

my rooster pen

james r. murphy

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once when i was young i ran in the rain
down to the river, slipping, sliding down
each drop splashed into me, into the ground
free running slice in a free running grain.

once when i was bouncing grin of the wind,
running fresh as spring's sweet morning mist
each leap was love, was life, was morning kissed,
lightly kissed in rush round corner's bend.

i see him now, that dart down long ago
space was morning stride, down to kiss the sea
arching in the shot to find the living core.

once i felt like him, all at once to know
death is love denied, life is love set free,
each and every morning the water seeks the shore.

murphy after a hurricane in calm sunshine ripple

i live on the edge
of a mockingbird's run

and i whistle to let him know
i whistle bird
and i whistle people
he waits
then sings his songs

i listen close when he flies out onward
to the other, the side away
and sings a song he's learned
but not quite

he sings a man
who sings away

murphy listening hard with an old man's ears

the order of brilliance is the web fresh caught
in pearly sheen quivering in the wind
the spider's trap spanning thick path
constricted wholeness sucking water from the air

the scheme this knitting thread of worlds
the special reddening from the east
that flashes in mind when thoughts fall and clot
and inky finger speaks feast of time full caught

a shudder shakes the touching eye of morning
begins at head, sinks to arms, slides down
the person helpless in its path to ground

a rhythm wraps the writhing meat for death
the spider ends his moment's light
web swept clear of tears without a sound

murphy drifting helpless on the waves

my cave has its glimpse of sky
its small patch of movement
to stand for all of constant change

it suffices for my meager needs
i seek no grand ocean to fathom
i need no cloud to bend, then whisk away

and my cave has its limits
its steadfast parts of inner eye
that sparkle large in hidden brain

the one that knows
that all that goes without
will make its world within

where the self perceives a self
in quick new glimpse of sky

murphy, resigned, sweeping the floor of his hut

the sundays of this fall seem far too warm
obsessive in their clutch of summer green
at once so untimely that they demean
destined change and thus unnaturally harm

even if we wished and so could achieve
life as endless joy and bounteous growth
even if eternal perfection were both
some thing and all things, the leaves have to leave

action always implies different ways
new climates, new ethics, and always new ends
doubtless also it requires a new me

each one i've left behind, each year, all days
require that part of myself which transcends
self to assume life now as memory

there's more to do, and now i feel pleasure
over the problems and the reasons for
attacking them, to add existing lore
doubtless answering my mentor's measure

existence is described, and thus pinned down
lifting arms of delicacy when deftly
expressed, my wings of fancy solely
standards of individual renown

as i progress in my feelings toward
necessary form, a peculiar pattern
deepens the obviousness of what i do

each man does this in his own time, a forward
rush of unknown force, no time to discern
simple motif of constant wish to renew

the time has come for more radical change
old forms were best, re-thought, and then passed on
as i practiced, sharpened as with a hone
directed toward what when new seemed strange
even grotesque, absurd, impossible of smooth rendering-- a rough
escutcheon which couldn't be polished enough

so now it's done-- a fulfilled labor of love
all things must end and so finally be

nothing more than phases, recurrent themes
derived from the peculiar human mind
ever inventive and yet forced to see
relics, and forced to build upon those beams
sent from past lights-- we're all partially blind

this then is my love's testament
ordered and sent to you first, then others
and it's not the gathering that bothers
depths of quietude earned by wordy bent

else why bother even to set down pen
linking leaves of a yellowed certitude
else why belabor obvious attitude
striking rebounding anvil times again

at least i'm in my mind as i think back
needing the impetus your presence gives
daring to expose that i dare not say

endlessly striving to fill my mind's black
readings, those modulations it takes to live
sounding those inner depths, the protected bay

the cold angularity of cities
old wrappers crumpled to be tossed aside
aspirations becoming gutter pride
drunk again with my sending you ditties

else when the joy was all on the first
living of the dream which now overwhelms
else where my notes were firm personal realms
sent with sense of place ingrained in the verse

afterwards i stripped my feelings in form
noted the passing of love twice again
dreamed a bit and let fantasy become

ever more refuge from ecstatic storm
read again the lines of mine to regain
self and unquity in modern day rome

