

Collected and Annotated

by the author

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Volume IV

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'...something
rescued from what we sense
of time

so beautiful
so vain'

INTRODUCTION

This collection of poetry presents definitive versions of most of the poems I have completed. Since I have included all the poems, including many early works and works of questionable quality, this is not the planned

SELECTED POEMS ASSORTED LIFETIMES

Rather, I am treating this as a kind of internal autobiographical documentation of my poetry. In some cases I have annotated the works, and I have included many alternate or derivative versions.

Many of the dates, especially those of the earlier volumes, are vague; most of them are guesses. The order of the poems, however, is generally accurate, both within the volumes and from volume to volume.

This volume covers the very late 1980's and about half of the 1990's. If there is anything distinctive about this period it is that I was working full-time throughout it, and was comfortable financially. It was a difficult period for Dorothy, however, both personally and otherwise, and hence it was at times difficult for our relationship, although we seemed to have survived.

[This multi-volume set is a revised edition. It is based on an original completed in 1993, which in turn was edited from an earlier XyWrite III source. This version has been re-formatted using XyWrite IV for Windows. Type family for Volume II is Apollo MT from Adobe.]

BOSTON, Part II (1988-93)

The beginning and ending dates of this section are arbitrary. It starts where an original 'volume one' left off, and ends with the date the original 'volume two' was compiled.

motion
 massive
silence

end of day
end of train

slowly rolling^a

March 1988

Many of the poems in this section were written about commuting, some while commuting. I was either taking the commuter rail into downtown Boston, or driving into Medfield.

.....
^aThe first draft added the final line: 'away'

at times
like this I think
 'no words.' b

and then i
think of things to say
or what
might be said.

unspoken
words
have spoiled the
not
so innocent
hope of many
such

completed March 18, 1993

**The original version adds the redundant line 'they'll spoil it'*

here i am
writing
about poetry
my poetry
bound and studied

appreciated
and uncirculated

poems about
dinosaurs
and birds
and trains
and subways
and chinese women
and moving
and laying low
and painting
and loneliness
and forever
and today

and yesterday
and computers
and snowstorms
and memory
and shoes
and wasting time
and losing interest
and silence

i should mark
(he thinks)
the ones not
written
yet with an
asterisk

*

Sunday, July 3, 1988

This is a reflection on my first volume. The list grew longer on revision.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE MUSEUM
(Exile Diversion)

The Ebsworth Collection

I

consider the Glackens'
Cafe Lafayette
portrait of Kay Laurel,
1914
the softness of Renoir but the smile
is solid
old Bill could draw
after
all those newspapers
didn't pay him
for red lips
slopped on like
Renoir,
 (his *Woman with a*
 Parasol and a Small Child on
 a Sunlit Hillside
from forty years (or so)
before
has nothing to compare
no face
no head)

The 'exile' was self-imposed, and I spent it killing time at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, taking notes and beginning work on this long poem while visiting the Ebsworth collection of American art. I worked on this a lot, trying to make something of it. This version is the one I submitted to the Massachusetts Artists Fellowship Program in 1988.

but Kay is real
as gorgeous and serene as the
paint
staring out

is she alive
somewhere
i wonder
does she still see herself
like this
as we do

2

a lot of left edges
in this collection
pay attention

3

see the Burchfield
Black Houses
(*Bleak Houses*), 1918
a watercolor page with
two inches added on the
left for a porch and
a little less symmetry

and Hopper's *Chop*
Suey, the star
of the show, but who
is the lady in the red hat
half moon profile
peering in at the left
across from the man
with the cigaret

not with him, surely, as he
smokes and watches his hands in the shadows,

his coat on the rack
surely, not
hers

she brightens the
shadows balances
the palette but
hold up your thumb and hide her

the picture's better
off

4

American Abstraction
triumphs here in
amazing names:

starting with Espher
Slobodkina, oil on board,
'Large Picture,' aka
Ancient Sea Song, 1943

and Ilya
Bolotowski
yes these guys
were as American as
Lasagna and Blintzes

The Blue Diamond
defying right angles,
bobbing, out of plumb, demanding diagonals
repeated all over the room:

in the Tooker, on the other wall,
The Chess Game,
with the diamond in the floor and the
board akimbo on the table

the cats on the linoleum with their shining claws,

the leading lady's painted nails
on hand and toe, gleaming like
her teeth,
the nail on the wall
on the left
(remember the left)
and the bar in the doorway
on the right

