

**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 Do 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