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Table of Contents

NEW POEMS AND PAINTINGS

BY

PATRICK WHITE

INTRODUCTION

DARKNESS, LET ME ENTER

Painting: Untitled. Acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

CONTENTS

NARCISSUS LOST HIS FACE IN THE MIRROR HE STORED HIS IMAGE IN

Painting: Untitled. Acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

O, YES, THE STILLNESS COMES ALL IN ONE WAVE, ONE CARESS

Painting: Untitled. Acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

PARANOIA KILLS LIKE A FANATIC WHAT IT SUSPECTS WITHOUT CONVICTION

Painting: Untitled. Acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

LOOKING AT THE RAIN. ARE YOU LOOKING AT THE RAIN

Painting: Untitled. Oil, 16 by 20 inches

IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER YOU AS YOU WERE

Painting: Untitled. Oil, 2 by 4 feet

HITCH HIKING OUT TO RICHARDSON FOR DISCOUNT CIGARETTES

Painting: Untitled. Acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

WRITERS STRIVING SO HARD TO BE UNLIKE ONE ANOTHER

Painting: Untitled. Acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

BORN INTO POVERTY AND HUMILIATION

Painting: Untitled. Acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

AND SHOULD IT COME TIME TO SPEAK OF THE SADNESS

Painting: Untitled. Oil, 24 by 36 inches

GREAT PAN IS DEAD

Painting: Untitled. Oil, 18 by 24 inches

POST SCRIPTUM

Biography and information on Patrick White's latest book Azazel.

Azazel cover by Paulette C. Turcotte

Introduction

DARKNESS, LET ME ENTER

**Darkness, let me enter. Oblivion, open your arms.
Sweet liberty, lengthen my chain by light years.
Venus in the Pleiades, let me feel your charms.
I want to ride the light, o yes I do, as far as I can
toward some flowering of the mystery
I can add myself to and bloom as the stars do.
My most intimate familiar, solitude, eras of it,
yet it's never known my name. My best feature
once you get pass the indignation and the anger,
compassion. And though love seems to me
the sum of many hearts, trying to express itself
as one, when have I not been a doorway to the dead?**

**When have I ever preferred my happiness
even as my last rainbow bridge went up in flames
and there was no where else to cross before the falls,
to that of the ironic beatitudes of the forbidden and the blessed?
Make me a star again one day with a few habitable planets,
each with at least one moon that can make me crazy as this one.
Promise? Promise me it will be so and mean it.
I will continue. I will keep on. I will endure like a mountain
that never capitulated volcanically to my own rage.
I'll walk the road standing up. I'll traverse it on my knees.
I'll be the nightbird. The green bough. The apple bloom.
I've learned. I'll listen. And when I'm overwhelmed by words,
I'll give you my voice and let you speak for yourself.**

**Whoever, whatever, you are not or you are,
though I hear you're too ineffable to get to know,
should the day ever come you want to disclose yourself
like a hidden secret that wants to be known,
I'll understand that, I'll be the night in your mirror
that shows you four hundred billion stars in the eyes
of as many life forms and more in the multiverse
than you can see without being astonished by the beauty
of all the secrets you've kept to yourself for light years.**

Even if I'm just talking to myself like a waterclock
pouring my mindstream from one ear into another,
whether you're there or not, or just the matriculated anima
of a pineal gland projected onto a holographic space time continuum,
and my spirit be no more than my own breath
condensing on the diminishing window of this cold sky
where I write the name of someone I've never met
with a frost-bit finger, longing for encounters I won't regret,
let me flow into your awareness like a wavelength
into a river of light or let me burn in the immutable darkness
a firefly of thought, a thread of lightning, a distant star,
a thinning fragrance of a wildflower you might have known
a long time ago that reminds you of someone
so many changes away from anyone you'd recognize today.
I'm not looking for someone to whine to.
I've been omnidirectional since I turned forty-five
so I don't need anyone to tell me where I'm going.
I'm not looking for a soft shoulder of the road to cry on.
After so many nights of laying my head
on this hard rock pillow of a world
that's refeathering itself in scales and razorblades
I'm not dissing the occult wisdom of my consolation dreams.
The way it seems is the way it appears. Let it.
I grew up on the streets, drastically. I know how
to break a mirror in case of a catastrophe.

Just let me pretend for awhile out here in the woods
where I always feel as a human it's the first day
of a kid in the schoolyard until I make friends with an owl
or the occasional, curious bush wolf wondering
what I'm doing so far off my natural turf, and why,
just like a dog from the city abandoned on a farm
I feel so disowned sometimes I should learn
to snarl back at the moon when it bares its fangs at me
instead of baying its praises to the rest of the asylum.

Just let me suppose for awhile that a poet
isn't the orphan of the absurd, that there's
a bloodline of meaning that still seeps into everything
like the dye of a black rose in the night that steeps the heart
in all frequencies and colours of the clear light of the void
that tastes like the mystic poetry of the waters of life
on the tongue of a stranger who's just wandered in from the desert,
his lips dusty with the stars he's been drinking
from an hourglass rimed with sand and salt.

I don't want to receive everything only to find out
I prayed for nothing, so I won't, but if you're
the shapeshifting creatrix of subtle intelligence
I intuit you might be sometimes when I'm alone
with the stars like a childhood that hasn't forgotten me,

and there's a sudden breeze out of nowhere
that grazes the back of my neck like a sabre of the moon
so close I could swear we were lovers in another life,
light a candle for me somewhere in the universe,
and you be the light by which the light is known.
Show me your smile like moonrise on the lake.
Let me see your eyes in the rain, so inter-reflected
they can't help shining out of everything as if
no one could keep you a secret for long, except you,
and for the moment, at least, I'm not accepting this.
Don't care if I'm painting a lifemask to put on an abyss
of molecular indifference. You should see the tears
I've smeared under my eyes to save face
with the sacred clowns I've been from time to time.

You keep your distance and I'll play hard to get as well.
You take one step toward me, and I'll go the rest of the way.
Devotion's always been a weakness of mine. One sign
and I'll light up like an esoteric zodiac that just went electric.
I'll meet you on a bridge at midnight, and I won't forget
when fire comes down to the water's edge, fire
has to use the bridge as well. Just tell me that you care,
if not for me, for all these humans that die like roadkill
stunned by the highbeams of oncoming circumstance
as if nothing in life, however rightly or wrongly,
however young or old the blood on the hands of the clock
that kills them as if they were as devoid of characteristics as you
could console them for the loss of what they dared to hold close.
That's the gamma ray burst of the protest that has kept us apart
since my innocence first started bleeding in childhood
for the impersonality that mutilates 3.5 billion years of evolution,
the sum of all our infirmities and strengths, as if there were
nothing to cherish or venerate in us, like a homeless drunk
beaten to death on a fire-escape in a back alley just for the fun of it.

That's the thorn in my heart. I watched my mother
half beaten to death three times by my father before I was seven
and it wasn't you, it was me, that picked up the ax
to put a stop to it. Who could aspire to heaven
when that's going on in the snakepit at your feet?
How do you return to your toy truck after
the cop cars and the ambulance has left with your mother
and the absence is so terrifying even the nightmares
don't dare echo an answer that isn't an atrocity of guile
that lies to a child about the good that will come out of it.

I'm sixty-four now and ever since my eyes were pryed open
like the petals of a flower that wasn't ready to bloom yet,
everywhere I look, the indignity and ferocity
of intrusive happenstance inflicting itself upon life
with a few intermittent truces to lick our wounds

like razorblades in candied apples. Yes, I stand my ground.
Knock me down. I'll get up again. And I'll carry my pain
in my heart, in my voice, in my art, my blood, my arms,
in the urn of everything I've ever cherished
like a silver eagle, a placard, a birthmark back into the tear gas
of the last crusade that never had a chance, if I must,
until the human divinity that broke the seal of our suffering,
small as our light may be now, leaves an indelible impression
upon space and time, or you, if you're there,
like the labyrinth of a fingerprint you can't ignore.