5

and right next to Ilya
Patrick Henry
Bruce's study in hopeless
titles and anti-painting
Peinture/Nature Morte
or *Form #5*
its pinks die in the
35\$ catalog
reproduction but
shimmer there, on the wall,

(left-hand balance) again
oil and graphite on canvas
the drawing gets lost in the book,
as well

about 1924 Nature died, or was it painting,
or just *Peinture*

forms survived

6

for Arnold Wiltz in *American Landscape #3*
and George Ault,
who called his picture
Pile Driver:
warehouses and railroad

cars, grain elevators
and other industry

Sheeler's *Classic Landscape*, as well:
in '28 a simple watercolor
about form; but in '31,
the oil's awkward

 textures struggle with
the American scene, space flattened by
phoney painting,

 the real space shows
in his *Catwalk* or his

Still life:
two pitchers, a glass and a flower,
just
forms
and space,
no remorse for 'nature morte'

7

reborn in Arthur Dove, his fanatical *Eye* patrolling the
galleries, alarmed perhaps by the gentle Demuth:
Three Lilies, sweet watercolor
at the edge of
an idea, and
the hatching at the edge of
Fruit and Flowers,
a reminder of form

8

the human form, fractured over
there in someone's mock Duchampian excess but
here
in a little Gaston Lachaise:
graphite, those dimples
that ass,
America,

and I keep going over to the window and his
Mask,
1924
bronze washed with nickel
and brass
washed
indeed
with tenderness, the
melting metals
giving
nature birth

again

this little face

and Kay Laurel's,
and Mary, Jane, Julia and Florence
always,
waiting in the shadows
by the vases
in another room
for the picture
to be ready

Summer-Fall, 1988

THINK ABOUT PLUTO

THINK ABOUT PLUTO

here i am trying
to make this poem
work getting vexed
with the infinitesimally
small details like
voice
and gesture

happiness and
perfection

and it seems there needs to be
some distance [for the
process] so i

THINK ABOUT PLUTO

gazing at Jupiter
and Mars and the
moon in the early
dawn

This is supposed to be an invocation to the audience, and they are supposed to do it as I flap my arm at them.

real
unwavering
mad Mars
(Venus low in the
mottled clouds)
Jupiter nearest
the moon
imagine
its atmosphere
and storms
(and Io and
Europa
moons as real as
ours)

we know about the moon

still

THINK ABOUT PLUTO!

(I implore myself)
and
Uranas and
Miranda, even,
but

what
do i really
know about Pluto

what's to think about

this is supposed to be
about distance and
space

metaphors
for love and
time

it seems to all come
back to poetry
 vexation
and the
strange impossibilities
of important
details

think about Pluto

August 1988

The note on the first page is part of the original poem. This was the first of an occasional group of 'astronomical' poems. It and the following poem were revised and re-set in 1993, and appear later in this volume.

RIDING ON THE SUBWAY

riding on the
subway on a
hot
day
very hot in the
middle of a sweltering
carbon dioxide
and electric ozone
summer

and a black
guy gets on
with a
boom box

up loud

and no one says
a word or
looks at him
sideways

and then another
guy gets on
with
another box both
ends of the
car
booming

now
everyone's
straight ahead
even the air
is tight
too tight
too hot

too scared

very loud

really loud
really shit
too
loud shit

and i'm sitting
there in a pool
of the whole summer's
sweat and
subway rattle
sort of trying
to tell myself
that i'm
digging it

i missed my
commuter
rail clean
quiet trip
and see
this dripping
tunnel
scene
as penance
mass ave
roxbury crossing
jackson square
...