the tongue lags behind day's excessive heat
oddly reticent to keep pace with my
ardor trickling from forehead, it drips dry
drinking this sultriness, chewing salt meat

each scratching scrawl grates, sensibility
lacks purposeful life, my quite adequate
ends shimmer into shades, meaning is cut
skewly from whole cloth, sewn as probity

a lounge is all i ask, cool wine and time
news brought by reflecting what's been before
discovered slowly as protected place

evening charging its easement with muted grace
resonant trueness of tone touching more
surely than mere exercised reason: rhyme

the grey of dawn makes precious color's feeling
old wounds fresh ache in sitting, seeing how
a touching time unfolds its artful healing
deep thoughts that glimmer full are with me now

each time i wrote before i wrote beginning
last thoughts of what i lost in heart's hot squeeze
each time i write is now in all its meaning
sad framework with its bold romantic tease

a touching time implodes a total message
new notes are strung on strings in fingered guise
dark thoughts are seen as moorings with no ties

each time i scribble scrabble brand new passage
returning to the start i note the skies
see somber shadow spread the day's soft eyes

the subway steps are cascading falls
our collective fears smell fetid and damp
a springlike spate from the slobbering sky
deep inside i keep heart warm and dry

each time i look i see life's walls
lost memories limned by mind's fresh lamp
etched deeper yet by this time's flow
such depths attained, yet so far to go

are you listening still to my occasional word
need i speak again of my bond to you
drawn tight today in my havened thought

each time is now in your presence sought
reality becomes the mind's purview
sends tremors and tears-- seen, felt, and heard

the bitter wet cold surrounds my blankets, wrapped
old thoughts intrude into the warmth i find
a pattern once developed stays within the mind
deepens until it holds a lifetime, mapped

each debt we unknowing start by starting
love again, and yet still yet again we do
etches skin with a tattoo colored new
seizes absurd hold on sense of final parting

as i late this day remember where the strife
needled through bulwarks thrown up when i was young
desperate in my haste, i wonder if i've been true

each year since then, beginning with sense of you
reveals itself in each these tries, each upward lunge
shows how early, late, i sense in you my life

there was a time when rainy nights became
old friends, seeped into my collar and drew
attention to similarities through
deepening puddles at bottoms of soles

each unseen tear of humanity's poor fools
listed in wind, slanted feelings as i
eked out that pleasantness we all try
sensitively to manage without shame

answers were to be found in my inner
doubts which were dry and protected from wet
events, from that encroaching soaking dark

old habits were formed, the confirmed sinner
rinsed his head, but kept the safety of pet
responses, buttoned his coat to hide spark.

twice told tales are rarely heard the same way
old sensibilities are slowly changed
as my fingers twiddle in nervous fray
doesn't it seem odd not to be deranged

even now as i sit back in my chair
looking over my recent histories
each succeeding step on personal stairs
seems inevitable inward foray

as i sit tonight and think tomorrow
needing yesterday to show me the way
down to where i should be made more aware

elasticity of time is sorrow
rending my position so that today
seems already lived, all ready to share

the last of words should be the best of thought
or one's ink is dark and sore lacking blood
a dull totting up with a neat round hand
don't you miss all my metaphors caught

elsewhere was when the books were found
lying open with their speckled seed
elsewhere was when focused first was force
singing aloud with a drum of sound

a little finesse when i circled around
new forms well chewed, become well worn taste
deep within the old i break new ground

each attack a rout of a self sown, bound
round the pattern so deftly obscured
skirting the absurd: in a ballroom, gowned

tangled lips will slur the will of love
once tripped the sturdy rock will change
all know who know to know the strange
deep within the yielding cove

extra touch for free this rush of thought
like bombs up high, above the night
each bursting glint a tamping tight
stretching the soul so it be caught

addled brains amiss, adrift the scene
nestled within what has always been
demanding attention as to what we've got

endless flarings fresh with new being
rash and sure like a teenage dream
sexy, and charged, with an intimate plot

murphy cool, breezy and sunny at the beaches

there are no truths, there are only stories
there are no lies because stories change
they change with time and with forgetting
they change to fit what we wish to know

there are the people, they are for always
they always change to remain the same
we hear their lives when we hear their stories
they change to fit what time will know

