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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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How to Answer the Question "How Are You?"

Cedric Speyer

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

September 1986

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ABSTRACT

How to Answer the Question "How Are You?"

Cedric Speyer

On a train traveling from Holyhead, Wales, to London, England, after an overnight ferry crossing from Dublin, Ireland, which succeeded an airplane flight from Toronto, Canada, where I had been driven by car from Montreal, I was asked the question which sustains this series of poems. The questioner was the proverbial little, old, spectacled tea-sipping British lady. The question was: "How are you?" The title of this thesis is: "How to Answer the Question 'How are You?'" and it represents the beginning of a poetic journey.

Each section of 20 poems manifests a state of mind. The parts are unified by the poet's awakening to reality. The highly subjective concern with frustrating attachments of Part 1 leads to the disillusionment of Part 2, which culminates in the spiritual detachment of Part 3.

The first two sections consider the confinement and trespassing of ego boundaries. The poems in the third section transcend the previous self-preoccupation and reveal a new attentiveness to The Other, whether encountered in nature or person.

The poetic mode is designed to suit the theme. Paradox, non-sequitur, verbal play, and argument are some of the means employed to illustrate the intricate ways we can use language to meet or avoid each other, and to approach or postpone self-knowledge.

Also explored, especially in Part 3, is a meditative attitude, reflected in what is left unsaid among the lines. Mental spaces are cleared of conceptual debris so that the "still, small voice" may be heard. The creative power of this kind of silence is not the absence of speech but the presence of a listening attitude that permits an awakened, open, and converted heart.

"Only the hand that erases
can write the true thing."

- Meister Eckhart

Dedicated to
my "all-star team"
of influences:

Centre: Charles Dickens

Right wing: Bob Dylan

Left wing: Sam Shepard

Right defense: Pablo Picasso

Left defense: William Carlos Williams

Goalkeeper: Charlie Chaplin

Coach: Thomas Merton

Families off the mark assessing feelings

Chicago tribune

CHICAGO — "How are you?" seldom gets a truthful answer. And sometimes doesn't even want one.

In a study of 41 families, Marie Lobo, an associate nursing professor

at Case Western Reserve University, found that in families of four, the children had an 89 per cent chance of being wrong when assessing how the father actually felt, and the mother had a 67 per cent chance of being wrong.

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How are you?

Part
1.

'You are my love and I am yours,' says he;
'Thou art my life, I thine,' so answers she.

But how

Can we

Say 'thou'

Or 'me'?

In our true lovers' accidence we find
Both words alike regularly declined.

-from the Sanskrit.
John Brough, translator.

I AM FINE

I am here.
I am fine.

You are away.
You are alive.

I look down
at my fingers
only five.

None of yours there.

You look up
at the sky
decide.

That when we
divide it al-
ways falls.

Space caving
in your mind
not mine.

We sleep untogether,
without your head
tucked under neck,
without reassurances
like your thigh
climbing mine;
without one bed.

I still rest on the left side;
you're always right

Whoever wakes first
is immaterial.

I AM INNOCENT

for Eusébia

i water cacti.
she watches/sulks.

she fingers her ringlets again,
studiously bored,

why doesn't she read Dickens,
curled up by the fireplace?

why does she fix her attention
on someone she wants to ignore?

"can we talk again?"
"if you're going to ~~talk~~ at me
or beside me or anything but with me
then I'm not interested."

"you're still angry, then." (hand on hair)
"no kidding. don't touch me."

blame and bitterness preside.
why don't I just apologize?

heart arbitration: one false move,
and my touch is discontinuous.

I wish we were back
in the Portuguese villa
with her virginity still at stake.

when we left she felt cheap.

at Fatima there's a huge parking lot
with a visionary tree in a concrete pot.

in Coimbra we ran our Renault off the road
and broke up in Retiro dos Poetas.

francoeur told me if what's good for her
is hurtful to me, that's the cost of loving.

"what are you thinking of?"
turn to the quiet voice, meet the shy eyes.
never liked eyes greedy for mine.

it always surprises,
her expresso mind.

I AM IGNITED

headspin
heartsoar

heartsoar
mindreel

mindreal
soulsteal

soulsteel
headspark

I AM PLANTED

She loves me.

She loves me not.

She loves.

She loves me.

She.

She loves.

Sh

She.

S.

Sh!

I AM IN LOVE

"For this is one of the miracles of love; it gives to both, but perhaps especially to the woman- a power of seeing through its own enchantment and yet not being disenchanted."

- C.S. Lewis

You cannot change a woman,
but you may enter her
and having entered,
love...
and having loved,
live where she loves
until she can no longer
tell the difference,
and is all turned outside in,
searching for you who has dissolved
into one of her thoughts
of who you could be.

