

# **slights**

**my new tiny poems from here not there**

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Cover photo: I took this photo from a distance (thus the graininess) at Woodard Bay in August, 2019. That day there were at least a thousand of these “slight” birds skittering around by the water, sanderlings on a migratory stop to rest and feed before heading further south.

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## **prefatory note:**

My career as a poet has been a series of discontinuities, starts and stops, sometimes long ones, dramatic changes in style and substance that (I see now in retrospect) emerged at the slipping fault-lines in my life cycle. Poetry has always been my adaptation medium, the one that both reflects and helps me cope with—it is by nature such a disciplined mode of discourse—the sometimes-chaos I feel at those transitional moments. I write a lot of poems in those interims and they tend to slow or stop when things settle. I quit “submitting” (what a terrible fate for a poem) poems for publication about 25 years ago, a combination of frustration with and loss of interest in that process, yes, but also seemingly, to me, an irrelevancy to what that ongoing work was for in the general fabric of my lifeline. I just write what comes to me when needs-must, then stop when it stops.

I became both acclimated to and comfortable with that erratically staccato process. But some life changes are so dramatic they require not just adaptation, but from-the-ground-up-relearning. My post-retirement move west in 2018 was, for me, one such, after a lifetime spent in the Northeast, a long career in the academy at large universities in big cities. Not only were my discursive systems acclimated to that ambience, but so were my perceptual systems, which is, of course, always the case, the latter invisibly foundational to the former. When a change is great enough, as mine was, that latter collapses first, inevitably taking down with the former in

the process. I write about this dynamic in a narrative way in *First, Summer*, my first book of personal essays after the move.

The Northwest—not just the flora and the fauna, my “natural home,” so majestic, lush, and oversized, but also the culture, so laid-back and gentle—looked and felt alien to me, such a creature of my invisible lifelong habits was I. Olympia is also small, more like the kind of east coast beach towns I remember from my youth, which don’t exist there in that form any longer, than the “big city.” I loved everything about it. But I had such difficulty both “seeing” and “saying” what I was witnessing here. The ongoing process of coming to terms with all of that, for someone like me, so attuned to and dependent on language to mediate both my internal and my social life, felt akin to learning a new language in a foreign setting, from, as I said, the ground up.

It was transacted in large part via these little experiments, “my new tiny poems from here not there”—which were at the outset more like Zen koans sometimes than the kind of poems I’d been writing in my final years in Pittsburgh. They began to erupt out of the blue right after I moved to Olympia, another part of my general downsizing process I assumed. I didn’t think much of them at first, didn’t even call them poems. Some of them were actually texts or emails sent to friends, struggles to put together a few words that made sense of what I was seeing here—more like placeholders, I thought, until the next wave of actual poems might come along. But I came to like them quite a lot, for

their concision, their clarity, their sonorous discipline, their subtle, often cryptic mystery. Over time they got longer and more complex, shifting subject matter, but always maintaining that same general tenor and style. And that's as close as I can come right now to explaining the "new," the "tiny" and the "here not thereness" of this book.

Now it is three+ years into our adventure together, me, this place, and these poems, and I am feeling more and more at ease with it all, as if I may be near enough to functional "fluency" in both my perceptual and linguistic systems to feel a genuine citizenship in my now home here. I could be wrong, so often am, but this book, after countless additions, updates and revisions, seems to me to be done, happy with itself, as I am, because of it, with myself, so deeply grateful for the gifts these poems, and whatever spirit that inspired them, have given to me, day after day, month after month, year after year, all for free, a freedom I have gradually inherited from them by some strange and delightful alchemical admixture along the way.

**part one: tiny poems open eyes**

1.

slight  
poems slide  
side  
wise  
right on  
by  
so

2.

salmon  
seethe  
one  
seal swirls  
beneath  
water  
boils flesh  
flaps hap-  
less between  
teeth I  
    deeply  
breathe

3.

might be  
trees  
the sea  
a breeze  
might free  
me



4.

saw this a few  
times with you  
so happy to do  
sky so blue

5.

bare feet feel  
everything  
  
so sweep

6.

today  
in watershed park  
my lens like yours  
found light with dark

to see how light is made  
seek shade

7.

star  
light left long  
gone  
still shining  
here

not

8.

fall  
flowers feel full  
finally

9.

every day  
advance  
this to that

what's left  
behind  
decides that  
itself  
by not saying  
stay

what stays  
is me turning  
into  
more me

if you want  
to be  
more me  
then  
say  
stay

10.

call  
me paul  
joel lowell

I'll call  
myself raul  
and ride bulls

11.

don't be  
fooled dare  
dark-for-real  
stares  
softly not scarily  
tears small swatches off  
edges of everything  
how they waft  
leaf-like still  
air rocking  
down

stop by watch  
long a while  
as you want  
this lovely longing  
growing stronger  
stay with it  
lovingly  
if you want

know  
when to go  
though

rocking soft-still  
lovely lovingly  
scarily  
dark-for-real  
dares tears  
everything  
everything

12.

those two  
boats  
motor fast  
sail slow  
one  
sky sea blue  
mountain  
still never  
moves

12a

two  
boats float  
sails rolled  
stock-

still one  
sky sea blue  
there  
never moves

13.

today I am  
nothing

next to

soft  
smoke wafts  
this way

canada fires  
they say  
can't see or smell  
myself so  
smoky inside  
sky  
high I fly  
through to  
that side  
blue  
way-much-too-much  
blue found  
no way down  
through  
filmy smoke  
flimsy  
clouds twirling  
next to  
blue  
next to  
nothing  
next to  
me  
next to  
next

14.

they all call  
me paul  
small  
thank me always  
no reason at all  
weather  
perfect  
eternally  
I love here  
everything  
even  
me

wish all  
for you too  
this birthday  
perfect  
(except being called  
paul!)  
always

thank you

15.

someone says  
"love"  
so what

is it  
isn't  
see  
say  
stay  
away

days come  
go  
"love"  
so someone

says so  
what

16.

remember  
when  
to open  
close don't  
forget

remem-  
ber now  
how now  
feels  
like don't  
forget

17.

hi

high

I fly

by

bye



**part two: tiny poems go for a walk**

## notes for walk-taking

1.

before there was anything  
god took a walk  
creating exactly what  
she saw along the way

2.

to see something  
be nothing  
until something  
sees back

3.

a walk is a particular  
assortment of things  
waiting for you  
to meet them

4.

a walk  
takes up  
no time

may make up  
time for you  
to take up  
walking

5.

feet are neat  
no hollow  
mouth  
to swallow

follow

6.

eyes wise  
so don't say  
what they  
don't see

7.