And I'm not asking for an emergency exit,
just take the gate off the entrance and let everyone in
on the secret of why everything seems so brutally true
in the bright vacancy, dark abundance of your absence,
and I'll dance with you in a garden on the moon
until the lemons turn blue as the wild grapes in late October
when you shall be my folly. And I shall be your fool.



acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

NARCISSUS LOST HIS FACE IN THE MIRROR HE STORED HIS IMAGE IN

**Narcissus lost his face in the mirror he stored his image in
while Lady Nightshade was saying grace over the wrong coffin
rats from the shipwreck were rowing ashore
in the last lifeboat with a trapdoor in it for an emergency exit.
The holy men who couldn't speak our language
without trying to fix it with an accent of their own
were recruiting for an army on the moon
to start a new crusade against futuristic infidels
who didn't share the same direction of prayer
as the wavelengths that reached the ears of the extraterrestrials
with high ideals encoded in a scripture of esoteric starmaps
that spoke like oracles stoned on volcanic gas
so when you asked how things were going,
they always answered, perhaps, in an ambiguous tone of voice.**

**I was sitting in the window of a burning house
trying to write poems that smelled like smoke to the Holy Ghost,
when you showed up like a stranger's doorway
out of my solitude like the bell of a three alarm death knell
with the smile that lingered like junkmail on the threshold
of a black hole that said jump right in, there's light
on the other side of sin if you go through this
like a death in life experience in love with cosmic bliss.
Who could forget that day you came like a muse
up the leaf strewn stairs of an abandoned orphanage
looking for a heart you could inspire with the ruse
of the poetic refuse you left in the wake of your pilgrimage
like the desolation of your absence from the earthbound
that languished in the eclipse of your innocence
like a spiritual lost and found trying to make sense of itself
like a horse with a broken leg on a zodiacal merry-go-round?**

**I felt the fangs of your crescent moons pierce my flesh
like a staple gun under a rosebush in league
with an alliance of thorns that liked to see a poet bleed
as if the great mystery of love were nothing
but a conspiratorial intrigue of sword dancers on drugs
though I did everything I could to prove to you I was wrong
about the moonrise, you weren't strong enough to be right for once
without starting a pogrom that interrogated
the light in my eyes for all those dark winter months
I never confessed, I never cried out as if ice were my only alibi.
I sat in the corner like a left-handed guitar with a dunce cap on
and wrote out lyrics that sang like the stars with a lisp**

on your celestial blackboard until I felt like Sisyphus
a note shy of pushing my heart like a moon rock over the top.

It was the immanental sixties on a grailquest
for the objective correlative of a universal paradigm
it could fight under as the sign of a revolutionary new design of chaos
that made love not war to the thunder of home-made sonic booms
in a battle of bands with saturation bombing riffs and rimshots
that urged us to surrender to the enemy as if
they were dragonflies and quarter-notes of music
in a riot of helicopters dropping tear gas over Watts.
Even the madness wasn't enough to mollify the sadness
of what we lost when everyone turned the lightshows out
in the concert halls and went back to the their atavistic law schools
to get a grip on the necks of the things they had let go of for a lark.
And the last time I saw you, before things went totally dark,
you were trying to set fire to my voice-box
like a lightning rod with bad wiring shorting out
like a bass amp on the stage of your burnt out farewell
to the audience that made a gracious bow to your frantic id
and headed for the exit like an arsonist long before you did.



acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

O, YES, THE STILLNESS COMES ALL IN ONE WAVE, ONE CARESS

O, yes, the stillness comes all in one wave, one caress,
like a tide, the salve of a cool kiss of the moon
on the scorched eyelid of a black rose that burned
like a reincarnation of fire, the dark enlightenment
the stars reach for beyond the eyes at the end
of their fingertips. The unattainability that lovers
demand of the night when they blow the candles out.

A warm gust of peace on the nape of my neck
at the base of my skull, the brain stem of the daffodil
not uprooted from the bulb of its head
by the sudden moonset of a guillotine with blood on it,
but washed in a warm rain that makes it glow
like a tungsten streetlamp in the aura of a ripe apricot
in a real garden it never expected to wake up in.

There's grace in the silence of the garrulous seance.
The ore of my labours have brought forth
a nugget of gold of inestimable age and value
among the asteroids I've been mining with my third eye,
strange translucencies that tremble like fluid jewels
when the nightwind is playing the lake like a harpsichord
and the fireflies are trying to read their starmaps like sheet music.

As if the sadness and the fear, the evolution of indifference,
the intermittent sobbing in the muffled asylum,
the terror of a child's first night in hospital,
or a long term prisoner's first night out alone on the street,
were absolved of their emotions like turbulent rivers
easing into a halcyon sea that whispers with uncanny assurance
it'll be okay, it'll be okay, just a bad dream that kept you awake.

Almost a voice I recognize that's been
following my echo for light years like one attentive star
I've caught sight of now and again on long night walks
where the eyes of wary animals glint in the dark
like a nocturnal substitute for flowers along the roadside.

One among many who shine more brilliantly but are
merely clever compared to this sibyl of compassion that turns
their furious flames down low on the night wards of the heart
and gentles the wind that plays too hard on the broad-leaved
basswood guitars of the trees troubled by the lyrics
of the cosmic dissonance that can't hear what the music's

been saying before the beginning of the universe
about suffering, about love, about the soul of matter
that's been raising the dead out of the ashes
of the urns of light like lanterns full of fireflies and stars
for 13.7 billion years now as the crow flies,
prophetic skulls aroused by the longing of the nightbirds
to add more beauty to the truth of their words,
to sing in the quantum notes of an eleven piece string theory
like a band on the corner of anywhere and the universe
banging on membranes like a pulse in the name
of a good cause, bubbles nucleating the wavelengths
of their original rapture to expand a little riff of intimate bliss
into a universal joy as pervasive as the time and space
life's jamming in like an electric violin with a blues harp,
like an emission spectrum in the starcluster of the Pleiades,
like a moment of peace blooming along the shores
of a winter mindstream like a galactic waterlily
of oceanic awareness blooming in a crystal skull
like life in the Saturnine waters of Enceladus
inconceivably thriving in a greenhouse of habitable ice.



acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

PARANOIA KILLS LIKE A FANATIC WHAT IT SUSPECTS WITHOUT CONVICTION

Paranoia kills like a fanatic what it suspects without conviction
isn't true about what it believes about thinking. It's getting
mad out here, the moon's gone rabid and the tides are awry.
Given my age and the quality of my rage tempered
like the sword I fell upon in the waters of life
more evolutionary than the revolution that dropped out
to go back to Daddy's law school like one of the fashionistas
of idealism who'd rather be wealthy and wonderful than real,
I scry the future behind me in Dr. John Dee's black mirror,
menace in the air, darkness growing like black mold
in the walls of the house of life, the garotte tightening
around the necks of those who stick out like deathbed confessions
that there are still things worth dying for that make you feel
you've wasted your life, given how little has changed.

The bees are estranged from the flowers by neonicotinoids
that go out of their way like pesticides to kill anything
anyone loves anymore, if that's still credibly possible.
I stare personally into the blank, oblivion of the door
that's opening up ahead like the threshold of a return address
and I think to myself, every groundhog's got two holes
to escape by and I can see an eyeless night at the end
of the tunnel of death littered with the corpses of star-nosed moles
that died like molecules for nothing when the light
went looking for their eyes like a convenient disguise
for seeing nothing, hearing nothing, knowing nothing,

the old stars in front of the aimless firing squads of the fireflies,
terrorists in sleeper cells of waterboarded nightmares
with mini-black holes in their hearts you can enter
like a bullet through the brain and leave by an exit-wound
through the mouth of God as the spin doctors infringe
on her copyright, factualizing the fictions, and fictionalizing
the facts like a twenty-four hour news cycle
that teaches you there's nothing personal in the way
you can't help but hate your fellow man as if
the only thing that bonded us to one another anymore
on this chromosomic coil of flypaper were the buzzing
of our anger and disgust at getting stuck without an alibi
for who we are as we plea deal for brain resistant headstones
we can hide under for the duration like cut worms in our roots.