and so after a
few stops they
both get out

and it gets
two degrees warmer
in the car as all the

white people left let out
their breaths

and then
these two
women
next to me
start talking

breaking my
vicarious
reverie on the
cool silence
of the
boom box
noise

and one
of these women is
old and the
other one
is practicing and
they start
yakking about
which bus is the
best one to
take to the
mall at the end of
the line

and i decide
that hail
marys

mother of god

are preferable

Completed September 1988

my method came to me

suddenly i recognized my
method for the
accident it seemed to be

my embrace of accident and then
my method came to me

that

i am not writing
a song but only living
a life by finding it
(came to me suddenly)

feeling its shape as i go

June 24, 1989

This little poem is typical of my computer driven writing style. I wrote it, and saved it to disk as METHOD.POM. As I made revisions, I saved each successive 'version' as METHOD2.POM, METHOD3.POM. Reviewing the versions for this compilation, I find I like this 'spontaneous' original much better than the 'finished' product.

**Poems submitted to the
Massachusetts Artists Fellowship Program for 1989**

I made submissions like this during the late 80's. Other submissions had been carefully culled from earlier work, often reaching as far back as the rules allowed. This one was unique, however, because I actually wrote all but one of these poems in November of 1989, with this submission in mind.

COIN

i.

i was looking
actually
for a gold coin

that was lost

and I found in
my letters
a name instead

a small history of facts
in letters and references
all from a name

i couldn't find the coin
i can't remember the person

a name
that's all she is
now

i wasn't looking
for my past
but found that
i had lost it

her
this name
part of me

as surely
as i still held
alive the lives of all
the other letters
from my past
lovers
and friends
and teachers
and students

but she was none

or was she one

ii

my journal repeats
this epistolary
episode as a
matter of fact
but my brain
cannot complete
connections with
the other names
and missing places

important once
possessions then
in common reference
to us both
to me
and to this name

now lost

iii.

the gold coin eluded me
that night
but i found her
photograph
replied to me
so long ago

the name
the face

but the memory that was
is where it can
no longer
be

as all soon
will

iv.

it is only time
that is lost
the past
the name
the face
like my half
of the correspondence
is
still
there
somewhere

beneath some
aspect
of her life
or mine

part of both
our futures

not wasted
though
forgotten
just lost

this forgetful
emptiness
my only reminder

her name
my life
a memory
forgotten
or remembered
a moment
contributed
to consciousness

desire abandoned
like hope and
fear

lost

the coin of
my life

well spent?

November 1989

DEPOT

i.

in the still of
the morning clouds low
and flat still
in the east framing
the sky above lit
with dawn
and
day
 the light

we wait for the train those
reading heeding our Herald
 the one

 pacing towards
Needham, to see if
the headlight
will come round the
shed before the
sun breaks
 the
clouds

the others

and in our
milling
stillness
i am the listener

ii.

the tracks sing to
me as i allow
the sky the grey
morning to dazzle
me out of
proportion: to its
stillness, to
the headlines in the
Herald, to the
timely arrivals
of the train and dawn

to my heart
and its imagination
grasping at straws
still clouds in
the east

and to
the wheels rolling
in
 from Highland, to
pace the scene for
me

November 1989

KEROUAC

i want to jump
back
into it
turn back
the
clock
beat my brains
against
life
 piss in
corners

turned again against
the side
keeping to myself
keeping life to
my self

keeping all my life
for myself
alone
.....

down the rabbit
holes
easy enough to
deify

spontaneity

late phrases
brought back on the bus
for future
considerations
.....

or can you
imagine
discussing your
imagination and
jack with
your boss
in the afternoon

or alluding to
the joyful way he
pronounces
'disdainfully' and
provokes buckley's
derision
sneer

or to allen's
false-sounding
true
hep chat

yeah

play
see
read
say it
all

easy to see
hard to read
where can we play
or speak

and what is
it
all
after

November 1989

ROLLING

rolling through
the woodlands in the
morning's summer shadows

embraced by green and music
and thoughts of fall the
bare trunks then that
line the road

and spring
the fields fresh
brown, fresh
turned and
lower, longer
shadows thin like
winter light

rolling with the music
and my silent drive
my finger on my lip
my shoulder to the
stone

November 1989

Another group of poems I put together at the same time dates the poem a little earlier, in the summer of 1989.