The lady is full of poetry
which will never be written.



I AM HUGGED

she hugged *oh boy* so
 needy she held
 and *z* dream awake
 hugged *big!* held
 warmth *big!* bright
 ning sweater thick
giggling breasts push-
 ing *girl* hugged. my
 chest her chest her
 cheek hot cheek red
wrapped all up my eyes
 glowing hers
 hers *lovingly* glowing
 mine in *the big blue towel*

I AM SIPPED

We popped kiss week,
hitting da ceiling of
togetherness-ness,
and Yes-

Us' is happening.
It is happying.

that is,
we's happi, y, I's happy
two.

The fizz is
runnething over us,

becuth we're sure serious,
but bubbly (doubly)

And love-
lynew.

I AM LOCKED IN

I dreamt that I was jailed
for rushing into intimacy with you-
locked in maximum security isolation,
watched by remote control cameras
dipping and swiveling at me
when I crossed the cell.
Mealymouthed correction officers
gave me their grim smiles,
the meager meals,
the plastic cutlery,
After a week I got upset-
they sent in nurse and hypodermic.

The crime was mainly in my mind.

When I awoke it was the usual

suspended

sentence

I AM HURT

Your softest voice
pierced my ear
like shrieking sirens
on a still, sticky night
over and over again
a telephone, a damn
telephone stuck to my ear,
telling me of your affair.

Your gentlest voice
in quiet, calm despair.
Your words your words.
Can those really be your words
wanting me to know that

you still cared.

or else you wouldn't have called.

I ejaculated forgiveness
out of all the empty
bus stations I've ever
been stranded in,
while in the streets
ambulances pursued
distant tragedy.

I AM DESSERT

I want to give you a caramel apple.

(No)

I want you to give you a caramel apple.

(No)

I want you to give me a caramel apple.

(No)

I want us to share a caramel apple.

(No)

I want us to offer up our caramel apple.

(No)

I want us to plant a caramel apple orchard.

(No)

I want to be your caramel apple.

(Yes)

I want to be the caramel apple you eat.

(Yes)

I want to be yours, at the caramel apple orchard feast.

(Yes please!)

I AM FOR HER

for Arpi

"The only gift is a portion of thyself."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

1. her soft voice,
simple respect,
child-woman's hand
placed in trust.
2. her hat in the grass,
her glass swan,
the dream-white stallion
she gallops on.
3. her softest eyes
and long baths,
the large men's shirts
she wears afterwards.
4. her rainbow hope,
black silk scarf,
her old photo album
happiness poses.
5. her parent problems,
her tennis prowess,
her shortest breath
when making love.
6. her party laughter,
rust-leather jacket,
her hair tied back,
her perfume power.
7. her baby-powder skin,
sin inhibitions,
the tears at Mass,
her teenage wisdom.
8. her diamond pride,
slightest confusion,
her pine wood heart,
the dovetail visions.
9. her hard decision,
tear-filled eyes,
childlike touch
placed in trust.
- 10.

I AM A MOMENT TOO LATE
(Part I)

She caught me
when I wasn't looking
and then I was
and then it was
too late because
she had also seen
that I had seen
that she had returned
to herself
and I to mine
not wanting to
face her faceless
yet unable to forget
what had slipped in
between us
widened a bit and
vanished again

One could call it
mysterious one could
recall it two could
not miss it passing
between a young man
and a younger woman
in a restaurant
at opposite tables
of opposite sexes
with eyes the colour
of each other for
an instant connected
self-extended meeting
somewhere there in
the smoky air for
instance it's a mirror
then it's an other she
young enough and free
to be neither satisfied
nor hungry he young
enough and bold to be
vulnerable and not to
want to be she delicate
and cool he brash and
absorbed (to be continued...)

I AM A MOMENT TOO LATE
(Part II)

Their eyes swept past
each other on the way
somewhere else
her eyes saying
- I don't know if I want
to know more about you
than I already do -
his eyes saying
- I don't know if I already
know more about you than
I want to -

Ali threw a punch
nobody saw
least of all Liston
the big bad bear
who fell all the harder
to a chorus of "fake! fake!"
jeers from the fans
who had missed
the knockout punch
- It was a perfect right hand -
said Patterson at ringside
- Get up and fight sucker -
said Ali over fallen Liston
right arm hovering
menacingly
as if unconvinced
by his own stunning
victory
but Liston had slipped
into unconsciousness
stayed asleep
fallen into history

The girl had stood up
quietly
paid for her tea
and slipped out
of the poem
seemingly forgetting
what she had seen
expanding me within me
inside our secrecy
a conquest promised

I should have retired
before defeat

I AM WEST SIDE STORY

Mercutio dies.

Tybalt dies.

Juliet pretends to die.

