will never
be unbruised again.
Can the wedding go on without baskets
of fresh flowers?
Is there anyone who knows, who might tell us
what to do with them? Or must we
gather up the flowers from the floor ourselves,
their delicate purple petals veined with thin rays
of dark blue where the bent lines run,
and go on with the ceremony as best we can?
And if we must, where is a father who can give away
his child to the right one, at the right time?

Swinging (for Laurel)

swinging
in hot pink and lime green
at each apex
your face turns

toward womanhood, toward
the evening's gathering cool that towers

in high firs

and thousand-armed cedars
a white sky
replacing the blue

brown hair
flinging
momentum behind

an idea of order
from which you step
easily
as the swing slows
only
where no longer needed

as the rainbow