unbearable  
how much light  
knows once  
it learns  
to walk

8.

while you walk  
nothing moves  
but you  
with you

9.

if time runs out  
to meet you  
reach out  
to greet it

if time slows down  
hold out  
your hand  
and help it

hold you  
back

10.

those gulls  
in the road  
lull me  
no hurry

white boats  
sail off  
wing tips

stop  
where air  
starts  
wind whirls

## fall x 2

1.

fall is here  
like there is  
fall is

except  
so  
there

acres of ochres  
soaked  
stiff with drizzle

blonde blades  
splayed  
layers

numberless umbers  
tumbling one  
by one

by one big one  
just wafted  
by soft

on my left  
so slo-mo  
right there

to pluck  
from the air  
a feather

but let it  
settle let  
all things

settle  
that let  
me settle

saffron stacks  
dump trucks  
of pumpkins

russet potato  
peels  
in piles

cucumber  
slices strewn  
sidewise

some  
singles  
straggle

avenues  
of passersby  
hustle

husks  
it is brusque  
dusky

pie pan big-leaves  
five finger  
wide hands wave

cookie cutter  
vine-maples  
butter dough

baked brown  
eight lobes  
strobe starlight

overhead  
overhanging  
boughs still stunned

suns and suns  
galaxies fixed  
forever in

still air  
until . . .  
gravity

small cedar  
decked  
at branch tips

yellow  
ornaments all  
holiday

ready  
not yet though  
today

fall is here  
still  
like there is

fall is  
except so

2.

air weighty  
with water  
makes wakes

on its way  
by my face  
laden

with more  
and more air  
so there

as I am  
walking  
so there

so there



**downtown 5/20/19**

lilac blossoms fade  
frayed blades  
the flower  
that is its color  
almost not lilac  
now wilted but  
still

“look, this is Mitch  
he had no interest  
in me two  
weeks ago  
now hahaha”

she says pointing  
to her phone  
for friends

the morning  
moves I don't  
the boardwalk  
walks I don't  
gulls squawk  
kids gawk  
people talk  
I walk  
by  
don't  
I

**woodard bay 5/20/19**

a walk is one step  
repeated once  
deep shade straight  
ahead made for me  
a barred owl  
woos me  
wattled sunlight  
dazzles dampens  
eyes delighted  
try receiving  
rotting logs  
all knobs and knots  
the bay laid out  
glass the past  
blue water  
blue sky  
one cormorant  
glides silent  
out then one  
in breath  
out then  
in walk  
in then out  
a walk is  
one step  
repeated once

more

**walking by budd bay on sunday evening**

maybe a million  
tiny fry breach:  
rain drops

a flagrant leaf  
dawdles:  
no plagiarist

shoals of shiners  
shimmy sidewise:  
shimmer

one jellyfish  
undulates:  
sun-stunned

I take this  
step forever:  
without

## **hairy woodpecker**

path picking  
I walk  
right behind

scruffy pate red  
jumps jaunty  
just enough ahead  
to be . . .

then sudden  
flight  
claws to trunk  
waiting for  
me

to pass

## **freudian slippers**

two ravens  
slide-step up  
the rail  
sidle to  
each other  
eyes wide

seagull screeches  
from pole-top  
wings flap  
without flying

fat seal goes  
down slowly  
grips fish  
flesh  
between lips

woodpecker  
pokes pounds  
picks specks  
out of  
hard bark

**first snow**

plump junco  
skip-jumping  
up the path  
tail-pumping

a quick flick  
of neck  
and peck  
to pick seed

you know only  
what you need  
to know about  
this snow  
don't you

**rain**

just ended  
hemlocks bend  
boughs low  
weighted wet  
friendly hands  
extended

beneath  
I deeply  
bow  
reach up  
slender  
fingers inter-  
mingle so  
tenderly  
with mine

## **sunday prayer**

everything I write  
a little  
poem today  
including this  
for you

miss  
lotus blossom  
on my path  
mellifluous  
cherubim

and mister  
mustachioed  
magician  
arriving sidewise  
greeting gladly  
godly



**tiny**

spider climbs  
a white  
tile wall

just a speck  
minutes to  
move inches

unlike me  
unlike you

no matter  
how hard  
we try

will never  
climb  
that wall

## **I walk toward**

woodard bay  
water so still  
borrows sky's  
pale blue  
a few clouds  
float by I  
believe if I  
keep walking  
five more  
miles a foot  
or so above  
the water  
all the way  
to the tree  
line I'll turn  
into nothing  
but pale blue  
sky a few  
clouds floating  
by anything  
and everything  
but myself

## **a pittsburgh dream**

fallen leaves  
street-blown  
cobblestone

cloud-whorls  
water-swirls  
swoop-slope  
bridge-works

live music  
lost cat  
on his way  
a handful  
of orange tulips  
to meet  
maybe you

**pst**

my time is

now

not

your time

probably

**part three: tiny poems dream and cry**

## **the morning of the poem**

(thanks Dave for reminding me to reread Schuyler)

. . . like me  
in the head  
except fed  
by New York  
bred with big deals  
O'Hara scary funny  
daring one day  
after another  
into the sentence  
until it falls apart  
not knowing where  
Lana Turner is  
to start asking  
Ashberry cross-legged  
on stage so-too-  
smooth-aloof to move  
shiny tan shoes  
poking out all over  
might as well be  
magnolias  
in the mirror  
flashy flying  
sky so high he can't  
make words out of it  
that make sense  
Koch who "could teach  
a golf ball how to  
write pantoums"  
whatever they are  
all meeting somewhere

so swanky you almost  
met Eliot there  
striped bass  
tranquilizers  
days in bed  
dead

instead  
Forest City  
no blare-bling  
or poet not one  
these three  
big "Bs" though  
Bunga rotund  
lumbering-laughing  
chatting up three girls  
behind the bent down  
center field snow-fence  
ball drizzles so slo-mo  
into oblivion in tall grass  
right beside him  
I chase from left field  
wing it all the way in  
great arm no bat  
had to quit that game  
Bones so boring  
shoulders folding forward  
a question mark  
betting I can't hit the same shot  
I just made from the far corner  
and I did and he says  
you should try out for the team  
but I knew all shot  
no dribble sure  
from 30 feet  
bad to the board  
Buddha jacked up

from all that lifting  
arms two hams  
he can barely carry  
in front of his waist  
da play's da ting  
wherein I'll catch  
da conscience  
o' da king