WOMAN IN BLACK

the woman in black
with an eyebrow
curving
no... 'arched'

with calves
curving under
slit coat
slit skirt
hurrying

the plight of imagination
strikes me as
i write
the death of
possibility noted

i wished our eyes
had met that
she had noticed
the way i'd watched
her fingertips
inside her gloves

rushing away
down the
glass corridor

subway
red lights
rippling on
the walls

stop
my heart
cried out

(someone brushed
my shoulder)
as i watched
pretending
it was
her in my
mind

reeling instead of
rock and roll

November 1989

SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 1989, 7:30AM

all the
seconds everywhere
ticking
at the same
time

i hear the quartz
march of the
thermostat and watch
another clock
sweep seconds
sound and studied
motion
simultaneous
while the neon on
the VCR
face blinks in
sync

time is tender
here
my
Saturday suffused with
counting
filled with quiet
patience
as i sit

writing while
liquid crystals
flash from high
on my refrigerator
doing time
with my tea

(no seconds left)

June 1989

THIRD PERSON

all poetry
is in the
first
person not
the third and
seldom the second
(2 relates to 1)
but 3
is the ideal

timeless
sexless
stable
eternal
like
death

observed
but unaware

omniscient
omnipotent

the narrator
the ego
the first person
implied
but realized
elsewhere

outside the
eye

inside the
reader's mind

to penetrate the
writer
with
no clue from
who or why

November 1989

Commuting Poems (songs from the woods)

This particular group of commuting poems were all written during my ride along Route 109 from Roslindale to Medfield. I made this grouping some months after the last was completed. One or two of the poems re-appear later in this volume, somewhat re-worked, and I omit here the first poem in the original group, included as ROLLING in the MAFP submission above. The dates on the computer files indicated that I worked on many of these poems throughout 1990 and into 1991, but the dates on the individual poems and the 'first draft' dates.

I.

pale moon
resting
over the church
for sale
in the dawn

waiting to set
and leave
the town green
to the bright
blue
and white
winter
day

and rising again

at sunset
hugging the flat roofs
over the project

shining through the mall

red and wan
the Cold moon of
December
ready

for the night

December 1989

2.

at the intersection
high on the hill
sunlight beyond the trees

(chorus)
the morning shrouded
wrapped in ice

the hills beyond
(wrapped) in light

(verse)
the icy hills like
clouds
gleaming
low on the
grey
horizon

the four stops
mysterious and
silent

empty
in the post dawn
dark

wait and look

and go
(singing)

January 1990

3.

white wonder
[forest] in the pre-spring snow
bright blue-sky side
slanting
shines with blooming
green under

piles

the warm brown earth
beneath them

the green is in the pines
the tall bare deciduous
trees spire above
like the mud below
waiting

under white
wonder

pre-spring
silent
shining
snow

March 1990

4.

rolling down poetry road
with 'songs from the woods'
echoing
past the [wildwood]

all this local life
every week
during the morning
seasons
before my face aches
from the public grimace

here in the privacy of these
slanted remembered
mornings

while Joanie sings
to Bob
 I sing
to god

April 1990

at the intersection
high on the hill
sunlight beyond the trees

in morning shrouded
wrapped in light

the hills beyond
(wrapped) in light

the icy hills like
clouds
low on the
grey
horizon

the four stops
mysterious and
silent

empty
beckoning in the
post dawn
dark

wait and look
and go

late 1990

This is the last of many re-writes during the early '90's of this 'commuter' poem. The reference is to a four-way-stop on Hartford Street, near the Dover-Walpole line, and the description is quite literal. The Hartford Street stretch was often an inspiration, and the view over the horizon at the stop sign that morning was overwhelming. I like this version much better than the hacked up piece that appears in the previous group.

another shoe
black patent leather

after all these
years
still listening
to the[ir] songs

joining
with our voice

sing

old poetry
new shoes

my
shiny sounds

begun September 1990—completed March 23, 1991

Another poem about shoes on the highway...

trator's

astructur
per addi
ic connec
and
temp softw
on a
tual cost
r packs.)