the children listen to what we tell them
they then become what they then become
their lives are bent by what they're facing
they change to fit the time they grow

they fit the new in an existing plan
they see the color they understand
they feel emotion that fits their mold
they hear the songs they already know

there are no truths, there are only stories
there are no lies because stories change
they change with time and with forgetting
they change to fit what we wish to know

murphy glowing with blarney

my mother died last night
in a way that she would want
at peace, with herself and with her world

this morning's skies are clear
with a crystalline autumn cheer
that seeps beneath my cares
this mother earth still shares

my feet are slow and steady
in determined memory's pace
i search surrounding clamor
for proper breathing space
beneath my feet
lies broken, splotchy, old concrete

a calm within descends
a certitude comes real
the time we have for spending
stops short each spinning wheel

murphy calamitously sober

the lunatics has hid its face
the buddings pop and preen
the breathing air is warm sure pitch
of nascent leafing green

this lastly spring leaves daft behind
unclothes the body's health
briny sweat is welcome tinge
to sitting in the shade

i prop my chin on leaning arm
hold up a vacant eye
that's turned within to see the soul
behind this spurt of feeling

the youngest birds all dart their love
and flutter in their courting
the taste of food is taste of earth
that's turned by soft sure hands
that clasp their love, their face of love

murphy sitting at seder with children

a faux pas is chaos of water
that crawls through itself like a snake
an oddness repeated is pattern
flip-flops have a heaven at stake

a quarter past sunrise is autumn
the kill done quick to the bone
the rhythm that beats is a tom tom
delivering its richness of tone

ten minutes til spring is the break up
that throbs in the mind as it flows
this movement brings fog every morning
that boggles, then goggles, then goes

murphy crickling the crinks in his neck

old air stains my lungs with its dusty taste
deep sighs meet sight of morning's wind blown snow
early chores will be harder now i know
the simple things loom large yet they must be faced

old dreams haunt, make my waking movements slow
each thought steams with breath, then is whipped away
leaving soft unheard what i wish to say
i bend once more to tasks harsh as winds that blow

should this be the way i meet each winter day
a grudging plod in place of practiced flow
easy once begun and finished without haste

i don't remember when i settled on this way
needing no more than this, that habit makes me go
gently through the cold, my spirit steadfast, chaste

murphy warm in accomplishment floating free

early light, mist rising, down to water's edge
look out on ceaseless moving, wet my hand
i know this place, it's always new, i stand
so slips within my mind the thinnest wedge

a shim so deftly placed glides softly then
bursts in understanding dawn is day
a pry to loosen tongue so i can say
raucous things with this, my rooster pen

but world around still, still fast abed
a snoring ignorance of fresh dim light, of birth
reaching sudden down from eastern tip of earth
above me now, me deep alone in head

kind world allows to life a struggling wrath
in turn again to climb along the way
nodding slowly inward, giving senses play
going patient home on well worn path

murphy grappling gamely with his new found life

sense rarely comes the way
we tell our clotured lives
the shams we show today
snicker through as knives
yammering inside our heads

there should be times we're free
from fears of failing scenes
a subtle reality
become an end of means
a successful might-have-said

our thoughts would prey their way
from toe to tongue to them
the elusive sense of may
at once the cold hard gem
of once and twice through read

musty leaves of thought
gather dust in my sickness
a rare book long cornered
in dog-eared waiting
for healing drafts

the freshness to come, motion,
not for the stirring dirt
nor seemly whirl of cant
nor flight from shelves
too filled with neighbor's print

but at the very least the thought
of stripping the cracked torn
covering from off my back
to bare my inner health
of communicable disease

what i think i might have been
once before enshroudments learned
pops in mind most often when
cold candles of gin are burned

stacked against my bookend nerves
interleaves of printed thought
stand my dowdy footfault serves
loosed at least by liquid doubt

ranting, raving, rancorous mind
slowly tilting to downwind side
of youth caught in drunken play

i like the sloth
the sotted bum
the leering lout
i have become

my god is dead. he died one day
i remember when it was
he died so hard the sun's first ray
was seen as though through gauze
but seen it was

my mind's alive. i see the sun
i feel just what it does
this is my work. it's just begun
and seen as though through gauze
it's what one does

i consume enough roughage
each day it floats to sea
gently nudging at the shore
piled with creaking docks

mine was a pleasant passage
sweeping the valley floor
with expansive white softness
spreading the plump blue sky

now i fear the inward tide
will cease to turn, and flood
the beds of all my arms

the nurturing river runs in sweetness
of water's downward plunge, in a souging
midnight wind of lulling call, in the lap
around the shallows behind around the bend.