I mean head like  
your head like  
which ones you loved  
took everything  
they wanted  
still left everything  
still there behind  
that blind  
like believing  
saying you pray  
but don't  
is all the prayer  
god needs  
to hear  
to care  
like thinking  
words  
like words like  
words thinking  
is all it takes  
to make  
anyone stay  
please stay  
please just one  
more day  
finding out late  
no never



not there  
here now  
all these years  
I sit and read  
the morning of the poem  
yours mine  
same thing  
chuckle snarky  
sad bottomless  
pit of stomach  
drops down  
eyes drift to  
the window huge  
cypress outside  
such wide wings  
waving waiting wanting  
to embrace  
but never  
amazed at you  
and me too  
no reason why  
never it seems  
any reason

why

## **starting to write again**

un-words stir  
tangles of language  
wait for braids

ways I may say  
what was afraid  
to be made

page after page  
turning sager  
gray cyphers

click click click

I love  
everything  
most

when nothing  
is just  
nothing

not  
nothing left  
bereft

and please no  
not nothing  
more in store

just what luck is  
when it's still  
dumb nothing

**“I dreamed I saw St. Augustine”**

Bob Dylan

day breaks  
I ache  
my heart makes  
no sense

cut glass bowl  
just slipped from my hand  
aghast I stand  
silent  
for a second  
the floor approaching

not yet  
shattered  
that future  
according to Augustine  
cut glass whole

still

shatters  
always  
the present

cut glass cuts  
according to me

then eternal  
not now  
a million pieces  
to be swept

all the women  
I'm in love with  
not here  
now  
fear

fills  
daybreak  
glass half  
empty  
but for one

they say ghosts are souls  
trapped on this side

of the glass  
waiting

for day to break

not entirely sure  
here or there  
not yet not now

both  
always

the mourning widow's veil  
all there is  
barely there  
between

no either side  
just veil

UFO researchers say  
a disproportionate number of abductees  
have hazel eyes  
39% compared to 8%

I have hazel eyes

why my day breaks  
achingly

these eyes of mine  
they are lonely  
lonely  
from wanting you

as a kid  
hypnagogic sleep  
unable to move

cry out  
nothing

buried  
in a body  
on a spaceship

they say up there  
it's all about sex  
how they take  
what they want  
to make what they want

send you back  
slack  
satiated  
oblivious

I don't believe  
any of that

not yet

but why did that stiff sleep stop  
when they fried me  
unfruitful

no use to anyone  
who wants to make  
someone

even aliens  
gone elsewhere  
for bad seed

I wake  
          hardwood waiting  
          day breaks  
          glass

dropped  
no use to anyone  
who wants

just pieces  
swept up  
even me

**“ . . . a dream I can call my own ”**

The Clovers

thick black  
candles split

sex-calm  
wandering

white walls  
block all  
doors not

morning

**waking**

aching still  
wind wails  
inside wild

wicked  
sky's white moon  
eye never cries

why



**tonight**

heart bleak  
starts blank  
beats black  
lack locks  
dark stars

streak  
no tracks  
back

**song**

my singing ringing  
in my ears  
what I want is a body  
not mind  
not mine

**tonight**

I might  
not turn  
light  
out  
but invite  
dark  
in

**skin deep**

her breasts  
pressed to dress  
test eyes  
wired to wander  
that way

careless flesh  
arrests  
for what I want

not to look down

**for Hank Williams**

Olympic ridges  
charcoal  
cardboard-flat  
no snow  
so slow  
horizon eyes  
water between  
choppy steel  
washboard

tonight I hope  
I will still  
be so lonesome  
I could cry

## **mid-night**

blind birds  
fly by  
wind-riven  
sky I can't  
sleep  
through

your tirade  
intolerable  
even in dream  
I push hard  
you fall  
back to bed  
broken

two dreams  
later I'm making  
love with  
someone you  
hate in  
that bed

**if only**

to be lonesome  
own some

phones  
I mean

bones  
I mean

**spring 'n all**

always so small  
how it starts  
all balled up at bud tip  
null space  
waiting to embrace  
what promises  
to displace it



**fall**

all the alders  
call paul  
paul

nothing  
changes

colors  
but me

**oops**

one  
brown  
  leaf  
loops  
down

**water**

so still  
viridian veneer

evergreen  
verdigris mirrored

buffleheads back  
now  
bobbing

**chit-chit**

little bird  
in the fern  
I start to  
step in

flush you  
to flit

but walk  
by why  
should I  
frighten you  
to flight  
just to delight  
my eye

**these**

three cedars  
greet me  
gleeful

stern firs  
stand firm  
worry-furrowed

**woodard bay 10/26/19**

tight lipped  
wave tips  
wind whipped  
white caps slap  
shore more  
and more

sky so  
blue pure  
sun blind  
sure eyes  
blink  
tear wet  
salt stung

Rainier's tip  
squints ice  
white over  
ragged green  
tree tops

## **nodding to descartes**

Amanda stands in an avalanche of  
language

I abide wide landslides of silence

between us clean sheets wait to be folded

I think    I am

too old to think  
straight

when Amanda holds my hand  
to her heart  
another landslide starts

**waiting forever for nothing  
is half the fun of it**

the birds start up at first  
hint of light  
silence to cacophony  
just like that

thumb-sized red tulips  
stems just cut  
float notes  
untethered

I lie quietly and listen  
all day I will  
lie quietly to anyone  
who will listen



**two sutras too stupid not to be true**

cold butter on hot toast:  
duty is futile

peel a ripe papaya:  
beauty is useless

**cedar branches**

swoop          droop  
                  and

little  
                  leaves

loop

**who's who**

I'm nobody—  
I know  
some some-  
body  
I said  
(to myself)

wondering—  
what difference  
“no”—to “some”  
made (to my-  
self)  
so kept—walking  
without—

## **the wind is**

a treetop  
torrent pouring  
over stones  
roaring crowd  
heard from a car  
driving by  
drone of tires  
over pavement  
two lovers on  
the sidewalk  
about to kiss  
coveting white  
noise to hide  
what they hope  
to say only  
to each other  
the voices of all  
my ancestors  
right beside  
my right ear  
risen from eternal  
silences to sing  
chorally the only  
word I need  
to hear right  
now to breathe  
where air can  
carry it to treetops  
quivering ever  
so slightly  
wind's fingertips  
caressing every  
single delicate  
leaf at once

## **watch**

how clouds billow  
collide without  
violence yield  
everything  
they have to  
one another

when sky goes  
blank blue  
they wait near-  
by quietly  
without fear  
or loss

when you are  
old as I am  
rise up with clouds  
where they gather  
speak gently  
if at all

body aching  
to behold  
what rolls  
so fast past  
liquid lips  
in empty air

ear tuned to  
hear what wind  
whispers so  
soft white  
noise almost  
no sound at all

plaintive voices  
explaining  
what it means  
to vanish  
that way into  
one another

the opposite of me  
the opposite of you  
the opposite of separate  
the opposite of afraid  
the opposite of wait  
the opposite of words