March 23, 1991

My computer threw this garbled text into a frame and I thought it was neat. There are a couple of other 'poems' during this period which transcribe happy visual constructions.

thoughts on sunset
red sky beyond the
thunderheads
orange towns
 tossed along
the waves of land

thoughts on thunderheads
the wing reaching
out, its tip

glowing,

 a marker
in space, antennae
feeling the
waves of
electricity

the chased and
timeless sunset
ahead i face
looking down
floating under
power

the sleeping travelers
alive, the orange streets
i see below
lined with
the glow of the
living,
 their lives,
like mine,

moving

both versions 9-15-91

Published in the FAP&PP as "A flight to California," this version actually 'finished' for this compilation, combining the original with a couple of the changes from the second version in the files, and a final touch-up here and there.

Grandma

how did she move
around the continent
shuffle knuckle
walk
 bok
surely she was not
a swinger
 winger

six foot nine and
eager to get home

how many grand-pas
how many cousins
dozens
 muggins

 jack
jacked and jaked more
than twice
she must have been
fast enough to
get away and slow
enough to get
herself

caught
 lot

i don't want to
know what she
looked like i want
to reassure
 you
don't look like
her
 if you can help
it

help yourself to
another handful of
whatever your
teeth work best
on and
ruminant

i call her grace...
for short

-in memory of
 Corliss Lockwood

November 7, 1991

This is about the unique female progenitor claimed by the mitochondrial DNA folks, and Corliss Lockwood is a blast from the past.

a red corvette
wearing a bra

despicable

sitting at Syms
waiting
 for
the suits

and twelve dollar
trees
to emerge and
be tossed in the
back

a woman's car
in a man's lot

fate

December 1991

I'm not sure about this poem, but I remember the moment quite distinctly. The 'twelve dollar trees' are Christmas trees, of course. Buying the suits and seeing the 'vette made me very sad, somehow.

conjunction
compels me

Saturn and
Mars by
the Moon
hung out

darkly red and
yellow in the
glass
projected into the
brains by optics
and imagination

without effort

we all dream
at night

February, 1992

a dionysian companion
to his appolonian
defecations
his feline friend
jumps after him
and leaps and
rolls at his feet
in his pants looking
through his legs
for affection

she joins him too
while he writes or
reclines

whenever his mind
exhales she rubs his
body

her dander caught
like a knot of yearning
in his throat

her hairs
delicately
tickling inside his
underwear
resting now in his lap
she reads the screen,
rubs her head on the
keyboard
wrist rest

and lunges toward
the hinges
on his red
suspenders

(bites his buttons and
plays her scent glands
through his beard)

purring in appreciation
at the electronic clickety-
clack:

the keyboard song

like the smell and effort
of the bathroom
or the alpha-wave repose of
channel surfing

exciting her to contact,
to curiosity and
to love

March 1, 1993

the cats and i
wincing
struggling against
the bright light of the
bathroom

in the morning dark
while dorothy dozes on

they roll their
greetings
through my absolutions and
eliminations

i brush

they stalk the narrow space
pausing by the scale
beneath the towel

the siren song
the cats' meows

November 11, 1992

ABBREVIATIONS
(Star Market Poem)

LOL CRM UNSA
LOL UNS BUTT
SKP CH PNTBT
SYRIAN BREAD

CONT TOM PST
ST PETI PEAS
JEL FUDG PUD
MUFFIN

WHO WRITES
THESE THINGS

December 1992

Another transcription of a 'happy visual construction,' in this case culled from a grocery receipt.