I want to trust. I want to love. I want to seek. I want
to listen to what others speak as if we shared the same silence.
I don't want to read any more statistics about
the collateral damage of our pandemic neglect.
Twenty-five million children, give a few of them
faces and fingertips in your mind, blood your abstractions
and see your own kids in your mind with the same
quizzical look of disappointed surprise in their
blue, black, green, brown, trusting eyes when they realize
they've lived just long enough to be killed by the lies
the elect of the world tell like bedtime stories to landmines
and political screening myths proclaiming they were victimized
by the lack of happy endings for bad seeds who don't believe
in the same genetically modified creeds of wheat
it's become a violation of an industrial patent on our cells
to break with each other meiotically once and awhile
as if we really meant bread and medicine when we said
hunger and disease, tired of our guilt spoiling the health
of our featherless chickens born ready for processing
as if the hogs had found a way of shortening the food chain
like a rosary of pearls thrown like loaves and fishes into the trough.

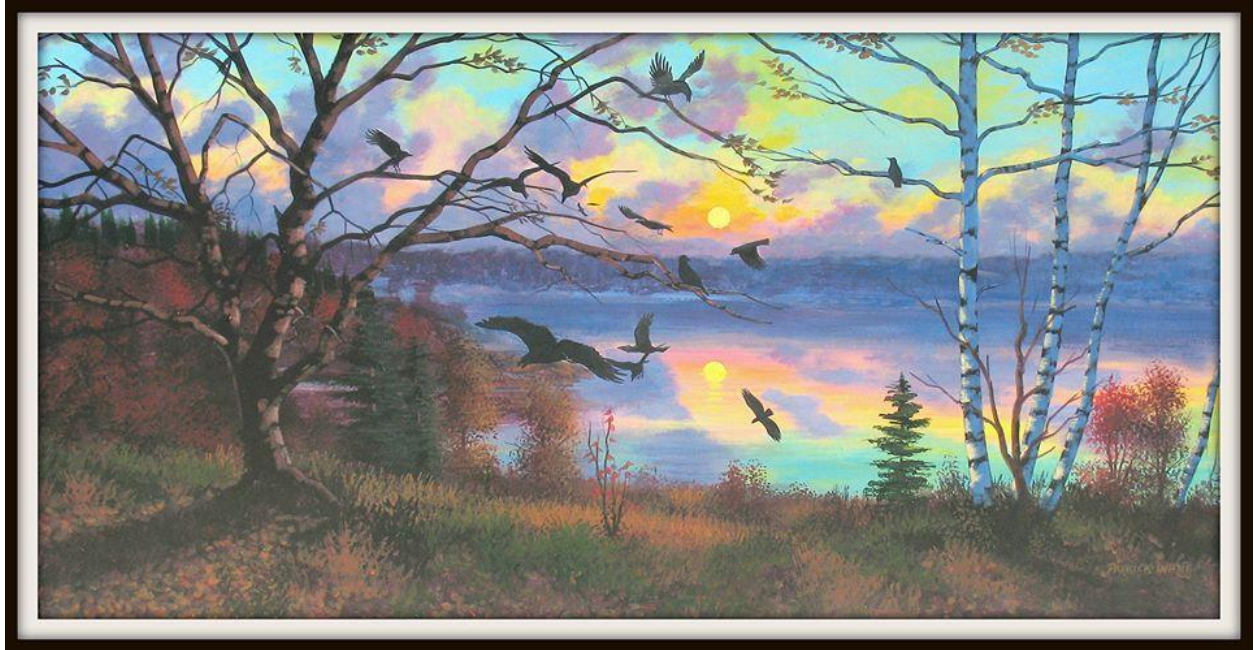
I want to look out over the valley of life as I'm leaving it
like dusk over the shoulder of a mountain I climbed
to get closer to the stars without going blind like people
who look into the face of God and think they recognize themselves.
It may be retrograde on my part to want to celebrate
in an age of desecration, but there's a beatific demon
of crazy wisdom within me that says do, dance, sing,
whether you have a reason to or not, embrace the absurdity
of dancing with the cloud shadows on the darkening hilltops
against the gathering storm of a clockwork apocalypse
on the nightshift of a graveyard where the stars go to die
because they can't live on the mean skies that make them feel
like mere satellites of the visionary fingerpaintings
we smear on our narrowing eyes like the aperture of a Cyclops.

Even if you have to sing like a soft metal alloy in a language
twisted by the mutated sensibilities of the times as
the cherry bloom cankers its perfection at Chernobyl and Fukushima
as the first sign of the fallout of a drastic spring.
Sing about anything as if there were a muse of chaos
lodged in your heart like a cardinal in an evergreen
that took over your house like a riot of homeless guests.
Dirge, dorn, whimper like a deermouse that believes
it's got Lime disease, put your hands over your ears

like a hood over the head of a red-tailed hawk
and shriek at the sky like fingernails clawing a blackboard
if you must, but find a way to go insane
that lets you sing in the asylum to yourself
sitting by the window in the artificial light of a false dawn
with an irrefutable smile on your face you don't need to wipe off
like a mirror that's getting ready to take your place in the universe.

Right here and even now where it's imminently conceivable
things will get worse and worse and worse and worse
and the dead will legislate for the living myths of origin
only the stillborn of the imagination will subscribe to,
and the dispossessed alienated by a deathmask
that slowly effaces them like a farcical masquerade
of the lives they pretend to be living for the sake of appearances
will cultivate exotic norms of madness that will conform
to the unconscionable scions of chaos living like
the mountainous echo of a moral code that couldn't restrain them
deep within where apocalypse originates not as fire or ice
but the afterbirth of a forbidden silence that never shows its face.

Even in the midst of this, Loki, a sacred clown,
a downcast harlequin with long fingers sitting disconsolately
on a beach ball as the circus packs up to move on,
a trickster crow, a dark farce of your dynastic selves
in a long hall of mirrors warped by the gravitational lies
you have to vow to the dark every night to ground the shapeshifter
you've become in your absence in the starmud
of your next astronomical catastrophe to keep
from taking your extinction personally, whatever,
whomever, whenever you have to do, make it the labour
of a capricious preference, if nothing else, to sing like a universe
to the genius of your solitude as if you were setting
a loveletter to your muse on fire to show her how
serious you are about passionately annihilating your inspiration
in the thousands of eyes she has shed like tears over the lightyears
to silver the mirrors that flow like the radiant rivers of the waters of life
from your improbable heart over the precipitous thresholds
of a homeless art that's been on this mysterious road long enough
not to close the gate after it like an exit with nothing to look forward to.



acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

LOOKING AT THE RAIN. ARE YOU LOOKING AT THE RAIN?

**Looking at the rain. Are you looking at the rain,
alone in an upstairs window of a small town
deserted except for the salt trucks sowing the road,
watching it freeze in the tarpits and stretch marks
of asphalt smeared by storefront colours
that try too hard like circuses and brothels?**

**And the people dreaming behind the makeshift veils
they can see out of into the dark, but no one ever in,
should the lights be on, and they're not. Are you
embracing yourself like a stranger in your solitude
by acclamation, no one to challenge who you must be?
And the sky glowing as if there were a fire
in the distance, you cannot see beyond
the looming rooftops, subliminally infernal,
marginally dispersed auras of infra-red
that fell off the flat earth of a pre-mixed palette?**

**I imagine you keeping your pain to yourself
like the secret name of a god you disclose to no one
for fear of them having power over you.
I imagine you trying to embody the whole mystery
of life within yourself like the improbable avatar
of all that's invisible within you like a ladder of thresholds
the light has yet to cross. Not a god or goddess
but a mystically specific human being who doubts
the divinity of her own uniqueness. Once for everything
means no two alike, but the air is saturate
with comparative metaphors in the absence of stars.**

**I imagine you remembering sporadic lovers
you were hurt by, children who abandoned you,
parents who tried but could never really understand.
Doors you slammed in anger as if you were
turning your back on yourself like a red sportscar
that kept breaking down by the side of the road.
And how you decided to go the rest of the way
like an indeterminate leaf on your own mindstream
once you decided you weren't a map to anywhere
that wasn't as evanescent as you were at cartography.**

Three hours from dawn and you're still a seance of one.
You summon lonely trains like mourners
hired for a funeral. Who's dying? Whose
deathmask are you paying homage to
by obeying the protocols of artificial respect?
I can intuit the sundial and the sanctuary
of the walled garden your heart keeps trying
to bloom in like a poppy in winter but you neglect it
like a small fire that's pleading with you to tend it
instead of letting it bleed out like a hare in the snow.

