

## OTHER POEMS

### FOR DIANE TURNING 36

in sight of really the simplest things,

all matter folding into

& out of

spirit? where the imagination roams  
never finding an outer edge

how language expands & expands till it lands  
on the branch of a winter tree,

i know it's a bird.

i am troubled, always & forever, so what.

i am, for the moment, a man

with a glass of wine

& you to think of, beautifully

your age

& the page is filling with  
something like fragrance,

your  
emanation or

i call it goodness

(i have to say it this way)

my sister,

one who sees birds

calls me out to look

## A VIEW FROM BARRY MCKINNON'S DECK, SECHELT

i was just working & thought  
the world's in a awful state

what can any of us do about it

i just read: "to save your soul  
& lose the world"

pointless

private grace states

out there grey twilight  
October fog

light behind growing dark, the trees  
standing black

a violet blue

i light the kerosene lamp

the charcoal is glowing red  
in a moment i put on the chicken

this is my last beer  
& i don't care

i've been here six weeks  
i'm not afraid of the dark  
& being alone, how  
to be alone

no poems, not that, i think about you,  
i thought of everyone, those

i've been close enough, souls

why go on living except  
for the promise

i'd forgotten how it's quiet, ate too fast

the simplicity of the mind, the mind

music from 1694

all the way here

## YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE

lay the cloth on the turntable with a weight  
gets the speed right, somewhere between  
45 & 33 rpms, it's only a guess.

rain falling, sort of waiting,  
it's a habit i can't break nor keep  
perfectly.

the songs so loud i hear other sounds  
long enough, make of them  
preparations, like schemes.

don't mistake what is said  
with what i say.

if i hear the rain  
you'll never know  
or this music, in the attempt.

it's light on a clear page absorbing  
the blue liquid line  
leaving the rest erased

you could start anywhere & end up with nothing

there's a name for this state,  
my intention from the beginning  
not to intrude  
feeling anything,

the pleasure i want  
a record of made known, a human face form.

a hand with a pen in it.  
nothing else

## THE OUTSIDE

we were outside, hiking,  
it wasn't recreation

this was years ago & the world  
was natural  
to the poems of Gary Snyder, Lew Welch

who else hiked  
the Coast mountains

many made the trail we were on  
but they knew  
that wasn't the point

the weight of the pack, legs  
stronger, this state of mind

is not easily described by elevation

height was important &  
to a certain extent  
pace

we had left places  
but it wasn't escape

there was no summit, i remember  
eating snow, crisp  
sunlight

i remember being outside

FOR THE BIRDS (season this with changes)

enough money for a bottle of J&B  
upon returning i pour  
a large glass, some ice,  
& read poems, just a few inky scribblings,  
add a word here & there,  
cross out a line, or see

it goes somewhere else, follow it  
out the window, looks  
like a bird, eyes full of twilight

i cross 7 years in a twinkling,  
there is the harbour  
& the word arbour  
or was it  
ardour, it is now

the announcement of Spring

or an exercise in attention, a flight  
for its own sake, let it  
go, let it all go.

soon i'm overtaken, what luck, it's dusk

Spring comes on  
like a cup slowly tipped, the last  
light spills across the page

the pen swims in a kind of shadowy  
wave, i can hardly see  
& don't care

through the open window  
the odour of the new  
earth, a new moon, returning

a kind of renewal anyway  
for the mind  
contemplating another J&B, heavenly daze

"intense pleasure  
of having been there, seen . . ."

& reading the intro to *Sunflower Splendour*  
i get this about poetry:

"to restore to man's mind  
the ideals of justice, of hope, of truth,  
of mercy, which else  
(left to the support of daily life  
& its realities) would languish"

languor, "for want of  
what is found there"

i would, at least, attempt  
an extravagant memory  
every now & then, a state of mind  
equally with what i feel, even  
if you never "know  
what i know"

i only ask for the chance  
to be completely accidental, appearing  
in your life, not presumed

it says so right here,  
though i can't see anymore

i'll type it up tomorrow  
in the midst of . . .

i forget what comes next  
as if i ever knew.