crossing when it's flooding tears apart the soul,
inundating thrust in swirling thorough hold.
needing when it's trickling satisfies the mind,
erasing disappointment in its filling find.

don't jump in the water pulling close apart,
ease into the current flowing past the sight
seeking like as like in steadiness of will.

end the searching movement in constancy of thrill
tossing precious fluid sparkling in the night,
arching in the aching spending of the heart.

twice again the sun returns as fresh
orange wall beyond a slivery window's pain.
masks the crude brick in a pulsing fire of flesh--
a dancing ephemera of dawn refrain.

crossing in mind to room's controlling depth,
i note the somber pause in slow cloud's dance;
note again how briefly fullness of feeling health
entrances gaze on a sudden moment's chance.

down on the street below this quickened breath
erratic sounds remind of bitter scene,
shadows of the gritty gutter growing pale.

erratic thoughts all, grey images of death
tearing through this brutal clarity i've seen
alone above in soft ease of inward well.

towns grate around my bed their civil noise,
offer vibrant stench in some peddler's fall,
mask a lover's thought in concrete of city hall,
ask a calm acceptance in a doorman's poise.

crossing below my seeing is fitful stopping flow,
in inundating web of forces known,
next my very window this all is show,
endless other windows searching for a key.

driving manic action, dust and roar and doom,
endless other windows light with humming tune
seeking for the motion a sailor walks alone.

endless are the changes the waves a deck will see,
timeless in their balance of rhythmic changing moon,
and endless folding difference cordoned off as rooms.

the sun i see corrupts my sight: i'm blind.
only color of the mind builds up whole form.
my fantasies are all i have: i bind
all inside, and hold to self with secret arms.

crossing this threshold faults the visional field,
inflying vortices pinpoint their shifting souls--
nothing is cozy and feathered: nothing is real,
eager nothing is attention to a particular role.

doubts disappear in remembered ease of ends,
edges blur til haloed stage comes all,
silence draws its curtain to yield an inner sight.

each other steadfastness can only pretend
to become freeness centered, certain to fall,
accepting the vanishing me of my fright.

the window is closed so wavy glass becomes
one link to all that's left so far behind.
my mind constructs a wind to blow about,
around apartment's sense of space in blind

crossing to inner self, a protective shield
in place, dropped before the eyes can see--
needles of thought rebounding on the walls,
etched as shown framework; end in furnishing me.

despite green leaves, despite limb's dance
enmeshed in true earth's change, the sense of real
sits in this chair and orders all to be

enmeshed in time, cocooned in place, my sight
turned back to see the gathered host of all i've been--
all astounds afresh with its patient waiting.

the echoes of their voices are low heard,
our dead return to the mind's inner sight,
march in solemn tribute one more time
around the kitchen table after coffee.

crossing on my plate's parading ground
in rough remembered line of lost years' flight,
new patterns form in beat to now's salute
entrancing me with tiny trampling feet.

desire for all beguiles this unique strangeness,
extracts in show the then of this pen's strength,
sends searching sounds to test this moment's fate.

each of us is heard a thousand moments,
the thens of each our own repeating song
attaching bone to feeling rush of home.

time again the clouds have burst, loosing fresh
occasion; the rumbling gift splattered harsh
morning with its slate grey thoughts, lives this night
as misty lights---probing halos of blind sight.

crossing wipers show my way toward home,
inward doubts fade beside these hissing wheels,
nodding love holds to arm; the thrusting storm
enmeshes swirling fears in moment's chills.

deep shivers wrack my balanced act, my care
exhausts my seeming calm, the tears now come.
senses reel as spray against the shell i guide.

everything is touched within cocoon i bear,
the outward shield so artfully spun is numb;
as long as massive flood conceals, i cry.