Paris dies.

Romeo dies.

Juliet dies.

Why?

You pretend to end.

I end the pretense.

You don't defend.

Parents relent.

The play ends.

And I alive
in silent theatre
with Friar Laurence,

Unrepentant

I AM DISENGAGED

"Believe me, for certain men at least, not taking what one doesn't desire is the hardest thing in the world."

- Albert Camus

I've got an audience
in a pale orange dress
doing its best to derail
my one-track mind.

The dame across the aisle
in $\frac{1}{2}$ spectacles trying
to read "Hidden Riches"
seems jealous.

We finally pull out.
A girl runs alongside
the train prolonging goodbyes
to her boyfriend.

The pale orange dress giggles,
gets brighter all the time.
I put sunglasses on, unfold your letter,
be more cool than her or you.

"I'm trying to be wise...I'm hoping
...I'm crying...Be mine until I decide."
But I'm through being burnt by young girls
and searing innocence.

Urgent longings, campfire entranced,
folksong, first love enchanted...
I want a woman in white with a black belt
in a home built with red bricks.

Aglow in the light of that low-flying,
eye-level orange ball out the train window.
How many times did I expect dawn in your eyes?
How often did you use me for a fireplace?

It's history. I'm on the Liverpool-London run.
(Did you know Strawberry Field is an orphanage?)
Your image is like a postcard I can't rip up;
it reminds me of a lonely place I love.

I AM DISENGAGED 2

With Waltraud
at Madame Tussaud's,
on display to myself,
human again, almost.

With another woman
my soul melts into
the shape you made
for it for me for you.

Picasso & Dickens are
just as good and they
use the silent treatment
better than you could.

She's a fascinating
replica cast in the
same mold, even posses-
sing the same spark & glow.

Such strange resemblance
I rented a camera,
solidified her smile
for my bedroom wall.

It may be a bit rigid,
the wax dummy trick,
but I'm falling for her
and don't want to get hurt.

I feel so relieved in
The Chamber of Horrors-
in the darkness you're her,
yet I'm not being tortured.

I AM A MEMORY

I remember the night
your necklace broke,
and after the beaded
waterfall,
the fractured moment
woke up
marble games in spring,
candies off a string,
and a little girl
who'd laugh at anything
in fewer pieces.

I remember I kissed
your eyelids
the night you cried.

I remember a hard stone
in the middle of my back,
hard stars which wouldn't
budge, and the rest
overhead confusion.

I remember a somethingness
between us which got
crushed.

I remember leaving milk
bottles on the concrete
steps, which some little
vandal came by and smashed.

I remember the night
the lightbulb broke
because I swatted a fly
who was sitting on it
at the time.

I remember being surprised
by the fine spray of glass
which showered the floor,
and sparkled in the dust.

I AM NOT READY

she sits across from him
at a distance that is
farther than futile
and not for each other

knowing she will find him out
where I have always been,
looking further than him for her,
finding it not that easy.

after all junk emotional remnants
romantic illusions identity shtick
and sex stuff have been left behind
at subsequent meetings

he might forsake the future fleeing.

I AM ALL FLAME

you little blue flame

you wicked yellow tongue

you warm you pray

you worm you damn

I AM ALL FLAME 2

**Love Holy Fire
burns you
alive.**

**Marriage Holy Fire
leaves you
burn.**

**Scorching Flame
teaches. Phoenix
learns.**

**But in the Fiery Furnace
you burn and burn and
burn.**


Part 2.

'The road is rough; and, oh, the moon is bright
 2 Suppose my husband should discover!
People may talk. - But can I bear tonight
 To disappoint my lover?'
And so she walked a step or two, and then
 Turned and came back again.

-from the Sanskrit.
John Brough, translator.

'Well, but you surely do not mean to spend
Your whole life pining? Show some proper spirit.
Are there no other men? What is the merit
Of faithfulness to one?' But when her friend
 Gave this advice, she answered, pale with fear,
'Speak soft. My love lives in my heart, and he will hear.'

-Amaru
John Brough, translator.



I AM A LAST LINE POET

"The universe is so vast and so ageless that the life of one man can only be justified by the measure of his sacrifice."

- Officer V.A. Rosewarne

He sat beside her on the plane.
She began to read a book.
The Bridge Across Forever.
He switched on her overhead reading light.
She fell asleep.
The book fell from her lap.
He returned it gently to her bag.
He switched off the overhead light.
She appeared to be beautiful.
He relaxed back in his seat.

She woke up.
He was very considerate.
He looked like the strong yet gentle type.
She sighed.
She had been hurt too much.
A gentleman. Sure.

Drinks were served.
They talked a lot.
She could sure help my self-worth.
He could really cherish me.
Meals were served.
But we have so little in common.
The movie began.
The Goodbye Girl.
She helped him find the right channel.