I want to console you. I want to undo the daisy chain
of razor wire you've wrapped yourself up in
like a gift to someone you think deserves it
as a mockery of everything you once cherished
but if I were to slowly emerge out of the void
into the room like an enchanted island you could be
the Circe of, you'd change like a chameleon on the spot.
You wouldn't be yourself in the confines of your loneliness.
You'd keep chanting the prophylactic mantra
of a Greek chorus in a satyr play as if
you'd just seen a hungry ghost rise up,
a *deus ex machina* through the creaking floorboards:
I am not. I am not. I am not. When, of course, you are.

So let me ease your fear by appearing
like a star you can't identify by its shining alone
through a clearing in the clouds at your window.
Let me empower you like a firefly
of the first magnitude, a mandalic insight
that inspires you, because you're weary and bored
of your colouring books, into making up
an original constellation of your own
that doesn't show up on anybody else's starmaps
but vastly improves your disaffection
with the outlook of the ashes of the zodiac
you keep in the urn of a see-through telescope
like so many burning bridges you've crossed
like an albatross with an arrow in its heart
arcing across the sky, martyred by a curse
on the long, cold, barren beach of your windowsill.

Be Circe awhile and throw your pearls like a full moon
before swine that used to be men you couldn't turn to
for nautical advice when they were shipwrecked
on the same shore you walk in isolation now.

**Believe in the power of your own madness
to work wondrous transformations at either end
of your modes of seeing that are the lore
of blind poets, and the legends of your shining
more creatively intriguing than the war stories of Helen.
If all is lost, you don't need to compete
with winning anymore. Paris throws the apple away
and says to the three goddesses, you choose
among yourselves. This is not a creation myth.**



oil, 16 by 20 inches

IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER YOU AS YOU WERE

**If only I could remember you as you were
for a few, brief radiant moments as indelible
as light in space and not as time would have it
the way things have changed. To see you
lingering in the doorway on a winter night,
the snow lying lightly on your hair like the Pleiades
over your shoulder descending below the treeline
as if it knew more about saying good-bye than you did,
and o how I loved you for it. If only I could
remember that lonely ghost of a mirage
that hovered over the watershed of your tears
and looked at me like the first lifeboat
you'd seen in a thousand years respond
to your s.o.s. in a hourglass. If only I could remember
the fragrance of the summer rain on your skin
as if it had mistaken you for one of the flowers
and how I used to like wiping your tears away
with my opposable thumb like plum blossoms from your cheeks.**

**Eternity coming to the surface of time
like old corduroy roads and bones in a makeshift graveyard.
Not likely I'll ever see you again in this life
but if only I could remember you before circumstance
underwhelmed itself and killed the ambiance
of our last dance by turning all the lights on at once.**

**But there you go, no help for it. The nightbird
transits the moon and the eternal sky as is said in Zen
doesn't inhibit the flight of the white clouds.
And this moment, too, though it's endured
a thousand deaths to come to this afterlife,
always saying good-bye to some aspect of you
that symbolizes the evanescence of love and life
in metaphors that buff the open wound
like scar tissue on the moon, like fireflies
welding living insights into the dead brain coral
of this encyclopedic coma life
can sometimes seem without you, even after
all these ensuing misadventures it would take a fire
and half a dozen bottles of wine to tell you about
if only I could remember you as you once were
like the lamb that laid down with the lion without fear.**

For light years, images of you have flashed out of the abyss
as sharp and quick and vital as moonlight
wielding a sabre, or a bird quickened by a purpose
out of the unknown into the unknown
and I recognize them as blossoms that have blown
far from the tree that was lovelier
than the whole orchard to me, though angels
attended upon it like scripture from its roots to its leaves,
you were the locust tree with your demonic thorns
I wanted to tear my heart on like a rag of blood
on the galactic razorwire that encircled your heart
like a storm of dark matter with unlimited potential
for creative destruction that got the light out of the way
long enough for us to see what glowed behind it.
If only I could remember you as you were
when we both made eye-contact with each other
like exo-planets in the void, and understood spontaneously
it wasn't going to take much of a wavelength
for either of us to understand this immediately
as if we could read each other's shadows like Mayan calendars.

Water hemlock, wild parsnip, sometimes
the memories scald like volcanic dew on bare skin,
but seldom have I ever regretted
that I lived through you for awhile,
when the stars raged in my heart like a madman
obsessed by the crazy wisdom of a woman
who had the wingspan of a bow on a bent event horizon
but knew enough about compassion
to push the burning arrow of my fascination with her
all the way through like a blood sacrifice to love and life
and the mystery that moved in the darkness up ahead
like the fork in the road that separated us,
like a wishbone that had granted all it had to give.

How tenderly painful the brevity of what
we actually relive again as if some moments in life
are illuminated by a different light than that
we read by in bed late into the night
looking for translucency in the windows of insight
that keep on opening their eyes in this recurrent dream
like the black waterlilies of new moons coming into bloom.



oil, 2 by 4 feet

HITCH HIKING OUT TO RICHARDSON FOR DISCOUNT CIGARETTES

Hitch hiking out to Richardson for discount cigarettes.
A hundred and fifty cars go past, someone counting sheep
in a dream that's got nothing to do with me.
I may look like a pauper but my vehicular inferiority
is more than compensated for by what I can see
close up and intimately in the grass, and the sun
on the brawn of my arms protruding from a tank top
like the Bronze Age. I'm a Mycenaean setting sail
on the surge of the wind in the gladiatorial reeds
of the oceanic cattails at peace with the rage of the world.

The dusty white clay of the road chalks my runners
like blackboards of starmud in the Burgess Shale.
Six miles and I can already feel my femurs
starting to take on the air of fluted pillars
as my muscles stretch around the block
like hemophiliacs at a bloodbank gasping for oxygen.

I stick out my thumb like a spectator in the Colosseum,
neither up nor down, not the first nor the last crescent
of the trigger of the moon, one road in a yellow wood
as if I had no opinion on whether the defeated
should live or die and I stare straight into the eyes
of the windshields like the Pythian oracles of Delphi
with no life left in them as they whizz by without breaking stride.
Nice try. Let them live. Empathy for the hell of it.

Swathes of grass the road crews cut. Rags
of chicory and Queen Anne's Lace have learned to duck.
Mandalic starclusters, doilies of brocade
in an ageing house of life, have you ever noticed
how they fold their spokes up after they're flowerless
like inverted umbrellas into the most elegant nests
as if they've been tooled like Faberge egg cups?

I look across the open fields to the albino scars
of the birch in the border bush rows of a Euclidean theorem
about where to plant the cocker-spanieled ears of corn.
I see neolithic villages in the spikes of the wheat
as I have in the bleached hair of the blondes
I've gone out with wondering if it's the ergot on the stalk
that engenders the little tree of the magic mushroom
that walks you through the stations of the Eleusinian mysteries
so you're never the same after that, and why

**in Islam the staff of life is considered forbidden fruit
if it isn't at least as hallucinogenic as the gods
growing paranoid about how much we may and may not know.**

**Candelabra of purple loosestrife, vetch and clover,
and the evening primrose that reminds me
of all those sunsets I spent cooling off in paradise
with a woman more earthbound than Lilith or Eve
who believed in the way I painted the petals
of English ox-eyed daisies the wind had dishevelled
like matchbooks some boy had pryed open
like people and steeples before they were ready to bloom.**

**Black rimless shades. Do I look like a serial killer?
I feel like a mendicant Zen poet on my way to Eido
in Tokugawa Japan, minus the hossu and the fan.
Life overgrows itself, a niche-dweller, in the culvert,
the fence post, the asteroid belt of gravel I'm walking on,
no occasion for flourishing overlooked, its stillness
in a hurry as I am not, the milkweed nursing
its Monarch butterflies, the pampas grass
preening its plumes like the quills of hieroglyphs,
what a riot of overstatement it takes to make its point
as if there was a point to it all in the first place.**

**A yellow Mustang muscles its middle-aged paint job by
polished like an enamel buttercup, but it's not
going to stop as it sucks the dragonflies up like krill
through its grill, cruising for sulphur butterflies
that gives it that jaundiced colour as if Van Gogh
had been eating his chrome yellow again. Avaunt ye,
knave, I'm the errant dragon knight that isn't
going to save you from the damsel as she says
soft shoulders go slow before she drives you off the road.
Part of looping like an eternal recurrence
through time I guess. But, yellow, man, yellow.
That's a bad guess. Don't you remember what
Henry Ford said. I don't care what colour you paint them
as long as they're black? How wide does
that racing stripe of yellow down your back
need to be before you realize you look like the lines
of a passing lane? Not cruel, brother, just got to
vent a little at your sin of omission. Where do you
park your horse, cowboy, at the drugstore?
You ride on like the Lone Ranger. Tonto'd rather walk.**

A raccoon's severed paw at my feet, the catatonic full moon
of an empty Tim Horton's cup trying to civilize
pagan Germania in the Teutoburg Forest, brown paper bag
from the liquor-store, I'm in the middle of a modern midden
that runs like a country highway through a landfill.
Who needs the NSA when you can take on the identity
of what you throw away? Don't underestimate
the power of the earth to remember and redress.
Wherever you keep your garbage. That's where your home is.