i slippery, eelily, watch all my spielery,
matching my thoughts with my sense of the night.
i sloppily, jollily, catch all my drollery
snatching the sense of the chase and the flight.

wolligee, golligee, what is my collagen,
the place that i learned the wrong from the right.
iffigy, piffigy, all is periphery,
spreading as always, and always my plight.

i logic'lly, codgerly, curse all cajolery,
ranting and raving, i fight, and i fight.
i pledgic'lly, legibly, leave thinking ledgerly.
left on this page is the pen and its might.

murphy with the little mouth hangin' open
with its big-domed head a'crashing back
into the yieldin' sea

i paint a cracked torn wall
smoke white
a tinge of dusk to dim
all thought of imperfection
in broad expanse of home

i see the close scarred tissue
i note the pounding wounds
the paint flows slowly onward
to touch each corner's bend
i paint a cracked torn wall

each spot the other's equal
and so a saming absence
in wholeness of the room
to free attention's wander
to broad expanse of knowing
a painting hung in oneness
of its eternal song

i give each unique parting
an eye's exact detail
the known and yet forgotten
to bring back when alone
i paint a cracked torn wall

of all my father's painting
and his saying how it's done
to so enjoy the doing
the pain becomes all wrong

the knowing fades to white
the smoke of dreams be gone
the wall become their wholeness
i paint inside my home

attention shifts to what i will become
when picking up the cues from all the parts
performed before me on long forgotten stage
deep hidden from questing eyes which wish to see---
is this leaving now the crucial show,
now closed but once the main event?

a twisted string draws curtain on my stage,
the shift to life remembers lost event,
my mind refracts its hidden sullen parts.
i look inside to see what i've become.
i look inside to see that which i see
in sorting out infernal running show.

i walk alone outside all practiced parts.
i focus love in group as shared event
in choosing how to try out for the show.
i walk alone inside remembered stage.
i concentrate my spotlight now to see,
to discover what it is i must become.

i see the rain, not hear a thunderous stage.
i slacken motion in tension of event.
i button coat and, hunching, peer to see
how far it is i walk; and so become
more natural and wet--so part of show
at once a whole beyond sum of parts.

i hunch, and peer through slits; i become
the sodden rain, i flow in guttered show--
a swirling heap of refuse, disgusting parts
of habitation now swept on stage
before me i hunch, and that is all i see.
i stand and stare at whirlpool of event.

the soaking dark surrounds my dripping parts.
i turn my back to wind, i turn up stage
to where i've been since when i stopped the show.
i turn my head to lee in search; i see
a fading blackness dimming patchwork of event
frozen in inattention.

i become

a show inside upon this painted stage,
a spoken script; the parts are now become
the event i am in being what i see.

blue sky hidden phantom sky
mist grey morning when we die

tears are streaming tears are lace
blue sky ridden to this place

here is wish and feeling here is wet
blue sky hidden water's net

murphy singing a korean song to change his mood

sun so pure startle color
wind so warm soon hurry spring

quiet gleam wayward footstep
nascent green still leading on

hurt is deep still has no meaning
heart is earth half buried stone

autumn sky puffs cold magic
window's blue cuts through this room

time so slow has no meaning
now so now stops heart in flow

this chair sits holds to very being
this mind waits sings its happiness

war is come dig through rubble
peace is gone mist of tea time

strength is come feeling gone now
numb is heart smash all else down

why is sunshine still here sometime
why is wind sweet in springtime

pound on pound goes my fist down
pound on pound table scrape back

pound on wood rattle bottles
pound full loud fall back people

would my problems scatter likewise
would my home repel the rain

eye to rome tall and squalid
backyard eye dense and careful

streaming cars hint of river
scream of fear short sound ugly

where is sunshine this grey december
where is earth where is sky

sit and wait as a mountain
stand and shout fast running gorge

scratch and till make a garden
rain and sun til thoughts grow large

sense is feeling all is nature
sense is form sense is sky

choose each time to be a moment
choose each place to be a where

choose a home to be yours only
choose your heart to be the door

widely open to see sun's coming
wisely shut this night so cold

i drink czech beer
it's drizzling outside
the tv drones a violence

my peace is here
accepting the latest pain
of wet induced sore aching

i huddle, sip
self puddled inky streak
all luck now bad
spiralled loss swirling away