He held her hand
when the plane lost altitude.
She clutched his arm
when it suddenly dropped.
They fell in the ocean together.

He helped her into the one life jacket
they could find. He slipped
from her grasp.

I AM TO BLAME FOR HER

Take the blame
that belongs to
Desirée, a
wizened (young)
misanthrope twit
whom no one wants
who shuts her eyes
when she talks,
(shows excessive blue
eye shadow) dresses
like the dog's
dinner in a vol-
uminous tent of a
kaftan raincoat
which hides a,
would you believe
it? mini skirt,
whose almost
orange bird's nest
hair she stuffs
under floppy hats,
whose mind curves
like a fishbowl with
thoughts that bump
up against the glass
embarrassing the guests,
about her life locked
up in a twenty-year
long treatise on
Blake?

Next time she asks:
"How's your heart,
pretty boy?" and so on,
abandon relentless cares
for your holy domesticity,
see the ballerina beneath
the skin, make like
she does:
"Go, love without the help
of anything on earth."

- William Blake

"It is easy to make shit
out of beauty. It takes
courage to make beauty
out of shit."

- John Barrymore

I AM NOT LOUIS DUDEK

Ideas for poetry:

- silver key on airport carpet, grey.
- drunken Indian passed out on Yonge St.
- Christian street theatre outside Green Mission.
- semi-circle of meditating monks.
- giant black bug in wet suit.
- clock perpetually 6:00 o'clock.
- people waving goodbye to trains.
- getting the chance to wave again.
- (scratch that one)
- buying milk/eggs in Irish countryside.
- rain-lashed face on Joyce's tower, Sandycove.
- a series of silences.
- clown wheeling luggage around Euston station.
- 3 black men, 1 blonde woman at Mr. Submarine's.
- Inuit New Year's eve with Joanne. Remember?
- leaves that knew the truth yet remained leaves.
- the small vertebrate crawling on the clothes-pinned sheets flapping on the line.
- Irish jig at Holyhead terminal.
- Nadja: obsessed with death.
- West Side Story with British accents.
- running shoes in the rubble.
- baby boots on mailbox.
- St. Kevin's inaccessible cell.
- Koert's gravestone made of Wicklow granite.
- (Fiona - Wood Ave. between Sherbrooke & de
Maisonneuve (red door) not that I didn't warn you)
- the way she moves you.
- the prayer you should pray, o.k?
- "my little voice": tells her who to trust.
- corporate liars/ rotting ladders/ tape-recorded
loons/ paper flowers under plastic bubbles/ etc.
- Yvonne Fitzgerald's hospitable house.
- man selling newspapers out of baby carriage,
- cancer of the emotions.
- drunken Irish tinker painting dust bins dark green.
- meadows/ junk heaps/ mountains/ rail yards/ great
U.S.A./ new taste Coke/ and so on/ wind does.
- Marilyn Monroe number on platform woman somewhere
in Michigan/ Kalamazoo Gospel Mission/ and so on.
- on a mattress somewhere in Chicago/ another soul
is not made possible/ bodies grind it out/ to dust
they shall return/ and so forth.

I AM HUMAN

A woman gets on
 the bus drunk
 starts at front
 successive down
 sits to bum
 next passengers
 some change
 if she can she
 can't she can't
 alien being
 foreign skunk
 human garbage
 cover up throw
 off shut up shut
 her out but
 monster-like
 B-movie type
 she keeps on
 coming into the
 you beside your
 right beside seat
 coat shredded
 breath puked
 hair died eyes
 glazed hands
 gnarled skin
 hardened heart
 ruptured soul
 ripped off face
 coloured sidewalk
 thick loud tongue
 over leaned point
 of which collapsed
 onto you saying,
 "Got a quarter?"

Get out of seat. Get out of eyeball, Get
 off. Get out of me. Get back. Don't touch
 children. Don't enter living room. I'm
 very sorry. I can't help you. I can't heal
 you. I can't look at you. Don't look at me.
 Don't get me confused. Don't make me puke.
 Don't threaten me. Don't take away my my.
 I am commuter. I am community. I am conformity.
 I am human.

not you.

I AM LONG GONE

A deserted beach.

A sandcastle
guarding the shore.

A man of varied interests
standing once more.
A cultured man
of letters and manners.
An entrepreneur.
A planner.

A gentleman
who, setting out
on a journey, a
trip, or a mere
excursion,
prepared well,
dressed smartly,
admitted to himself
no weaknesses,
indulged no egotism,
never thought of
what he could be or
what he was before,
anymore than the
last wave out
makes a good impression
on the shore.

Someone once
instructed him
to take a flashlight
and a woman.
The flashlight
for dark places.
The woman for light.