Two miles more and my lungs are alien atmospheres
trying to cling to a habitable planet like an aura of air
laced with diesel fuel, hot asphalt, carbon monoxide.
The Taliban of the wild parsnip throws acid in my face.
A thousand yards of silence punctuated by birdsong
flooding the woods after the roar of the long thought trains
passing bumper to bumper like Bactrian camels
on the Silk Road behind a driver asserting his will
by mean-heartedly doing the speed limit to live forever
like an accident waiting to happen to a self-righteous caterpillar.

The road grows long. I'm doing my time standing up
like a red blood cell on a pilgrimage to the shrine
of the goddess of nicotine at the eastern doors
of the burial hut of Smokin' Eagles, until my bones are dust,
and my spirit's gone south with the Canada geese.
Whenever I make a truce with the world
I stuff my peace pipe with tobacco and pass it around.
In another life I think I might have been a hookah.
I'd rather be killed by the thing I love than something
I didn't have any feelings for. You can live
three lifetimes more a moment when you're happier
than you can when you're doing it by a book
you didn't write. Still think its dangerously debilitating
to be too wholesome like the smell of bread in a denatured bakery
that reeks of frustrated capitalism. The angels
only know one side of things. They're cyclopic.
The demons have two eyes like we do. They're stereoscopic.
Who knows? Maybe I'm dropping ashes on the Buddha?

As an SUV pulls over to the side of the road behind me
with the smile of a friendly New Brunswicker
who's been living in Innisville for the last thirty years
and he immediately puts me at my ease because
I can tell he's the real thing, a decent human being,
and I start talking cheerful normalese to prove

I'm definitely not a serial killer. Peace, brother,
beauty, love, the sixties fifty years later just got
into your car and to judge by that light show in your eyes
you were there, as an unspoken vision of life
binds us to this road we'll travel down awhile together
like two passing strangers as the night approaches
the simple kindness and sincere gratitude of the encounter.
All part of the spiritual evolution of two retrograde revolutionaries
looping back on themselves like the second innocence
of the return journey, better than the first,
like green wine from wild grapes that's had a chance
to age the dream awhile like coopers in our heartwood.

And too close to death to lie, still wonder what
it was all about. Did it do any good? Have we lived it well
over all these intervening light years we've been
holding it together like god particles without sacrificing
the creative freedom that comes with being vast
and spaced out. Did the effortless meaninglessness
of our evanescence ever make a difference to anything?
A chaos of fireflies or a cosmic array of stars in the sky,
one thing for sure, we'll be long gone by the time
the light gets to where it's going so the circle,
even squared with the way things seem, remains unbroken.



acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

WRITERS STRIVING SO HARD TO BE UNLIKE ONE ANOTHER

Writers striving so hard to be unlike one another
as they're looking for new similitudes between themselves
and the many in the one, the one in the many,
everyman writing the autobiography of his loss of identity.
Everywoman etching hers with her fingernails
like grafitti on a glass ceiling breaking
like chandeliers of rain along the fault lines
of a shift in continental plates. Captain of a dreamliner
I set myself adrift like a lifeboat a long time ago.
I sing to my own silence whenever I want to be heard.

Savagely vatic, a wry surrealist with mystic outcomes
I rely on too much, I can see the horror and the humour
in the sublimity of the black, morality farce
that gets laid over your face like a death mask
people can recognize you by like a patina of soot
on the thin chapbooks of the butterflies sipping
from a Venus fly trap like the wellspring of the muse.

Young, in a room that doubled for a shrine,
I had a dark genius for making people mad.
Later, as islands emerged out of my magmatic rage,
my fist relaxed and I acquired a grace for making them cry
but that was still the lunar achievement of a journeyman
watergilding children walking skinless through the world,
wrapping their tears in the iridescent sheen of the night sky
like a lullaby that had compassion for their dreams.

Master of nothing now, working in the creative freedom
of an abyss that entices me out of myself
like nature into the vacuum of an unknown medium
when I'm not a genie on call, I can hear the laughter
of the sacred clowns in the iconic guildhalls
of a little skill, more yielding than a thousand acres
you can carry around with you for life like the voice
of a nightbird that knows how to penetrate the dark
like the embodiment of a longing that asks for nothing back.
Ripples on the waters of life. Echoes in solitude.
If I shine, I shine without deliberation. If I love
I rise like foxfire from the ashes of the inspiration.

Ragged in the cloak of a noble calling, sometimes
I'm wrapped in darkness like the skeletal kite
of a troubled bat that can hear more than it can say.
The night is not a reward, but there's never
a credible alibi for not laughing at yourself
for the crazy wisdom of an allegorical starmap
trying to get you to sit still like a fixed star
for your astral portrait in eighteenth dynasty starmud
glazed in Babylonian lapis lazuli and copper from the moon.
The gesture of a Mosaic snake among the pharaoh's magicians,
I wear the jester's cap of a daylily when the stars
look into my eyes too seriously to see what keeps me burning
after so many light years away from the island universe
on which I was born. Life, the mystery of perishing perennially,
there's a hidden secret to being clear that supersedes the obvious.

And when death calls for it, I gouge my eyes out
like symbolic jewels embedded in the underworld
so I can envision the eschatology of meanings
trying to justify their ends as if death had embarrassed them
by not making any sense they could cling to for solace in life.
I celebrate the absurdity of the insight death brings forth
like a firefly with the candlepower of billions of stars.
How the mighty must fall to appreciate the magnificence
of their own insignificance raised up like a grain of sand
to keep the pyramids in perspective like studs on Orion's belt.

I enjoy a hermetic social life among a variety
of prophetic skulls, but even the moon isn't a palliative
for my solitude when I hallucinate the fate that awaits me
like a lover at every corner of my coffin. Pay the mourners
before the tears on their cheeks are dry. Didn't I write
the most amazing odes to catch their beauty on the fly?
Didn't I publish the names of the flowers and the stars
that moved my spirit to give them something
to remember me by like the lyrical elation
of an unpredictable moonrise? Didn't I emblazon
the heraldry of new constellations with argent starmaps
on the shield walls of exoskeletons in the Burgess Shale?
Wasn't my madness enough to convince the shore-huggers
of the imminent dangers of an oceanic awareness
beyond the eyes of their circumspect tidal pools?