**the form (says dave)**

seems light  
and airy  
yet some  
so heart  
wrenching  
scary

**nothing but these cold arms**

1.

stiff wind  
whips wave  
tips raw

the only loss  
from fare thee well  
to farewell is thee

my dear

and somehow  
me clutching  
nothing but  
these cold arms

2.

the bay so  
gray today  
grave voices  
quaver over  
washboard  
water say  
stay there  
if you want

or walk  
this way

into nothing but  
these cold arms



3.

when there is  
nothing left  
ahead

stand on the last  
spit of land  
long as you like

stop or step  
either way

nothing

but these cold arms

**here**

while I lie  
in this silence  
waiting  
all that dark  
gathered  
to greet  
cherish  
carry me  
there  
where I  
cannot fathom  
more than this moment  
fulsome fathering  
nothing  
but love this  
moment  
alone with  
this moment

what is lost  
never found  
taken unreturned  
learned  
forgotten  
mourned  
yearned for  
past its last  
moment  
lasting forever  
fixed in memory  
what life becomes  
in eternal stillness  
instead of . . .

today a great flock  
of forty herons  
rose at once  
from one side  
of the bay  
together  
to settle  
in bare trees  
on the other side  
found souls  
crossing

never to say  
why just flying  
up like that  
over dark water  
here to there  
to settle  
in bare trees  
there on their  
way

to wait with me  
for the first moment  
of light  
of first light  
of light  
unremembered  
the flight  
of birds  
on their way  
to whatever world  
will stay with them  
here

while I wait  
for the same fate

bearing  
what cannot be  
born again

harbor those  
walking lost  
with little lights  
in the deep night  
carrying  
cherished  
memories  
of love

lost

how I loved  
try now  
to find words  
to guide me to  
sounds to announce  
my arrival or passing  
a line that will last  
past this moment's  
single wing beat  
not question  
or answer  
just a gathering  
of greatness  
that has waited  
belated missing  
its mark  
this moment  
alone with me  
alone  
in the dark  
that has gathered  
for years

here

this silence  
I lie in  
waiting

**so snow**

has  
no place

t  
o  
g  
o  
b  
u t  
d o  
w  
n n  
o w  
f  
a  
l  
l  
s  
i l  
f r o s y  
u u

t w w o  
a h a f  
l i l  
l t l i  
e s t

so they said  
it rarely snows here

now two

f  
e  
e  
t

o  
f

i  
t

so-so-so-so

c-c-c-c

o-o-o-o

l-l-l-l

d-d-d-d

**part four: tiny poems shelter in place**



## table for one

a quiet mind  
is kind

find

one

if it's not  
yours

yet

in

vite it

in

for simple  
social dist

an

c e d

in

n e r

un

wind

## clouds out my back window

1.

vapor  
paper-thin

one layer  
gauze

sheer  
off white  
veneer

next to  
nothing

next to  
intrusions  
of blue

still enough  
weight  
of water

to somehow  
drizzle

right behind  
my house

now  
wow

blue  
wins

sun streams  
down

instead

2.

cccc  
llllllllll  
oooooooooo  
uuuuuu  
dddd

s?  
////////| | | | \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \

so **LOUD**  
what light  
gets by  
is

s  
o  
l  
i  
t  
t  
l  
e

even eye  
might not  
get by

if  
eye blink

eye am  
eye think  
therefore

soso

s  
o  
s  
o  
l  
i  
t  
t  
l  
(m)e

3.

one  
puffy white  
one

dawdles  
flaunts  
fluff

erupting  
tufts  
of more  
white  
slomo  
popcorn

that blue  
haired  
lady sky

slips  
piece by  
piece

between  
her lips

watching  
some old  
movie

I somehow  
cannot see

from my side  
of the wide  
white screen

4.

i  
am not

i

i am

not  
not  
i

allowed  
to name  
that cloud

or that  
one

even one  
that says  
straight

call me  
that

is what  
i  
am

not

5.

there

the rare  
pink tint  
skinny fingered

daring dawn  
to linger

I fawn  
want to  
fondle  
fondly

but

it is way  
too

s  
l  
i  
m  
f  
l  
i  
m  
s  
y

and now so  
gone

I wonder  
was it  
ever

like love  
when it  
leaves

even  
there

## clouds out my car window

driving  
down  
state street

that bank  
of clouds  
afloat like  
breeze-puffed  
boat sails

taut-flappy  
duck cloth

moving  
                  schooners  
over  
hilltop  
treetops  
on the back side  
of budd bay

fills  
me  
up  
till

I too  
billow  
with  
well  
being



## **why**

are high  
white clouds  
always flush  
to the horizon  
side of  
woodard bay  
air lush  
with them

so  
slo  
mo  
I must

stop

breathing

to see  
motion

great freighters  
waiting  
to offload  
cotton balls  
one at a time

until  
they are  
all  
gone

never hovering  
over head

as if  
right there  
where I  
stand

can only  
be empty  
sky

so blue  
so  
blue

so so  
so so  
blue

**night**

turns a  
blind eye  
crazy

black  
mane  
rain  
slaked

slicked  
side  
wise with  
wind

## **night rain**

rain static  
attic rafters

so gray  
all day

less alone  
am I

since your  
goodbye

heartbeat  
    misses  
when rain  
kisses

attic rafters  
static

electricity  
don't pity

the fool  
I am not

since your  
goodbye

alone with  
all this

beating  
of my heart

**if**

that seagull flaps  
only one wing

will it fly  
in circles

or flop  
right  
down

I need to know  
like right  
now

in case  
she makes me

break a wing

**tea time**

pinky finger

pointing  
out

the next  
spot

to nap

**pay phone**

if only I  
had a dime

for every  
time

I almost  
call you

sweetheart  
but don't

have  
a dime

**alone**

is a word  
with  
out words

with  
what is  
missing

when I'm  
alone  
in bed

with  
out  
words



**you don't**

know me  
never will  
unless

you read  
this I bet  
you won't

right now  
while I  
write it

alone  
in bed  
quiet rain

outside  
                even I  
don't

know me  
when I  
write

like this  
how well  
I hide

when I  
want to  
or don't

know how  
time  
passes  
for no  
body  
my body

alone  
in bed  
same as

for some  
body  
trying

to decide  
how to  
read this

no way  
of knowing  
what

if any  
thing is  
missing me

## **binary code**

sun in my back yard  
sky so blue-infused  
cloud-wisps twirling

rain in my front yard  
falling so soft and slow  
intimate on my skin

somewhere I know  
must be a rainbow  
I can't see between

I will walk back  
and forth around  
the house until

white light lays out  
all of its cards and  
one or zero wins

## love song

1.