what kind of bird was that  
anyway



## THE LAST STRIP SHOW

there isn't any elsewhere  
now we're here, ashamed, watching  
this woman bend over  
showing the huge scar high  
on the back of her thigh

not dancing, her body  
lunges across the stage, staggers  
down drunk or drugged

perhaps acting, pulling off  
the blouse without pretending  
mystery or nakedness

the music breaks  
against our heads like fists  
mad & stupid, it's clear

the part she plays is slave  
but these contortions speak  
a different mastery

look, i'll spread open  
until there's nothing to see

the scar is yours for free

what is your pleasure  
worth, 8 bucks an hour  
i'll writhe here  
in the bad air & red lights

flashing on the faces of  
the other men, dumb eyes  
staring like struck

& after there's howling

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barry is fired Pierre tells us  
Joy just phoned,  
now 4 cold beer  
from the Avalon, at 12:00  
the insurance runs out, the RCMP  
in the parking lot, 11:54  
the lights flash  
off & on down Marine Drive, there's  
money somewhere & now  
like a curfew it's  
all meanwhile, i can fall  
into a world of my own with  
dream edges & alcohol  
but why do this alone?  
it's real to come back here  
& drink with you, tomorrow  
no money. no tomorrow  
enough now for 4 beer,  
while i count the change  
the time's  
running out  
now it's 12:00  
& the RCMP turn right while i  
take the short cut  
home, the beer in the bag  
how could they cost \$4.60  
by the time i get home  
no insurance  
& Joy phones with the details



ENGLISH BAY a draft

behind us orange lights, traffic  
intersection of Davie & Denman

& there, 50 yards away, night falling

the moonlight flecks the calm  
of english bay

others stroll, we stroll  
into the fading light (not knowing each other)  
but aware of certain distinctions

an etiquette, almost perfect, civil

an ideal i would write, a transparency  
overlaid on the actual scene,  
many transparencies

then i'd lift them carefully away, whole  
something like an object  
whose outer edge continually, measurably  
slips & changes  
as the lights shift, reforming the present  
each word slipping through the others

the whole held in mind

i would read into it, looking for something  
i hadn't noticed.

in this version surfaces, one is a dream, others  
walk the beach at moonrise  
separately or groups  
nothing larger, what  
would that be, not a crowd

clouds over Bowen Island glow,  
a community?

at some point between  
this real world or one proposed

i'm walking with you, ice cream cone  
in one hand, talking

not analysis exactly  
but where are we.

a man playing bagpipes  
walks back & forth

it had been so quiet,  
like in certain movies when the sound  
is turned off  
then, for dramatic effect, something crashes or screams  
& the scene, the drama, its world  
resolves.

bagpipes in the gloaming.  
i wanted to stand around, listen

the atmosphere in this zone  
between city & the water traps sound, we can't hear  
that traffic

the bagpipes fade as if slowly turned off

we walk on  
an asphalt path between grass & sand  
some young men yelling, drunk  
nearer the water, by some rocks, no words  
some kind of anger? muffled

next to us a woman, around fifty,  
shopping cart, the bottle in brown paper  
in her hand and another  
in the cart, i can't tell, this is  
something like memory

everything is as it should be

i'm not duplicating events, the syntax  
rippling in the waves, not read  
so much as looked into  
depending on whose eyes  
reflected

it would see them, but deep, time  
would stand for stillness,  
it does not move

we move onto the sand, walk toward the water  
it's ocean, high tide calm

we watch the heron's performance

linger in the twilight,  
a lovely touch of silence  
high on our list of things  
to look at & take

to heart  
who else sees it, parallel  
to the water & landing, long wings

these moments accumulate with attention

and exist as quickly

i know we look for them,  
almost a task  
as if someone is asking  
don't leave it out

what will they make of us

now, we're beside the water, i reach down  
stick in my hand  
for the taste, salt & something more  
i've done this before.

we walk along the beach  
moonlight on the water follows  
all the way to the moon  
as real as anything we'd make of it.

                    behind us orange lights & traffic, towers  
of the West End

if we'd come here to commonly celebrate  
this sight,

but we're good at the dis-continuous  
present

i've been taught it, how to make a way through  
a path to the ocean  
with you

the others among us, not known, but that first  
we think well of them

                                    expect the moonlight  
in their eyes  
                    & a whole world.

the ocean, no path through stays long, a boat's wake  
gone as we watch

the place in the water  
where my hand went in

i was drowning here 35 years ago  
(my mother pulled me out)  
scars on my left hand where the point  
of a sharp log went through,

i hear them calling me out of the water—  
same trees on Pacific Avenue.

the water, the lights, the moonlight  
shapes in the soft air, people moving  
exactly into place

as i look up  
were you waiting for me, your arm  
is around me as i stand

sounds in the street  
we walk toward  
word for word