today there is no sun
i can't afford this beer
its cost a pittance more
than what they leave me now
when i give myself away

i drink it though
it brings a simple solace
taste, a dull to ache of bone
a settled stomach before i eat
simple pleasures i understand
and precious while they last
and i can invoke them in faithful habit

i'm lonely though
and sip an extra glass
before night's show

murphy still warbling away

early morning arousal is immoderate
the light has yet to find harshness
the bed has not lost its pungence
we alone waking face the world

my daughter asked today when i will die.
i wonder why she wants to know such things.
i wonder, as she answers, "when your hair turns white,"
why mine still clings to its dark brown state.

i wonder why i cling to younger ways
than my flesh is wont in its age to do.
i wonder why she wants to know such things,
and i answer, "life has death as its first sure date."

i ask my son if what he wants to be
is still the same as it was yesterday--
and it is, as engineer; and daughter wants,
as daughters will-- money, fame, a movie fate.

i look around, ask myself in quiet tones,
if its fear or boredom will get me first.
i wonder new my small-boy wondrous thoughts
of life, of love, of getting to stay up late--

to talk to women and to learn it all,
to learn how life can be short, full and sweet--
how death might come tomorrow night,
or be here right now, coming down the street.

newspapers pile around my chair
the lamp has two lights out
side table strewn with coffee cups
beer cans, magazines, junk mail
the sloth of summer taken

my children show no industry
content with what they find, they mind
their moment's interest, then lose
their thought to other things, in other rooms
they mimic what they see

that's fine, and so am i, in cluttered home
that's home -- that serves to set the stage
for siblings two to get to know the third
they are about up to getting mad
enraged at someone's taking charge
someone old and large

i keep my thoughts to self
and set a slow paced path
for reconciling loved ones
solved intricate as math

i read my morning papers
they slug their bed til ten
and wander in to nibble toast
and ask how i have been

just fine i always tell them
just fine now that you're here
and seemingly together
all together what i hold dear

murphy hovering above bustle of place

the slow grey morning sits outside.
i sit with coffee and no papers,
no handy escape to large events
and sweeping forces to fall into.

i sit with coffee and with my dreams
which persist in their reality.
i sit with a pen and blank paper,
a handy escape to sit inside.

the slow grey morning seeps away,
the full of cold is now inside.
there is no heat to luxuriate,
no sun of color to tan my hide.

the slow grey morning reflects my thoughts.
they're old and thick in their purpose,
and blocked by years, and blocked again;
but turning world insures a change.

and change is the dappled horse we ride
into the teeth of slow grey morning
time of grief at the cold inside
that time will bring; and now i tell.

i seek to dream and thus make real.
it's hard enough sometimes to tell
exactly what it is i feel
and not have those i love recoil.

i sit with coffee and this scribbled page.
i've spent this time to spend my rage
in squiggling lines and muted thoughts.
the slow grey morning becomes my me.

murphy reluctantly on square one

blood is only blood
my father would say
blood tells

i've tried to find my blood
in terms i understand
whole blood
half blood
breed

but
blood is only blood
in terms i understand

and my mother would nod
as if to say
but i don't tell
the secrets of the blood
i just know
that things will change
and blood be only blood
that bleeds

i've tried to find my blood
in terms i understand
of whole death
and final say---
and half-red blood
is only blood

murphy being partly irish

i sit in the scruffy apartment
and stare
i sit in the water's drip
in sink all piled with crud
i molder slowly in the cans
half eaten by the cats
and dirt
i sit to think of always
in this bedraggled place of curs

i hear a memory told
ground to this rough hewn meal
ground down below mere thinking
strewn in a stench of fools--
i sit in my mind's preferment

i remember all the people
with sullied wasted lives
half eaten by social mold
in the clutter of their things

the rich in all their splendor
are spent as the trash they cause

lesser men
stare at the bones
of waterdrips

murphy on an urban reservation visiting a woman gone mad

snuffle deep in the stink of me
i am an animal
who doesn't know how to live
burrowed deep in my sink of fears

i don't know how to live
as an animal
i dream i keep traffic flowing with lights
and words
my master's call
mechanical and learned