I want to slumber  
under a penumbra  
tumble unencumbered  
with some comely number

2.

lofty clouds  
shed soft  
fleshy

petals  
that waft  
“in lacy jags”

never seem  
to settle for anything  
less than me

3.

if all goes well  
it will peak  
in two weeks

if you won't tell  
I will sneak in  
for a peek

I still get weak  
in the knees just  
hearing you speak

**those three**

dreams  
left me  
bereft

endless  
calculations  
always

wrong  
long line  
for dinner

I'm not  
in it  
never

what she  
wants  
me to be

and one  
so dark  
I refuse

to re-  
member  
it now

re            fuse  
to  
re            member

## cloudscape

layered gray  
one glum  
galleon  
glides by  
over off  
white waves

then dustbowl  
storms plow  
over what  
little  
is left of  
a missing  
sun once  
yellow fringe  
now singed  
slate

later  
layered gray  
times two  
my mood  
I'd say  
but blank  
is no  
mood I  
know I  
can name

**between almost-closed curtains at dawn**

bright light  
knives in

thick black  
backs out

think bends  
dead ends

night dozes  
white roses

gazillions  
of photons

fill space  
spill lines

still words  
now there

## **I cried**

now  
emptied  
of what

I didn't  
dare  
hear

blank  
pleasant  
like

after sex  
with  
someone

not in  
love  
with me

wondering  
what on earth  
made me

then later  
can't wait  
to do it

once  
again  
again



## **I have**

no idea  
why you  
don't

know how  
close will  
is to won't

wait and  
too late  
mated

a word  
blurred to  
unheard

I have no idea  
why you  
don't know

how wow  
my now is  
how sounds

surge with  
such force  
irresistible

without only  
immovable  
silence

why how  
true my love  
you want

won't warrant  
even one  
in return

## **starlight**

photons  
parse  
parsecs  
of space:  
starlight

spark  
neurons  
outside  
now in:  
starlight

I am  
now  
not

I  
am but  
what

was is:  
star  
light

**fog now**

cloud  
found  
ground

my eyes  
founder  
flounder

to focus  
cyclist  
whirrs by

blurry  
I look  
back up

from  
my fog  
now

bright white  
clouds  
billow

so high  
and tight  
I cannot

see through  
or be  
with them

### **three**

collared  
doves swoop  
in queue up  
on the power

line I am  
so happy  
to see chilly  
today I

walked empty  
streets unlonely  
two joggers  
scatter them

wide white  
Vs on tails  
bobbing  
in flight

**note to self @ 2:49 am, may 1**

I love you paul  
I love everything  
about you

except for

                    well  
yes

there's  
that

**loopy**

no  
I am  
not

no  
not  
am I  
losing  
my grip

just

l  
o  
o  
s  
e  
n  
i  
n  
g  
i  
t

you would too  
if i were you

## **doppler effect**

five AM  
dark  
I lie quiet  
seagull  
flying by

piercing  
siren alarm  
clock cries

coming:  
why  
why  
why  
why  
why  
why  
why

going:  
now  
now  
now  
now  
now  
now  
now



**so you say**

you always  
get what  
you want

oh yay

and then  
it's not what  
you want

no yay

what?

well

go back  
to go  
and  
don't want  
what you

wantwant

want

what you don't

## **night life**

a flare of street-  
light: air  
delirious with snow

each step a dent in  
wind blowing  
over what's left of

the night beside me  
tucked in  
luxuries of snowfall

two trees across  
the street  
lustrous to twig-tips

in tuxedos I pull tight  
the bow  
of my black tie

step out in fineries  
sheer syllables  
of silk ruffle through

a sheen of street-  
light still  
delirious with snow

**part five: tiny poems grow the fuck up**

## **a song for every one**

distant thunder rumbles  
up from the south  
beat boxes booming, then  
hard, pounding thumps,  
house-rattling tympanis,  
some huge heart  
big as the mountains  
beating harder and harder  
bright pulses of lightning  
coursing through the veins  
of a dark sky and then  
after minutes of breathless  
waiting rain sweeps down  
one black sheet after another

grief grips my throat  
won't let words go  
I watch

the long genuflection  
of a knee on a neck  
8 minutes and 46 seconds  
to breathlessness  
a month of grief a lifetime of grief  
an eon of grief reaching back  
as far as time can measure  
one knee after another  
genuflecting on a neck  
God still on its side

Creedence Clearwater  
blares from my stereo  
the same song for fifty years:  
“Saw the people standing,  
thousand years in chains.

Somebody said it's different now.  
Look it's just the same."  
Now nobody even bothers to say  
it is "different now,"  
the noose  
of a knee on a neck  
and neighborhoods in flames  
fifty years ago  
the Pittsburgh Hill District burns  
and I stare at the amber glare  
of fires on the skyline  
a night-long sunset, feeling  
not fear, how could I, death  
everywhere  
back then, might as well be mine  
as anyone else's, and burning up  
on the outside instead of the inside  
as good a way to go as any  
and then the dark, the darker,  
the darkest, that long, slow descent  
to the bottom of the ravine  
where the Vietnam Memorial Wall  
is tallest, grief intolerable  
each name in relief  
the ones I know the ones I don't  
a tourniquet of flames around  
the neck of goodness every  
8 minutes and 46 seconds  
another breathless measure  
of what time is in the shadow  
of power's eternal rage,  
tower after Trump tower  
glowering down on everything  
it fears and hates,  
tears holes everywhere;  
"Richmond 'bout to blow up,  
communication failed"

as it always fails again and again  
every 8 minutes and 46 seconds  
for 50 years when God's side of it  
is still a knee on a neck  
"If you know the answer  
now's the time to say."  
and still, now, now's the time to say  
and now, now's the time to say  
and now, now's the time to say  
and every 8 minutes and 46 seconds  
for 50 years now is the time to say

stop

genuflecting on a neck

God still on your side  
"they could've  
saved a million people,"  
or a billion, or just one  
a knee to his neck on a street  
just like yours and mine  
could have been saved  
"how can I tell you"  
how can I tell you  
how can I tell you  
every 8 minutes and 46 seconds  
for fifty years  
over and over how  
can I tell you  
when that knee of grief  
genuflects on my neck  
and "I can't breathe"