ducking under	and times'	'who
massive	...	sir?'
bearded		...
chins	the back beat	
belly	disappearing	[a pause
to belly hugs	into	for
between friends	life's inevitabil	photograph
who never	ity	s
hugged	...	and regrets]
...	old beer	
they call me by	warm smells	and joined
my	familiar shit	at last
old name	holes	by the
but we see	echoes of	curious
through eyes		friendly
even older	the prince	young
than before	alone	and though
		less eager
how indelible	the	
other peoples'	wales' tales	still
lives		
are	still ringing	bemused
	in the dim	as they
how delible is	fluorescent	anticipate
the minds	space	their turn
impression		
	written on	the defiant
is mine	but not	shout
	over	the dare of
my	...	life
life	'not	the table
	i sir'	dance
		of love

June,
1992–March,
1993

This is a pastiche of poetic fragments written at my 25th class reunion at Amherst College in June of 1992. I have three different arrangements of the fragments, and this final edit from the following March.

i wear orthopedic appliances in my shoes

and fuzzy slippers
and use a cane and can't
bend my right knee

i correspond with musicians i admire
and read about more than i ever
could remember and never talk

except to my cat, who is as
old as i am and barely has the energy
left to jump up beside me on the
arm of the sofa (where are the doilies
now?) and lean into me as i click my
clicker and flash the tv to find
some sports
or cspan
or anything alive and

really happening

does anything really happen?

irrevocably

i have retired into the future and I wait for
the past to engulf and become me
and mine

i don't really have to order
any more checks

completed January 29, 1993, shortly after my 47th birthday

COMMUTING POEM

at the intersection
high on the hill
sunlight beyond the trees

the icy hills like
clouds
gleaming
low on the
grey
horizon

the four stops
mysterious and
silent

empty
in the post dawn
dark

wait and look

and go

at the intersection
high on the hill

the morning shrouded
wrapped in ice

sunlight beyond the trees

the distant crests like
clouds
gleaming
low on the
grey
horizon

the four stops
mysterious and
silent

empty
in the post dawn
dark

wait and look

and go

February 1993

Two more revisions of an old agony.

SILLS

like my father

like the yellow
man frustration
leads me to the
window

I draw the curtain
look outside
and try to deal
with things I cannot
know or help
I seek the backyard
landscape, the neighbor's
drive, the same
streets, the angled
views I know

to wash the rage
not with reason
but emptiness

an unanguished
alternative
to the interior
world
the banal exterior
insulated view

no noise
no voice just
the frame, the birds
hopping, the animal
footprints in the
snow
(no shoes)
no other telltales
of life

still life at the sill

March 21, 1993

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Dylan's left foot
swivelling on its toe
as he keeps up with
the all star band

the shadow of the bow tips
at the base of the stage as the
band plays on

Ron Wood pointing
at him to go ahead
and sing
the band makes room for
his lunge for the microphone

the [smug] guest
conductor taking the fare and
going nowhere

the cock of the knee like
Niel Young's bopping
decrepit dance as awkward as
Springsteen's

Composed on the occasion of watching the Bob Dylan 30th Anniversary Concert, and attending the Brown Brothers Harriman 175th Anniversary part at the Boston Pops.

the pianist
played all the notes
loving none of them

the Band we all loved is gone

the poem unfading
as the shadows
reveal violas and sophistry

oh the monkey
wrapped his tail
around the flag
pole
see his eyes
roll

happy anniversary

June 1993

The original version ended with:

WE ALL NEED GOOD LEAD GUITARS
THE BLUES
AND A CRACKERJACK BAND
FOR TIME AND CELEBRATION

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

I felt this was a bit forced (!?) and substituted the reference to BBH partner Noah Herndon conducting the Pops signature tune.

triple deckers
in the arboretum
window
whistling through
the roads
the views
the news in my lap

June 18, 1993

diane gallops
her dance and then
stretch rolls
the way cats do

(hopping first, the
way she does,
back
arched

then flopping)
on the landing

glad to see me
(or is her dance to
the moon) or glad
to hear my step

or just happy
for another
morning on the way

Sept 1993

This is the third poem in this group about my little cat Diane. This one is ripe with references to my High School Poem "The flowers/Gallop"....

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thoughtsonsunset39