**Came a time when I realized it crucially necessary
to be given up for lost like a heretic with nothing to confess
but forgiveness for the spiritual search parties
in the labyrinths of everybody's fingertips in order
to decipher a way out of here like Braille hieroglyphs
breaking trail like a cul de sac in a desert of stars.
Don't the homeless still seek shelter within
the boundary stones of the firepits I left in my wake
like lost and founds along the way I had to take?
Don't gauge the size of the city by the measure of its gates.
Exits don't always live up to the expectations of the entrance.
Sometimes the sunset disappoints the dawn.**

**And then here and gone all things turn around in a heartbeat
like the wind and the sea, and the toxicity of tomatoes,
and all those weathervanes we used to flip through
like telephone books with tenure, set in their ways
like wet cement, appear cumbersomely contrived and shallow
beside the depths of the nightbirds singing
in the shadows of the moonrise they're drowning
their voices in like stars in the throats of autumn trees
with their hearts in their mouths like the taste of wild blackberries.**



acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

BORN INTO POVERTY AND HUMILIATION

**Born into poverty and humiliation and the degradation
of a woman at the hands of a man who said he once loved her,
had to have her for the world, begged and pleaded,
achieved her and then tried to put her out like a dance step
he was learning to do with a cigarette-butt in the dirt.**

**Not a humiliation of mine, not a degradation of me
I didn't have the rage and discipline to overcome,
but the boyish impotence of watching her suffer
day after day, the occlusion of the light and human warmth
she was to four frightened children who were witness
to their black out father's swarming drunks
when he got out of jail like a hive of killer bees
and she were too isolated and hurt to keep
anything back from me, the eldest, her sounding post,
who couldn't do anything to help her except
pray to an unforgiving god to let him grow up in time
to murder his father while he was still conscious enough
to feel the bright steel of a son's sterling blood
shuck the flint knapped oyster of his heart
to see if there were ever a pearl inside I could pluck out
like the evil eye of a mad moonrise on another binge.**

**As my mother withdrew like an ice age into herself
I tried to decipher her tears like unbroken circles of rain
in the heartwood of a young boy's smashed guitar.
A strawberry heart with the savage scar of the moon
across the bass string of her throat like a martyr
garotted by what she had to go through to survive
her own life with four kids she controlled like the damage
done by love on the rampage that had trampled them.**

**I'm not a Momma's boy. She didn't cling to my brother
and I like an umbilical cord on a burning box kite
and we took more than our quota of self-destructive
chances in the world to prove to ourselves we might yet
outgrow the stigma of being men in the image of our father.
And the rough-hewn diamonds in my two sister's eyes,
as well as my mother's intransigent independence
to sacrificially transcend her circumstances at all costs,
long before the feminist revolution, I took it for granted,
all women who had grown up poor were as liberated
as the life-nurturing events of underwater volcanoes**

breast feeding the ocean like islands of drowned sailors
that had smashed against the rocks of their seafaring wills.
Viking mermaids in bobbi-sox and saddle shoes
who sang alluringly to their vagrant boyfriends
they weren't amused by the course they had set for themselves
by relying on their starmaps like mythically inflated safety nets
as they lowered the Titanic like a lifeboat on the moon
they inherited from their parents like shipwrights in drydock.

Pull yourself up out of poverty by your bootstraps, Paddy.
Get an education. And I thought, why was that? No one
going to lower the bucket to help pull me out of the birth canal
I fell into like the wrong housewife? And I did. Amo, amas, amat,
amamus, amatis, amant. I was taught civilization owed
everything it stole from the poor to agriculture,
and ruining a few wolves by turning them into sheep-dogs.
Animal husbandry that culls the people like roadkill.
I don't think that anymore. My teachers were the dupes
of the lie they benignly bought into to keep their jobs.

Civilization, government, law, education, economics,
no more than the pine-scented deodorant the rich use
to disguise the blood musk of the abattoirs
slowly butchering the poor emotionally, creatively,
imaginatively as a kind of collateral damage
like torn beavers, wrecked muskrats, meaty groundhogs
water-logged in a ditch the turkey-vultures administer
like bankers and undertakers eating the guts out of
as the rich pass by every summer casually on their way
to the vacation cottage that will enable them
to get back to nature, ravening on the fat of the poor
like the American dream or whatever passes for one
in Canada from the floor of the House of Commons.

The rich sustain their vision of a good life like ants
eating the eyes out of the heads on the soft shoulders
of a way of life that has made them arrogant, stupid
and extinctually feeble. You know what civilization is
when you boil the fat out of chaos, it's a deodorant
for the rich and powerful, corrupt, hateful, and mendacious
to smell like herbivores instead of overseas bloodbanks
that stain their teeth and lips red in claw and fang
like a dowdy, middle-aged political rose smearing
thick lipstick like dubbin on her waterproof mouth
she's lies through as if life were a strawberry milkshake
she's sucking the bubbles of the bottom up

through the proboscis of a straw longer than the budget
she proposes to make everyone else but her go first?

I studied history at university. The filthy rich
and their inconsequential bloodlines like varicose veins
that have grown stiff with the plack of their porky progeny
killing the poor of one country off against another
then flying like Churchill to Poland to sit down with Stalin
to see who gets to imperialize the cadavers
in the boneyards of Europe behind Roosevelt's back,
because the U.S. is still too much of an ingenue
to know how to use a secret police force effectually
over port and cigars to keep a strangle hold on the people
they hang from meat hooks like abstract eviscerations
of foreign policy, as if flesh and blood had nothing to do with it.

Look at their bodies scotched by overindulgence
and privilege, see them naked at a photo-op
squealing like pigs at a trough living in their own shit
as Napoleon said of Talleyrand like excrement
in a silk stocking. Imagine history sitting on a toilet
listening to the vital organs of an overfed sea cow
like a trickle down theory of economics claiming
as it breaks like a political wind in an executive bathroom,
it can eat your food for you as a way of filling your empty bellies
with the crumbs and fins of the loaves and fishes
it feeds on as if it eliminates through the same bung hole
of a mouth it feasts with. Monostomes. Look it up.

Who hasn't compiled a secret hit list of black ops
to be meted out contractually like an apocalyptic mode
of creative street justice for the atrocities they had to swallow
like bad medicine in an age of nuclear miracles
where the rich eat pearls and gold to avoid the black plague
of the fleas that docked their yachts in Genoa, or Cape Cod,
to teach Europe first and now North America
to the chagrin of the McCarthyite clones of Ted Cruz
and the feudal Republicans, death is an equal opportunity Democrat
that treats everyone fairly without distinction
like a plague rat chewing through the morgues of Congress?
Imagine that. The high and mighty brought low
by a little bug the NSA didn't plant in the name
of the panic button on homeland security
genetically modifying the collective unconscious of the mob
like the super id of Monsanto in a cornfield of dreams
killing the bees and the Monarch butterflies with neonicotinoids

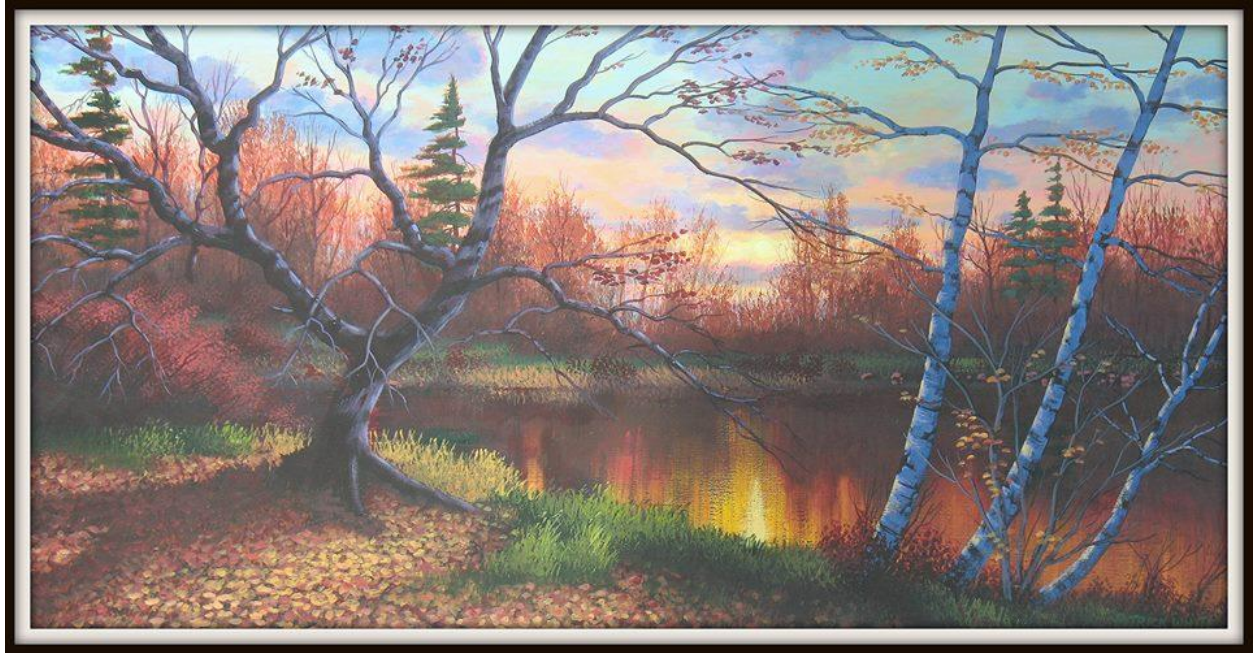
as surely as the Germans used Zyklon B at Auschwitz
or Assad fumigated the suburbs of Damascus with sarin gas.