## **a fairy tale**

every morning now  
I wake on the other side  
of something  
all those dreams

like the last one  
last night you  
in my arms  
feather light  
and I carried you  
for miles surprised  
thinking you are so light  
I can carry you  
for miles  
there must  
have been a reason  
but I don't remember it  
the way we never remember  
the reason for anything  
sooner or later just  
that we do it and do it and do it  
and one day we wake up  
on the other side of something  
and have done it  
and you were smiling  
yes, smiling I remember now  
and it was like I was carrying you  
"over the threshold" but it was  
outside in the open air  
sunny and warm  
greenness everywhere  
greener than green everywhere  
a lightness even to the light  
which was everywhere

and we were together there  
my carrying you in my arms  
your arms slung loosely  
carelessly  
over my shoulders  
as if you were carrying me  
and I was so light  
you could carry me for miles  
your eyes sunny  
and warm a lightness even  
to their lightness  
and I was smiling  
thinking yes  
we can carry one another  
just this way  
all the way to the other side  
of whatever was there  
to get across  
all those dreams say  
the ones that come  
night after night  
some of them staggering  
through the darkness  
unable to carry the weight  
of anything to anywhere  
unbearable  
and then the one  
with you right in it  
still in my arms as if  
it was not yesterday  
or never  
but now right now  
the only part of now  
still worth remembering  
carrying one another in our arms  
and then out of the blue  
I kissed you right



on the lips felt  
the taut softness of them  
like it was not yesterday  
but now right now  
and the moisture we share  
when we kiss was right there  
like a mist  
lingering on my lower lip  
right there right now  
and how surprised you were  
that my lips and yours  
were touching like that  
not for the last time  
but for the first  
and when I woke right then  
on the other side of something  
I was not who I was  
and I knew I could still  
carry you in my arms  
all the way to the threshold  
and then over it  
home for the first time  
on the other side  
of all that green  
and all that light  
smiling into the light  
on the other side  
even lighter than light  
everywhere  
a greenness greener than green  
a lightness  
together  
ever after  
happily

## **how change happens**

things go suddenly  
south  
and they never go back  
north again  
again

## **just another day**

sheer liquid  
curtain cascades:  
gutters clogged

huge sun-spooked  
clouds shapeshift:  
dustbowl billows

sun comes and goes  
rain unrelenting:  
tumbleweed

if cararra marble morphed  
modules growing nodules  
puffing slowly  
Kilauea pillow lava

skilled winds  
sculpting  
abstract bodies  
so lovely

it would be these  
undulating clouds

### **the tree across the road**

bleach blonde tatters  
smatterings swivel  
in the slightest breeze  
this one then  
that one letting go  
so so slow  
almost all gone

every minute I stare  
fewer and fewer  
soon just long skinny  
fingers clawing  
into a gray sky  
longing for  
lingering leaves

## **Trump**

airbrush  
agent  
orange  
rubber  
bladdered  
pig skin  
counter  
Kaepenick  
kick trick  
make up  
rattle can  
shake up  
shit hits  
pepper spray  
flash bang  
shamble  
bible  
gestapo  
despotic  
pop pop pop  
tear tear tear  
gas gas gas  
shit

## **I cop in piitsburgh utterly I . . . shit and I**

*(This is the title Word gave this document when I typed up a few details of my dream half asleep last night. I've corrected the typos now:)*

I'm a cop in piitsburgh utterly loony lick the magic toad loony everyone chaotic and out of control crazy and I'm waist deep in a muddy puddle falling down exhausted not drunk laughing and you on my arm I'm explaining why I have that wacky look on my face all the time because everyone goes around absolute batshit loony and I can't believe it and I try to tell you I know I mean really know you don't pay any attention to anything I tell you but I keep saying it anyway because maybe one day you might wake up before it's too late and the only other person I ever knew who never listened returned a favor or said thank you was him yes him you know him and I keep saying these things to you because I hope maybe one day you'll wake up and realize you haven't been awake because you know what he was almost charming that unawake way when he was thirty but a total total tool that way when he was sixty and you are about halfway in between so you do the math . . .

**01/22/2021**

january sunlight blazes  
june bright coaxes  
amazingly  
each grass blade  
glazed white with frost  
into sudden blossom

silences rise  
like chimney smoke  
through my mind  
all day watching  
this and that  
pass through  
without a trace

each vernal  
instant  
eternal

nothing

every  
thing

still

still  
there

**think**

what it might mean

today

to say  
out loud  
I love you

if you are alone  
walking in the woods  
among winter trees  
their svelte delicate arms  
outreaching  
so openly  
they will smile  
understanding

never say  
I love you  
back  
knowing  
you will know  
that everything they know  
about love  
is in words  
that cannot be heard

except  
we will be here  
when you come back  
tomorrow  
lovingly



by yourself  
with us  
another ordinary day

you may say  
I love you  
all day long  
to children  
the glossy wings  
of those words  
gliding perfectly  
through the crystalline air  
a bright white wedge  
dissecting the bluest of skies  
swooping  
to a soft  
landing  
in the greenest grass  
that grows  
in that wide field  
at the top of the hill  
where you always end  
your imagined walks  
with them  
together

and you may  
say them  
smilingly  
to any passerby  
on the street  
who will assume  
a lunacy  
of loneliness  
or the out-of-tuneness  
of Jesus  
sounding loose

even stupid  
so barren there  
in the open air  
when they cast  
eyes askance  
and walk past  
at an obtuse angle  
as if they cannot hear  
or nod smilingly  
to say  
silently  
safely  
thank you  
even if I can't now  
know for sure  
or say  
that I love you too

be wary though  
with those  
who barely  
know you  
out there  
in the marketplace  
of giving and taking  
wanting and needing  
where those three words  
are a worrisome  
currency

care there  
is imperative  
say I love you  
even beneath your breath  
and those who overhear  
will tighten

recoil slightly  
eyes dipping  
tiny invisible anxieties  
gripping the corners  
of their lips  
tipping them  
down

but always  
and I mean always  
in the lush hidden chambers  
of your own heart  
where you speak to yourself  
ceaselessly

say I love you  
over and over  
an endless loop  
as if those are  
the only three words  
you still remember

ever need

to hear

or to think

**back at woodard bay after a long absence**  
**1/25/21**

1.

from the tip of Henderson inlet  
a phalanx of buffleheads  
is swept off like flotsam  
on the outgoing tide  
three flame-coifed mergansers  
heading the parade

2.

a dozen juncos  
skitter and flit  
down the gravel path  
zig-zag back and  
forth settling  
in low-slung  
hemlock branches  
on either side  
of me singing

3.

a tangled stand of  
white-blanchd alders  
eighty feet tall  
winter bald  
all lean jauntily  
at the same angle  
tipping patiently  
in the direction  
of remembered  
summer's sunlight

4.

the water seems so much wider  
without late-summer foliage  
mirror white for half a mile  
then washboard gray  
the rest of the way  
to budd bay