Instead he set out alone,
leaving no less than everything
at home.

He walked towards
the ocean floor, determined
not to float or gulp.

I AM MY HERO

I have begun
becoming
what once was.

It is slow
process
which neglected

As a kid
rushing
to wrong window,

Running up
street
faster than Flash,

Blinking my
eyes,
arrive instant I

Start to
superimpose,
own heroics.

I watch most
wonderful
scenario unfold..

What was it?

RETURN TO SENDER
 RENVOI A L'EXPECITEUR

Unclaimed
 Non réclamé

No such address
 Adresse inexistante

Address incomplete
 Adresse incomplète

Moved, Address unknown
 Parti sans laisser d'adresse

No such Post Office
 Bureau inconnu

Refused by addressee
 Refusé par le destinataire

Damaged
 Défectueux

I AM UNDELIVERED (Part I)

I know who you are,
 Do you? Let's see-
 into you, have at
 last passed she who sees
 me looking for her, excuse
 me- start over.

2. Dear she who is angry/
 dignified,

I don't need you.
 There's a man standing
 at Glosse & Ste. Cath-
 erine, staring into
 space, who needs your
 company more than me...

3. Dear her who refuses all
 those roses,

I ask for the ocean,
 get less than a glass of
 water. I thirst. Don't
 blame you! How exquisite,
 living in this perishable
 state.

4. Dear moral girl somewhat
 redeemed,

Father forgive her,
 she stole an eraser,
 screamed at her mother,
 kissed a 7 yr. old boy
 on the cheek. There, it's
 out. Leave the old country.
 Add 20 years. Go and sin
 no more. Forgive me, I'm
 indiscreet.
 (P.S.)

I AM UNDELIVERED (Part II)

5. Dear Queen of Heaven again,

In a long blue cloak,
pink nightgown, unhooded hair
bunned, 16 yrs. young, sun
halo, microcosm womb, moonlit
from within eyes... Hello-
under only one star tonight.
(P.S. How are you?)

6. Dear bright woman by
candlelight,

This very morning I
saw the rosy sun and holy
moon in same sky, reminded
of you and I. You fading
fast, in spite. I rose up
just the same.

7. Dear less than lover, more
than friend,

This is the last card.
DUSK SETTLES OVER THE MAGNI-
FICENT GRAND CANYON. Each
moment is magic. Our public
eyes are deep, completely
private and expansive. Every
word is almost in love.
(P.S. Wish you were here to
read and believe)

8. Dear disillusioned angel
this A.M.,

Sorry about the insig-
nificant stain on your
dress. Not sorry about the
significant stain on my bed.
Sorry about the prostitute.
Not sorry about what she said.
Sorry that's all it takes.
(P.S. The wings will grow in
again)

9. Dear me who is feminine
instead,

Writing from sweat hut
Indians say replicates womb.
Dark in here, hissing rocks,
hot. Soon be born into
splashy lake. Sweating for
now.
(P.S. Are you doing well,
way out there?)

I AM WAITING

You don't give yourself to me.

I'm not invited to your 4 o'clock tea.

You say you're going to call me.

Who knows when?

Your bedroom curtains are never open.

You don't respond to pebbles thrown.

Your theatre seat is reserved, yet empty.

You refuse to come to my poetry readings.

You always tell me "maybe".

Your bitter grandfather answers the phone.

When I call, you're not at home.

You won't even appear in this poem. *

See?

I AM PASSING THROUGH

debarb bus
from back
not there

stringless
guitar hung
shoulder hotel

pool hall
scum town
ghost photo

room hollow
window brick
Gideon bible

punish drunk
wall peel
vomit wall

scratch off
flower print
stink sick

curtain rod
strong enough
belt length

I AM JUST AN ORDERLY

I have given baths
to patients with no skin,
I have pinned down
terror-stricken girls for injections.
I have shaken the shaking hands
of the family abandoned.
I have seen a grown man laugh
at lightbulbs and toilets.

The Irish parish priest
provided us with details;
of poisoned family pets,
tongues cut out of cattle,
domestic deer shot dead,
horses mutilated, and other
acts of malevolence I'd rather
not mention.

What about the man exposing
his plastic leg for better begging,
the bag lady offering pencils
for your pity and a nickel,
the guy scrounging change
to buy Pascal's paint thinner,
the aging young lady
in that dark Bleury window.

God is not immune.
Is that worth saying?

I AM DREAMED

I dreamed Keystone Cop scene,
charging into brothel,
where kid might be hiding;
excited faces; excited chase of prostitutes.

I dreamed Rustaan crying,
"My dogmatic life is not useful!"
with girl on narrow bed who
didn't comprehend; thought he was just a dog.