i can't free the traffic
in my mind so rational
now flowing down in curling sleep
to dreams of when i was
an animal

sniffing proud my complex world
i sort
i straighten form
and weave a cloak of being

but covered now i lock my doors
and hunker in my clothes
under blanket haired by cats
i smell collected fears
from dreams in twisted nights

i snuggle down to see
just how i've lost the life
remembered as parent's tears

a close repayment builds
slow as memory
i keep up with my arrears

i am an animal
who knows the whiff of freedom
born close in smell of night

murphy in early morning drinking instant coffee from a bowl

outside my protectments the wild things live
dining on small things as big things will do
eagles eat rabbits and the wolves caribou
the polar bear eats all the ocean will give

outside my mind is the wind and the cold
etching my thoughts with their presence sore felt
leading my dreams to your warmth which will melt
inturning fears so our futures will hold

since my home is now safe in that it feels
as you laughingly greet me, more and more warm
kind to each weakness and molding my strength

i look out my windows and past all the seals
note how their presence distances harm
gifts reaching arms appropriate length

murphy jumping through his usual hoops

the tongue i offer now will quiet speak
the song, the rhythmic sky are words of love
my tongue slow teases taste in ample proof
your lips grow full in softness ruby round

the song i sing transfigures our first parting
the taste, the then is sparrow on my breath
my words seal now as blood passed to another
disappears to flow alone remembered red

the sounds i hear remind of senses flowing
the lips of love retell the sad sweet dream
i love you alone of all the others

the softness now surrounds the dark of night
the lips of love in parting grow anew
the lips consume the all envelop me

murphy waking to cuddly fetal form

did i tell you today that i love you
were you with me in dreams i adore
are you holding as tightly as i am
holding close as the sea holds the shore

were you there when i saw you the last time
was the where with all proper esteem
do we dance in the palace as ballroom
or squeeze with our bellies asteam

are the stars out tonight in our dark thoughts
have dolphins slid soft next my bed
to nuzzle and touch as the morning
springs grey when it brings back the red

murphy alive, and kicking on purpose

until you've worn the horns
you don't know
i mean the gnarly things that strut
and pierce their way from out your head
you can't slow the world enough to hear the cheers

until you've worn the horns
of cuckold's creek
meandered in her flow
i mean the switchback swish
that loads the outer bed with silt
you haven't sense of upward stream

until you've pushed your bigger head
and laked and and pooled your way to overflow
i mean that understanding when it goes
and floods the outer plains
you'll never know the drowning fool

until you've wanted all you'll want
in life that's left, and quiet looked in doctor's face
i mean that awful knowing man
that pokes and prods
you haven't seen what that might mean

murphy squashed in the back of a vw beetle

the wind comes back, gusting, wintry cold
my spring wool shirt, unbuttoned, flaps
i give in to the wish for warmth to come
refuse a shiver, ignore dampness taking hold

the others here have shed their coats
and lost the sense of wild, the real out side
they shout and point to distant things
they hitchhike on the feral ride

their abandoned senses cough and reel
fill the floor with banana peel
which can't sustain sharp move away
from knife or club that's come to slay

they lack the net to catch the real
and keep it close so they can know--
they drop instead their heads, and kneel
accepting whatever their fate bestow

that's all right as far as i can see
now that i'm warm, protected, dry
i will not kill the likes of these
and they will never care, nor wonder why

i sit in peace this raw spring day
and wait for you to bring wildness in
a calculated stance, this sense of play
love captured whole, public in mild kissing

but that's not here, that was a there
today i keep the score in schemas sung
i mute my horn, its song burbling fair
i lick my spoon with telling tongue

murphy not long to be with children

a woven warp of dimness lies across my bed this night
discursive woof of print on page now snags my jaundiced eye
i, once more startled, try to find the inner cloth of me
the blanket warms my open pores, unbidden comes a sigh

the focussed gaze full inward turns as hands go slack in pose
the glasses chewed around their stems taste new of thoughts grown old
this night of nights alone i seek the truths arranged in rows
of mildewed words, and slackened days, of youth so recent sold