5.

twenty seals slumber  
on the hundred-year-old  
abandoned lumber dock  
gurgling and grunting  
contentedly

every few minutes  
one bellyflops off  
to fish

6.

as I stand at the point  
one stunning bufflehead  
flies past me  
the first one I have ever  
seen on the wing  
inches above the water  
displaying all at once  
in freeze-frames  
flickering fast-forward  
all of its dazzling whites

7.

once again

I am  
after all these months  
nothing  
but an absence  
happy to host  
all this presence

once again

**just when you think you can't possibly**

be more

alone

wait

wait

wait

there

now

see

you

can

**on my 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday**  
**I wake from a dream in a library**

where I wandered the stacks  
failing to find  
the folio of Marlowe's poems  
I so wanted to read from  
for a friend, then  
steeped a pot of tea,  
rare, rolled leaves  
sweetened with a secret  
renaissance syrup  
of honey and milk  
and we two sat silently  
smiling slightly, sipping.

outside my window  
a foot of new snow  
has buried  
the drab, dreamless  
February world  
in endless deeps of white;  
at 5 AM, not even  
one footfall  
mars its sheer veneer.

I think today I will  
forget everything  
I ever knew  
except Marlowe's great poem  
"The Passionate Shepherd  
to His Love:"

*Come live with me and be my love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,*



*Woods, or steepy mountain yields.  
And we will sit upon rocks,  
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,  
By shallow rivers to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.*

## **after daylong drizzle**

somehow clouds  
bloom behind  
hundred-foot firs  
across the street  
from my house  
plumes of smoky  
blue wind-flumed  
sidewise west awash  
haloes hazy peach-  
pink thin salmon  
fingers stretch east  
past downtown

I walk back and forth  
window to window  
breathtaken it settles  
even evening gray  
all that disarray  
of sun-frayed  
light somehow  
still layered behind  
my pried-wide eyes

## **dawn awesome**

pink glaze dry-  
brushed sidewise  
hand poking  
through puffed up  
ruffled grays  
thin wristed  
long skinny fingers  
reaching all the way  
from here to downtown

half a dozen  
seagulls black  
wedges drive  
wildly down wide  
whitening highways

then suddenly  
like me  
barely  
any longer  
there

**part six: tiny poems say (so slowly)  
fare thee well**

**out of the blue  
(for pamela)**

high sky a confusion  
of blues with huge  
cumulus clouds

bright sunlight  
on the path  
I walk

to woodard bay  
trying still  
to reconcile

what's lost with  
what cannot  
now be found

the way love  
no matter how  
loud you announce

today hears  
no echo  
anywhere

then out of  
the blue somehow  
soft snow falls

I have no idea  
from where  
it comes or how

for some reason  
I just laugh  
and laugh

it reminds  
me long  
as it lasts

something  
is wakeful  
enough even

in thin air to  
make me forsake  
what is false

no matter  
how alluringly  
it beckons

like love lost  
but not at all  
hope always

because even  
in brightest  
sunlight sometimes

somehow something  
surprising arises  
out of the blue

and soft  
snow  
falls

## **quietly on my thighs satisfied**

if you could slide  
your fingers  
inside mine  
would I try  
to type what  
I think  
you want to  
write or just let  
our hands  
rest quietly  
on my thighs  
satisfied

if you could slide  
your eyes in  
behind mine  
would they  
smile while  
I imagine  
your hands  
resting quietly  
on my thighs  
satisfied

when you answer  
clearly even  
when I can't  
find words  
to fit your  
voice tightly  
inside mine  
I let my hands  
rest quietly  
on my thighs  
satisfied

## **place setting**

a white seagull  
floats motionless  
beak upturned  
fancy folded napkin  
to be unfurled  
across my lap

one bufflehead  
bobs porcelain  
well-steeped  
Earl Grey  
teacup bright  
white saucer

a mallard drake  
and a merganser  
side by side  
unlikely pair  
vinegar and oil

two collared doves  
seem almost  
asleep breasts  
to ground resting  
salt and pepper

one sandpiper  
hops and yips  
might as well be me  
on my way home  
to make breakfast



**avian inventory, 3/22/21**

1. *the inlet*

2 bald  
eagles glide  
side by side  
treetop high  
a flight path  
to my right  
so soon  
out of sight

6 herons  
galumph across  
the inlet settling  
separately  
in topmost  
cedar branches  
their s-hook necks  
stretching up to  
pick something  
for nest-making  
or just to laugh  
breathe in deep

a smattering  
of buffleheads  
maybe twenty  
in a scattershot  
pattern near  
the inlet mouth  
dabble and dunk

half a dozen scoters  
scoot around

in tight formation  
at the center  
bullseye

1 kingfisher  
bullets instant  
down the inlet  
inches above  
water alights  
on a branch  
overhanging

30 seconds later  
2 kingfishers  
bullet all the way  
back up the inlet

30 seconds later  
2 kingfishers bullet  
all the way back  
down the inlet

I have no idea  
how few kingfishers  
comprise those 5

2 canada geese  
snuffle up  
something sumptuous  
near the shore  
then paddle  
madly away

2. *the bay*

30 or so herons  
stand statue still  
on the abandoned  
lumber-dumping  
railway trestle  
out in the bay  
soaking in heat  
from morning sun

2 geese waddle  
side by side by  
a big alder near  
the picnic tables  
marking a spot  
for me to stand  
tomorrow when  
they are not  
there to bother

1 spotted towhee  
flits twig tip  
to twig tip  
in underbrush  
but I know for sure  
it is not a robin  
by all the white  
bits on its wings

1 rare varied thrush  
yellow-orange stripe  
above the eye  
rusty-color breast  
robin-like but not  
sits still on a bare  
branch long enough

for me to memorize  
later to learn its name

3 more herons  
float overhead  
barely wing-flapping  
waft down to join  
the legions warming

1 robin after another  
every fifty feet  
or so too many  
to number  
and sparrows  
and juncos zinging  
back and forth  
across the path  
same thing but

I see them  
every single one

3.  
every single one  
I see them

the air so clear  
so right here  
nothing not near-  
by my eyes wide  
as sea and sky  
unconcealing all  
these things  
with feathers  
floating or in flight

**“even a numbskull has mind for a teacher”**

*Chuang Tzu*

pregnant with possibility  
invisible absence  
gyrates and surprises  
name and named  
surging urgently  
from a fissure-field  
I cannot cross  
except by abiding

all these words so  
uselessly intimate  
what is not  
that but this and  
cannot be not-  
or better-said

absence and presence  
the same  
generative tissue  
issuing one  
from the other  
which is which