I dream-tamed ferocious dog
with woman standing by; wanted
me to succeed but dog was not horse
enough; too small for trotting.

I dreamed elevator # 5 went sideways
until I ended up at priory;
journal workshop in progress;
Silvana asked to see penis.

I dreamed red-faced monks
leave crowded basement for deep-sea diving;
Rosamund in her nakedness
vacuums water from sobbing bathtub.

I dreamed plane got stuck in stairwell;
Brothers Paul, David, Leonard came flying
by sans planes; taught me not to flail
my arms or try too hard; just concentrate.

I dreamed a dream man cried real tears
who was me; who awoke from dreaming real tears
to real tears dreaming on my cheek;
to awakening; still crying.

I AM COMING UNDONE

I'm meditating away
my self-inflated,
easily infatuated
ego fixation
today

easily deflated
yesterday.

I'm not even rattled by
last night's slept-through
thunderstorm, in fact

I wish it had wakened me

now no more than morning dew
on the sun-drenched lawn.

(I'm like some nun in love
who thinks about it later.

feels about it later

finds the will of God
has won by default

while she wastes her time,
pretending it's more difficult)

I AM INFORMED

Six o'clock news:

Three little children
burned to death
in a trailer home.

The absent parents
"absolutely shattered
by the incident."

A flicker of concern.

Weather report
of heat wave

really makes us squirm.

I AM NOT NOISE

Accept what is
like radio speak

radio allergic

radio mono jerk

radio alarm gang

radio static stuff

radio back yard bum

radio stew guck

radio vegetable fodder

radio weather ruse

radio radio sooth(e)

Radio talk too much
except what is

I AM A FAILURE OF REVISION

He was on the podium
saying something im-
portant,

when the bottom, of no-
thing much fell out,

consciousness caved
in,

words echoed-
but not in his mouth,

body became a
stumbling block,

microphone a snake
about to bite.

Now he's on a mental
ward trying hard to
figure out

what the spaces
between the words

are all

about.

I AM IRELAND'S INNOCENT FACE

Belfast paving stones
jerked up- missiles.

Street lighting devices
ripped off- fusing switches.

For breaking for bombing for burning
the bums.
For breaking for bombing for burning
the bums.

Graffiti perpetuated hate.
Broken glass unswept.

All God's houses-
For breaking for bombing for burning
the bums.

Haunted by derelicts,
haunted by derelicts.

I am Ireland's innocent face,
desperate for dignity and elegance.

I roam the deserted streets,
staring in dark windows.

Using them as mirrors,
using them as mirrors.

For breaking.

I AM CRAZY

old young man
grey beige suit
lotus position
on the green

cricket wickets
likes the sound of it

young old man
black white zuit
focused fision
green sleeves tune

schizophrenic
likes the sound of it

I AM TELLING YOU

Don't lie to the children.

Don't tell them,
"We're moving soon from Grandma's.
We'll get you new clothes
and new toys in a new town."

Tell them clearly this:
"The house has burned down.
All those keepsakes, stuffed
animals, stamp collections,
scrapbooks, will have to be
kept in your heart
from now on."

Show them that death
is always on the horizon.

Don't lie to the children.

I AM IRELAND'S INNER SPACE

Emerald hills of Glendaloch.

The Round Tower
rocket
set for
take-off.

St. Kevin's Kitchen
exploded into
grey smithereens by
extremists of
prayer.

Stones laid in 533
by uncommemorated ascetics
survive the blast,
conspire against
the untterrified
tourists.

Modern monks
worship the ground
which refuses to do more
than support
their weight.

Part
3.

Harder than diamond? Softer than a flower?

Well,

Who can tell

The minds of men held in religion's power,

Or spell?

-from the Sanskrit.
John Brough, translator.

I AM RELEASED

hard-edged compartment chest
stopped a lot of heart knocks-
the thought I sought got caught
mind-trapped in thought vault
locked in head-edged box

at last took trapdoor to the garret
surprisingly wallpapered with playful
rainbows, designed to funny-up my mind
with pretty pictures of sunshower shine
and little tree-view window too

It was there I learned to love
rain on the roof

Even the raindrop

trembling on

a

leaf

I AM RELEASED 2

for Dom John Main

There man is, this way walking on sidewalk left. He is who? Should meet him I, as pass by I, or at all not meeting, not having met, in a web caught in, which can I point & probe & poke & stretch in & sticky web it is, it better forget till time next.

The spider kill first, the flying ant birth, instead meet him wrapped up with thin silk thread spider worship. But he swept net thought with one look that so all leg spider pull out impulse I left behind for time this.

He me sees, he free is. Why consciousness my cannot contain his look? Nowhere have I to hide. I nakedlike where nohave without thread. (In his eyes, must I be complicated?) Knew I then, wrestling in net self, had better pretend until better webbed for time next?