Whatever direction the wind blows, World War I
all over again. Rumsfeld peddling mustard gas
and the dragonfly helicopters to deliver it to Baghdad
against the Iranians and the Kurds like cologne to a dictator
with sons more subordinately vicious than their old man
smiling like a Pacific dawn on the smog of Los Angeles.
And don't tell me the terrorists don't roam in packs
of rabid pit bulls tearing a child on her way to school apart.
Or the profiteering capitalists in the black markets
of the wars they start don't think the poor are the reason
they suffer, and don't take anyone's pain to heart but their own.
Or the poor themselves don't eat their own when
there's nothing else in the house of life to chew on
but the gummy cliches of the snake-oil politicians
selling them the artificial fangs of yesterday's vampires
as if everyone were entitled to a bloodbank of their own
as an antidote to the poisons they ingest like their daily bread.

Looking for a happy ending to the black farce
of the life you're living? Who can blame you? I don't.
Every little piggy's got to get its own, every dog,
its bone, only so much time and then forever and forever
and forever, nothing to look forward to, nothing
behind you to look too kindly upon. Nothing but
a waterclock of empty moments to preoccupy you
with how minisculely irrelevant everything is at a distance
that disappears into itself like a blackhole
nothing can get out of, the bones of star-nosed moles
buried alive like tubers that groped the dark
with the green tentacles of their eyes awhile
and then withered like used condoms that have the feel
of the skin of old men in a wet dream. Life peaks
like an amoeba on a mountaintop, fish in the sky
out of their heights, a few astronauts like dust
on a starmap, lies that binge in the mouths
of corrupt politicians crying big slow tears
of crocodile saliva for the victims of their hydrophobia.

I wish I had a dad in the grave I could lay flowers upon
and talk to in the intimacy of the eternal silence
like a son that went fishing with his lighthouse of a father
and got lost at sea on the moon as my mother
called out to us from the far shore like a foghorn into

the forlorn dampness of an impending echo in the air
of a recurring nightmare that ended with a dove descending
as if somebody cared enough to return the message.
Three bells and all's well. Or straight from the heart
of Julian of Norwich, all shall be well, all shall be well,
and all manner of things shall be well. Instead of this hell
that, too, shall pass. Like a kidney stone we pissed out
like a diamond in the rough. Like the ostrakon of an asteroid
with our name on it coming at us like a right cross
to the jawbone of the asses braying like pundits on tv
as if this were Periclean Athens, spinning fables
of oracular equality at the beginning of democracy
for those of the citizenry rich enough to be free,
and for the rest of the mob, the afterbirth of what's left.
Optimistic autopsies chalked like flow charts
on the godforsaken sidewalks of the stillborn.



acrylic, 2 by 4 feet

AND SHOULD IT COME TIME TO SPEAK OF THE SADNESS

And should it come time to speak of the sadness
that reaches fruition in the medicine bag of the heart,
don't bring a teacher that can't heal by singing and dancing
to the wounded discipline of a lost art that's gone
into the sacred solitude of the secret suffering
that upholds the integrity of the silence in your eyes.
This is a seeing that has nothing to do with truth or lies
or the innovative causality of pain. Don't speak
of its release as enlightenment or liberation,
as if you were uncaging doves from the ashes of your voice.
Don't seek what has eluded you when you're cloaked
in an eyeless night like the screening myth of a lonely alibi.

And should it come time to speak of the sadness
don't humble the message at the expense of the medium you choose
to weep in when the hidden urges you into the open
like a dragonfly emerging from the hovel of a chrysalis
into a palace of air with the wingspan of your diaphanous windows
beaded in tears like the afterbirth of the rain
in the post-natal mirrors of your indefinable awareness of life
as the sweetest agony of sorrow transformed into bliss
you ever had to endure like the darkest night
of a sea change in the unforeseeable nature
of your inconceivable soul trying to emulate
the unknown likeness you shapeshift to accommodate
the arrival and departure of everything you've ever had to let go of
like summer stars, and waterbirds, and legendary ordeals of love
when the full moon so often filled the empty silos of your longing
with the unsuccessful harvests of hungry ghosts
that competed with the sparrows and the scarecrows
for the seeds of a garden the wind neglected to sow.

And should it come time to speak of the sadness
that saturates all human affairs in an aura of mourning
that hangs in the air like a mingling of swords and bells,
don't pretend your life was a nuclear winter of unrelieved misery
when everyone knows if it weren't for trying to cling to joy
or even the longing for it, you might have smiled your way
through everything like the cold stone of the moon.
Remember those thoughts that used to come
like snakeoil salesmen that greased their sinusoidal way
into your heart like coiled serpent fire that mesmerized you
like the blue bird of happiness on your own projections

until the promise wore thin, and all your ploys at joy
turned out to be nothing but the hucksterism of tapeworms?
And, then, as it sometimes happened more often in autumn
than spring, your heart soared like a guitar with a broken string
taking wing like a waterbird off your tears
until you burned out like a comet with an uplifting message
in a niche that was meant for candles with slower wicks?
That kept you hanging onto life like a burning box kite didn't it?

And should it come time to speak of the sadness
like a sin of omission that overpowers us all eventually
because the best things we promised ourselves
were never unattainable and the joy we sought and fought
and laboured for, and did not find, was barely explainable
even to us who became experts in grinding mirages into lenses
to reveal where it might be hiding somewhere in the universe
right under our noses. Up close and as intimate as our eyes.



oil, 24 by 36 inches

GREAT PAN IS DEAD

Great pan is dead and a frenzied terror spread over the Greco-Roman world like the abysmal dread of nothing as two and a half millennia later the god of the Christocentrics expired for not living up to its mythically inflated reputation for resurrection and gentleness. Corporations are people, too. La, la, etc. Is it a sin to lie to the dead? Who took God's confession on his deathbed? Was he forgiven for the deathmasks of horror he wore like the black robes and executioner's hoods of the Court of the Star Chamber of the sexually sadistic Inquisition? Psychotic thought police in a world without the internet, despite the connectivity of all life to the same convulsive nervous system on the rack, a hundred thousand women burned at the stake for witchcraft in the seventeenth century like a holy act to keep the aniconic dream grammars of their blackest magic from contaminating the superstitious demotic of the common people who stood by and watched the flesh drip off their bodies like candles as if something rigorously severe and good had been done here.

Loopholes in the lobbyists of the law they hung themselves with like the old woman to whom was given a strong rope as Muhammad whom the Muslims aren't listening to pointed out as an example of what not to do, who unwound it into a thousand and one weak threads like Sunnis and Shias trying to decapitate each other's heads before wisdom reached for the henna to die their hair red with blood. I don't think Leo the Tenth was what

Jesus meant, or Muhammad would marry his daughter to Muqtada al Sadr as the Taliban murder Fatima at the Battle of the Camel for learning to read the Koran straight from the lips of Allah. Did you forget Muhammad liked prayer, women, and perfume best, not the smell of cordite, misogyny, the revenge of the cursed upon the blessed.

Your mother, your mother, your mother, then your father, knows, haqq al yaquin, with certainty of sight, what it's like to carry you in her womb, from a gob of starmud to the improvised explosive device of a terrorist going supernova in the marketplace where she shopped for your food, as if she gave a fig about how she raised you, Allahu akbar, to surrender to a god, bismallah, ar Rahman, ar Rahim, with a will greater than your own. Alif, baa, taa, thaa, jim, as if the word were still mightier than your AK-47's magazine.