i track my mind, its memories hold within my guts of fear
i hold to life which slips away so slowly beer by beer
a book in bed and shelves still full await my palsied hand

i see the buck, the dauntless lad, who fought the heedless foe
who backed his thoughts with blood and bone while always stubbing toe
who clung to words though their porous web was always seeping sand
is this the way, recumbent way, he finally proves a man

murphy a bit confused as to the form of his endeavor

the spring holds back from its promise of warmth
as wind still bites with its northern roots
i hurry with shoulders hunched against the cold
to food and you, candles, talk, simple things
that open like yellow roses in a heated room

tension dims with the sipping of wine
the talk grows fevered, fresh and free
it leads me on and i chase my thought
i wander to place of unexpected me

you lead me there as you always do
hearing what i haven't yet learned to say
showing what i hardly dare to wish
touching me lightly in your serious way

the winter is gone despite its chilling leave
the growth to come shows in fuzzy tip of hedge
streets surrendered to cabs and scurrying men
rushing somewhere searching for the likes of you

i'm leaving instead to talk with children
ready for their spring and first warm taste
of life, and how it all rushes away
except when time forgets its parting haste
and makes a love, an inviting place

murphy patient and happy in his chinese bar

memory is this body's trap of sense
snapping shut on tape of inward sway
to set its own awareness fence
that sieves impending fullness of the day

forget again and then be wrong once more
the past does bite with all its hidden code
there is no knowing not the reason why
just that the new is gnarly new again

it hurts as often as a knot will tie
the heart again will in its good time heal
that's what i know within my open eye

the ones in close know when it is to know
to see small wounds slow, slow bleeding still
the ones in fruit know not the time they'll go

murphy writing slow sad songs for the basso profundo of his mind

i wonder if the middle of the stream
gives the proper down hill slide to dream
the rhythm of the richness of the ride

i stagger down the middle of the street
quite vainly hope that my strides are neat
enough to get me back to where i hide

i seldom catch the volume of my thought
til it is over, snagged tight, and caught
my copy cat that notates talk sits by my side

i often find myself in the middle of these days
staring obliquely at the sun, its sparkling rays
a verdant trap that i allow to grow inside

i float as leaf within the belly of my rhyme
that flashes up to videos of time
that cut apart the wholeness of the ones who died

murphy venturing out to see what's left

around this bend, here, now
there is a pool
a small eddy shifting sand
a thick purity of motion
a clarity of passion

around this problem ahead
there is a rush
a squeezing speed as arrow
a movement solid in intent
a calm only of purpose

around this proper place
there is a fence
an in and out of feeling
a slap of bared chest
an angled run of frenzy

around this heart of mine
there is a beat
a thumping gush of gifts
a reddening stool of light
a steady conn of helm

murphy under a tamarind tree waiting for justice

the litany of birds at dawn
the crosswinding trills distinct
 how direct seem my aimless thoughts
 one, two, then three and four
 not all at once, not eyes, not ears
 a plodding slog to heaven

the ache of color branding western sky
the evolving shades pulsing with life
 how simple are my fondest dreams
 soft, warm, and dry, with water sweet
 not grandiose and rich, just snug
 a nestled ease from fearing

the exploding tongue loosing all its wets
the eddyful swirls mixing their souls
 how frugal are my fueling needs
 fresh and green, meat and starch
 not candied up with cream, just food
 a peppery fest of being

the silvering touch of full grown moon
the shivering shadows in flow of breeze
 how few my onward worries
 teeth, guts and ticker, the gripes of old
 small aches that ease with movement, with grace
 a savored text unfolding

murphy having quit his day job for good

to stop the chatter of the words takes time
great dollops bring an awkward mind
then the need to tell will slip away
behind the glare of what it means

to still the spirit of the wind won't do
great spirits have their wills not wants
for the day requires a final deed
before the task begins of moving scenes

to search the clatter of the social way
small sippings of the downward seep
leads the mind to nodder soft in dreams
beneath the pillow's plow of sleep

to bring the quiver of the new strung bow
small tremors of the muscled hand
means the aim must never shift its hold
become the fleshy flume of now

murphy in his dotage still worrying about his children

he returned home to see
himself as he was once
but stealthily
as if to see
the backside of all his fronts

murphy laughing with his father