To me turns he yet, he turns to me yet, yet turns. But yes. Yes but. Yet yes. Flying ant birth. Death spider spun out. Spin spider uncobwebbed returning, returns.

Yet I'm met. Fly would I towards him. Turn would I to time this.

I AM UNTITLED

"Mention is made of two classes of yogis: the hidden and the known. Those who have renounced the world are 'known' yogis; all recognize them. But the hidden yogis live in the world. They are not known.

- Sri Ramakrishna

the eye
sees everything

but itself.

the centre
is everywhere

but there.

conversion
is continuous

but interrupts.

the personal
is no secret

but mysterious.

I caught a fly
in cupped hands

and let him go

so?

I AM THERE

700 years
of silence.
(not counting tourists).
An altar
of fallen stones
in the abbey ruins
will do.
Gravel floor.
(crowded with pilgrims)
No roof.
Fine day.
Girls perch
on half walls,
sitting pretty.
White clouds part.
Black cows bow.
Sun climbs higher.
(for a better view)
Beams off silver chalice.
Father Freeman praises
the taste of pure love.

(a moment of giving over)

"This is my Body
crumbled for you."

I AM THERE 2

James Joyce
was beamed down,
for a garden baptism
at Sandymount.

Liked what he saw:
dogs, cameras rolling,
child with rosary of daisies,
baby faces, bald priests,
playing, praying,
on the lawn,
rendering the real
under one species.

James Joyce
gave a guest homily,
said there's so much
energy in the universe
almost anything you do
will destroy something else,
so do it with love, told us
to let the dog off the leash
by the fearful raging sea.
Lord have mercy, the door of
the mind must be open to
we know not what. Amen.

Stayed for the barbecue,
made marshmallows go
golden brown, had a lot
of fun with the children.
(I saw a sunflower head
beam over the picket fence
for a good look
at a literary genius)

I AM TAKING AIM

for Richard Sommer

mist mountains
partly move.
buttercups wake.
grass stirs.

straw target
stands still.
crazy kite
tree-caught.

poet archer
unsheathes arrows.
archer poet
enters notebook.

"In light of the butternut tree & beyond,
haze & mountain, the day cold, no concessions,
the art like that, at least today like that,
untranslatable, utterance purely the act of
uttering..." (R.S.)

archer poet
walks composes.
poet archer
flexes bow.

straw target
still stands.
saddened kite
gives up.

anemic sun
faints away.
Magritte sky
above treeline.

milky lace
shoulders sky.
curtain drop.
moon rise.

archer poet's
bull's-eye.

I AM A GIRL'S IMPROMPTU POEM

Captin hook

Captin hook mus remember not to
pick his nose. Captin hook must
remember not to open sardin cans.
Captin hook must remember not to
pore tea. Captin hook must remember
not to shack your hand. Captin hook
must remember not to turne pages in
his book. Wansy Peaple I would like
to be, but mosttely eapt notcaptin hook.

by Nicole Munoz, 9
on a train heading home
to London, Ontario

I AM A COUTTS-HALLMARK GREETING CARD CHILDREN'S POET

for Gary

What more does a greeting card
picnic need than spunky Adélie,
plunked on tree trunk,
in assorted skirts and
chemises, not to mention
a purple kerchief.

Both hands clutching
unruly yellow locks
she laughs,
pleases everyone, she
laughs, at once debunks,
she laughs & laughs,
a celebration!

AdélieAdélie
who demands to be
the one who counts the sunflower seeds,
who totters over to me,
who stomps towards me:
"I like college cheese!"

What more does a beach party need
than nude Adélie prancing around,
who shrieks at James giving chase,
laughs when caught,
laughs when spanked,
"Des tappes d'amour!" she adds & dances away.

I AM LISTENING

pure white cat
on compost heap.

stares at me.

halo of flies
round my head,

dung-shit, slug-
guck at my feet.

note of clarity
noiseless

in the heat.

I AM IN THE PARK .

bridge
bicycle
bench

grandmother
kid girl
cousins

frogs
ducks
dogs

sailboats
mermaids
music

matrons
immigrants
evangelists

the odd peacock

I AM ANOTHER TIME

mystical villages,
old brown barns,
church windows
stained rich,

bales of hay
we sat on
when we
kissed.

girls in barns,
with bare arms,
in flowered skirts
and pony tails.

(not women in
gold pants at
flashing discos,
oh no)

old brown saddles
smelled leather,
when we worshipped
in rainy weather.

I AM UNLESS

"All that we see
or seem,
Is but a dream
within a dream."

- Edgar Allan Poe

Her Girl Guide
inner voice.

My giggling
big intellect.

A marching band
sense of wonder.