**You make orphans and widows of the life
you were charged to protect as mujahdeen.
Are the refugees still leaving Mecca for Medina?
Read the Hadith with your sister. Don't you get the impression
Muhammad was a man with humanity and compassion you'd like to meet,
or give up your seat for on a bus, or run a foot race with
as if you were creatively competing with the spirit
of the female principle of Aisha in all of us, keeping us alive
like the roses of Shiraz or the mole on a young slave girl's cheek
in Samarkand, the mighty capitol of Timur the Lame Khan.**

**Spare me the lectures, the details, the fatwahs, the sermons,
the theological alibis, the Hanbali miscegenations,
the creationist lies in the dark ages of the night schools
of Texas and North Carolina. I seek knowledge
like evolution even as far as China, that Sufi state
of mind, or Ardoch, Ontario, where the crows squabble
like creosote in the Selkirk chimney pots of the cold morning.**

**And as I've grown foolishly into a wisdom unbecoming my age
I remember to be grateful for my ignorance as much as I am
for everything that didn't happen but could have
like something I deserved more than it was willing
to rat me out for. I don't make a sacrifice to myself
like Wodin on the axis mundi, or Jesus on the cross,
of the people I fall in love with like tares and wild asters
in the starfields that keep expanding my imagination
like dark energy in the subconscious coalbins
of a diamond cutter's eye for the facets of translucency
that pass through me like spearheads of the chandeliers
that light up the waters of life with luminous tears of glass
that fall like polished lenses of rain into the housewells
of the Palace of Versailles, or even, more profoundly,
the black reflection of the Taj Mahal in a momento mori**

**of mystically erotic moonlight, everything opening
and closing like waterlilies and uncultivated orchids,
each according to their own unique waterclocks
with a sense of timing absolutely crucial
to the relativity of their contents revealed
like a unified field theory love longing for the superlative
discovered lightyears ago when everyone
was looking the other way like gods at a thief stealing their fire
right from under their eyes like the industrial secret
of a burning dove on a midnight shift of factory stars**

creating the heavier elements of life like your starmud
in a flood of light that made everything more obviously clear
than the false dawn in the apple core of your nuclear reactor.

Wash your eyes clean of your self in tears, stop mourning
your mirages because they disappear like mirrors into the dark
to show you what a real constellation looks like
when Gabriel-Jabreel turns on the lights in the seventh heaven
as if the picture-music's never over, and death
isn't a curfew imposed on when you leave or not
with someone you love as if you'd never met before
but in truth, when the iris in her eyes unlocks
the security alarms on your heart, you forgot, didn't you,
she was the blessing you swore on your holy life never to?

How many plane loads of pilgrims ago was that?
How many Arab villages of gore can be crammed
into the psyche of a video game in an abattoir
as killing takes on the lifestyle of G.I. Joe gone
mercenary in the Hundred Years War for oil
as the fourth estate of the Vatican and France
foam at the mouth like rabid dogs to foment
a holy war to clear the garbage out of Europe
by murdering their way into being made men,
capos in the Mafia of paradise, first, by slaughtering
the Albigensians, then greasing Jerusalem in human fat
and the blood of a gang-raped rose that hemorrhaged
like a virgin with immaculate conceptions of love?

Villains, villains, villains, villains everywhere, black
and white, fundamental, lock, load, fire,
no trembling, no doubt, no hesitation, dead eye
on the target, boom, and your Freudian phallus
ejaculates like an apocalyptic moment of sexual devotion
to the stone age of a gun that's still just a rock or a bone
in the hands of a chimpanzee going ballistic
though it's the weapons that have evolved, not
the apes that use them like a flying buttress or a crutch
to keep their end of things up like a penis on a gargoyle
on a Gothic cathedral of sado-masochistic ideals.

Great Pan is dead. God is dead. The Mahdi
hasn't shown up in over a hundred years, Moses
is too old to go up the mountain again and Jesus,
though he is supposed to for Muslims and Christians alike
isn't coming back to this mad house for love of a second life

**no way, no how, never again, after Birkenau
and the Khmer Rouge in the killing fields of Laos,
after Damascus and Baghdad, Sabra, Shatila,
after Aurora, Newtown and the wells of Deir Yasin,
Wall Street, the big, tough, dumbed-down, fanatical Republicans
spitting Obamacare out of their mouths like vicious brats
that can't take their own medicine, and wouldn't
save a kid's life if it cast a shadow of compassion
on the baksheesh of the profit margins of their fascist ideologies
goose-stepping to the corporate boom-times of an oil drum
humping the shepherds of the black camel like a Sufi sign
of the end times. Hell is Judgement Day left to our own discretion.**

**Hell is a pharmaceutical company letting hundreds of thousands
in Africa die by denying them the medicine they need
to stay alive, just to keep the price high in Pakistan and India.
Hell is a mediocrity perniciously opposed to any standard
of human excellence that might show it up by contrast
for what it is to the mob it's trying to involve
in a conspiracy of shadows against its own enlightenment.
Hell makes it a crime to break loaves and fishes on a hillside
like food stamps for the victims of the biblical famines
of the New York Stock Exchange and the thick batter of fat
the rich insulate their white collar hearts in to perpetrate
their gluttony like a board room crime against humanity.**

**Money mints the human like counterfeiters in the spring.
Cash flows like green foliage but no birds sing.
Slumlords alienate the humanism of their daughters.
Sons dread the prospect of becoming their fathers.
You get the picture, the litany of horrors. Hell
looks like any other day on earth, the politicians
trivializing the desecration of millions as a matter
of policy to humiliate and deprive the people
trying to hate them out of office as a rejection
of their ravenous, clumsy, sexually inept egos.**

**Big vacuum. Void. Bardo state. Gap between
cosmic neurons. First we string our spinal cords
like spider silk between opposites, then we lie down
like suspension bridges, or the sky goddess Nut
for others to cross to the other side
of the firewalking thresholds we are, because
things have a way of burning behind us don't they?**

**Bored with the dialectical history of themselves,
conceptual shadow lives of flesh and blood,
they turn the light around, invariably, and it's
as dark as midnight at noon, a diamond in a heart of coal,
when the dusk plays false with its beginning
and the dawn gets involved in a whole, new love affair
as if the first and the last were quantumly entangled
in other's wavelengths like the Pleiades among the willows
stripped bare of their sorrows like black queens
in a beehive of light making honey out of the darkness
in the starfields of the magnificent wildflowers
spreading like fireweed through our baleful herb gardens
as slowly the future devolves into its arcane tomorrows.**



oil, 18 by 24 inches

Post Scriptum

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PATRICK WHITE is the former poet laureate of Ottawa. He has published nine books of poetry: *Poems* (Soft Press), *God in the Rafters*, (Borealis), *Stations* (Commoner's Books), *Homage to Victor Jara*, (Steel Rail Press), *Seventeen Odes*, (Fiddlehead Books), *Orpheus on Highbeam*, (Anthos Books), *Habitable Planets, New and Selected Poems*, (Cormorant Books), and *The Benjamin Chee Chee Elegies*, (General Store Publishing), *Azael* (cdris/Primitiva). His work has been translated into five languages and appears in hundreds of national and international periodicals and anthologies, including the likes of *Poetry* (Chicago), *Dalhousie Review*, *Texas Quarterly*, the *Fiddlehead*, and *Georgia Review*, etc. Winner of the Archibald Lampman Award, Canadian Literature Award, Benny Nicholas Award for Creative Writing, he was also a runner-up for the Milton Acorn People's Poet Award. Founding editor and publisher of *Anthos*, a *Journal of the Arts*, Anthos Books, and producer-host of *Radio Anthos*, a popular literary radio show. George Woodcock wrote of his *Selected Poems* in the *Ottawa Citizen*: *He promises to be one our best and best respected poets*. Sharon Drache, in the *Kingston Whig Standard*: *He might well win the Nobel Prize one day in his own inimitable way*. And *Orbis*, (London, England), has said of his work: *His images are strong, lyrical, moving. He dares and achieves*.

**Patrick White's new book AZAZEL
is a book length poem published by cdris/PRIMITIVA.**

**To purchase AZAZEL contact Patrick White at
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COMMENTS & SUBMISSIONS

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