**walking down the hill toward town, 4/1/21**

a ridgeline of clouds  
like springtime mountains  
snow-capped but  
browning down  
toward the base  
shimmers up behind  
the rolling hills  
on the other side  
of the bay  
mimicking every  
peak and curve

the absence  
out of which  
all of today's  
presence evanesces  
into place

just to the right  
the Olympic range  
looks exactly  
the same  
hovering above  
the treeline  
mimicking rows  
of sailboat masts  
crowded into the  
south corner  
of the bay

the presence  
out of which  
all of today's  
absence vanishes  
into space

**everything that matters this morning**

he picks up piled  
pine needles  
and dry grass  
on a plastic rake

*good morning  
hello how are you  
doing great today how are you  
I'm good thank you for asking  
have a nice day  
thanks*

he dumps dry grass  
and pine needles  
from the rake into  
a big plastic can

**5 snippets from my morning walk:  
July 25, 2021**

*“We invest each other with selves. But how can  
we know that what we call a self is really a self?”*

Chuang Tzu, #12

1.

a layer of gray fog  
dense as dryer lint  
puffs up between two ridges  
west of Budd Bay  
the only clouds anywhere this morning  
if you can call them that  
more ground now than sky  
each one refusing to yield  
even a pinch of lint to the other

2.

three slender cedars  
hover above Puget Street  
doing their headstands as usual  
propped up back-to-back-to-back  
broad shoulders to the ground  
tiny little tip-top toes  
poking into solid blue sky  
impossible to tell  
which is which  
when balance slips a bit



3.

that single willow at the bottom  
of Glass Avenue is shaggier  
and more Scooby-Doo unlonely  
than usual this morning  
each slight breeze flicking  
millions of tiny fingers  
up and down its tresses  
shimmering all over now  
with little flecks of light  
both tree and sun one

4.

like too many toothpicks  
poked into too-tiny hors d'oeuvres  
too close-packed  
on the too-small tray  
the tide provides  
on East Budd Bay  
a few hundred sailboat masts  
skew akimbo in tight bunches  
waiting for Mount Olympus  
that brown-gowned wraith  
frowning on the far horizon  
still snow-coifed in late July  
to step back a bit  
making more room

5.

A dozen huge yachts  
moored at the marina  
on West Budd Bay  
jut jaws forward  
as if they are entitled  
to take off on their own  
and might any minute  
their pure whites  
luminous in the light  
seeming as white as white gets

until two seagulls fly by  
head and bellies so brilliant  
mirroring summer sun  
extra-white, super-white,  
ultra-white, inside-out-white  
a shining, yes, a shining  
no yacht can ever top

today nothing I see is itself  
in any way that lasts  
even past my passing glance

including me

**for lulu**

fifty gulls float  
motionless  
on still water  
superwhite in  
bright sun  
face right into  
the light  
waiting . . . for

what?

one and one only  
shrieks over and over  
no replies  
no way to know  
why it cries

a child trips  
and falls  
on the paved path  
wails waiting  
to be picked up  
and held

I walk off into the woods  
those cries ringing  
in my ears  
wringing my heart

no loss is too small  
to mourn  
all now nothing  
here now gone  
blank space  
waiting for . . .

what?

Rainier's ice shines  
behind the tree line  
the only clouds  
in the whole sky  
three filmy gray streaks  
smudging up its peak

on my way back  
all the gulls  
face the other way  
the late day sun  
slant too much even  
for their eyes

no bird shrieks  
no child cries  
why must  
tears always fall  
without sound  
to the forest floor  
no one ever  
there to hear

not lulu, not you  
not anyone

not even me.

**no way back**

ferns  
eternally vernal  
florid understory  
forevering

I wander savannas  
of frond-fans  
until I know  
no way back

with each step  
forward I forget  
someone who has  
forgotten me

I will walk until  
I remember only  
what's left  
of myself

## **dark comes**

earlier now  
late summer  
I sit by  
the window  
watch the moon  
slice of light  
slide sideways  
up the sky  
my mind's eye  
glass smooth  
sees everything  
but me

in the mirror  
corner of the eye  
glimpse then gone  
might be grief  
or gaiety close  
companions those  
thieves leaping  
rooftop to  
rooftop agile  
acrobats of love  
lost and found

silent each night  
this week dreams  
sidled by me  
step by step  
barely there on  
waking then back  
into the body  
which remembers  
everything

last night a woman  
I'd never met so  
handsome and kind  
tested me to show  
so I know for sure  
how amazing I am  
each released  
breath she said  
sonorous and deep  
beyond belief

her long hug  
and parting kiss  
half on the right  
corner of my lips  
an awkward miss  
gestures beautiful  
beyond measure

and the night before  
sallow sullen boy  
standing aloof  
outside my door  
I open letting him  
in after all these  
years home again  
me with me

with me

and the night  
before the secret  
of tinkering trauma  
image and event  
peeled apart  
resisting repetition

how the body heals  
when cared for  
properly always

the body

tonight I am  
moonlight on a  
mountain stream  
without dimension

change  
    surging  
        beneath

flickering flecks  
of white light  
so soft and flexible  
caressing every  
crevice always  
the same light  
never the same  
water twice

little ripples of  
memory in motion  
my eyes move  
emptily as one  
unrelentingly  
forward afar  
from the future

always  
what I am not  
yet becoming now  
more and more  
now and then more



amazing

as I am tonight  
no idea  
why I think

anything

not a word  
I need to say  
no one with me  
to hear ever  
I remember  
just moonlight  
cold cupped hand  
lifting me slowly

on the way to  
somewhere  
a near heaven  
I set out for  
so long ago

with no  
one

not even  
me

to keep  
me company

**the end**

when  
you  
know

that  
nothing  
matters

any  
more  
and

never  
will  
again





Paul is the author of numerous books of poetry, personal essays, and scholarship available in multiple formats at online booksellers and at paulkameen.com

### **Poetry:**

*light/waves* (2022)

*first: my newer tiny poems from (t)here* (2022)

*slights: my new tiny poems from here not there* (2021)

*In the Dark* (2016)

*Harvest Moon* (2016)

*Li Po-ems* (2016)

*Mornings After: Poems 1975-95*

*Beginning Was* (1980)

### **Personal Essays:**

*In Dreams . . .* (2022)

*Living Hidden* (2021)

*Harvest* (2020)

*Spring Forward* (2019)

*The Imagination* (2019)

*A Mind of Winter* (2019)

*First, Summer* (2018)

*Last Spring* (2018)

*This Fall* (2016)

### **Scholarship:**

*Re-reading Poets: The Life of the Author* (2011)

*Writing/Teaching* (2001)