The burning scroll
sizzling in swimming pool.

The melting pound of butter
melting on counter.

Blue swimming pool.
Silver counter.

Is that Jesus snoring
in the next room?

(expected waves
beat
on expecting
shore)

I AM A VISIONARY, AND YOU?

"He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image that his soul so constantly beheld."

- James Joyce

there's crushed beer cans
on the seashore,

a white girl in red
writing letters,

red & blue rocking chairs
next to the sunlit trunk,

every girl I ever knew
in high school,

a black child on the bus
with old, wise eyes.

there's a blind professor
looking over my shoulder,

a moon in the morning,
storm clouds with pink stomachs,

a lake (blue)
at the end of the corridor.

I AM SILENT PRAYER TIME

mind
like buz-
zing black
fly.

need mind
like motion-
less
moth
on plaster wall.

not coming
not going

not squashed.

I AM SILENT PRAYER TIME 2

"Be still, and know that I am God."

- Psalm 46:10

into the breach
I finally
I stepped quietly
without following me
no commentary
layers of biography
silently falling

mantra opened
heart unlocked

radical restfulness
in motionless air
no stairs there
music in inner ear
is clear
notes composed
on burning scrolls

weightless stones
floating tones

abide with me
says still small voice
I will let
you breathe and roam
I will
bring you
home

I AM YOU

In your vision
 we merged,
 purged of ourselves
 caught up as
 one Person

Something like
 when dawn breaks
 on a pink lake

And two alabaster gulls swerve

Godward
 on a sudden

Gust

I AM HOPE FOR THE FLOWERS

A broken butterfly
fainted and floated down
and dropped at our feet,
in a station of the metro.

The girl next to me said,
"It's dying. It's disgusting.
It's almost dead." Disgusted,
she got on a departing coach.

It was yellow, black, hurt,
and a little white. Last I saw it
spinning under a grey plastic bench.

I got off at the next stop.

Came back to find it there.
Gum wrappers, transfers, stares,
and delicate wounded wings
flapping in despair.

Wings which spoke with weak flutters,
as if to say thank you
and good-bye and God bless you,
in a Westmount back yard.

I AM NOT KAHLIL GIBRAN

for Robert Arron

It's not the Kahlil Gibran stuff keeps people together. It's her pregnant-moon eyes, glossy black hair; quiet moments reading in The Friendly Giant's armchairs; a white rose in a long, deep, blue vase; the way you shake your hair & laugh & challenge me with your eyes; Barbi holding me while I cried & cried (even during the James Bond movie); WashLevPeterTuviaJohn Juleswinecheesebread and I in a tent getting high; Derek, no. FrancieNeriCherylTovahDorit SuzieSandi; the perfume of their hair & skin, especially Cheryl and Tovah in their proud peasant blouses; eating Chinese food slowly, a hand, a live warm bird caught in mine, the outline of her breasts by candlelight; deeply, darkly kept secrets revealed in a chill on Mt. Royal at dusk; building a pyramid of dining room table at The Watson Homestead winter camp, secretly hoping to get caught; Derek kissing the statue of Queen Victoria with his lips freezing to her stone chest-

I am not a man who travels around the world with a small backpack containing a folding saw, all kinds of remedial herbs and spices, special ointments in little vials, useful miniature tools, an asbestos groundsheet which can be used for countless other purposes, various holy books, simple loose clothing, exotic incense, and The Prophet.

It's not the Kahlil Gibran stuff keeps people together. It's hauling canoes over shallow rapids; getting drunk that night with Robert; graduating from college; boiling our books in a big pot; laughing it all off. What a folly! What a ferment! What a fool he was! The struggling artist who wouldn't be confined, and he thought my poet's hat and earring were bad! He polished his sax gold and his image black. But we couldn't stop laughing at untold jokes- that was the funniest part. He threw his marks in a sewer, envelope unopened. What a poseur!

Still, it was good to be open to no one but each other.

I AM SHORE

waves happy dance
waves slap dash
waves wave hands
waves grow crash

dig in toes
sit upon heels
kneel on knees
still at ease

eyes close close eyes
soul knows knows soul
mind goes goes mind
heart opens opens heart

waves happy dance
waves slap dash
waves wave hands
waves grow crash

I AM THAT I AM

For Father Laurence

When I used to meditate, it was that right-brained, yin, feminine, passive, concentrated, let-it-happen in tune with purest universal rhythm, the aware zero no-stress source of creative intelligent original Christ-conscious Buddha-natured Bodhisattva-brained Nirvana-retrained Kali-drained dharma-inclined karma-cleansed heaven-intended satori-suited chakra-cleared soul-mated Zen-rated uncreated ground of being in an empty satiated state of mind that I was after.

Now I sit still and say the mantra.