

POEMS BY JEFFREY L. STALEY

HOLY WEEK 1984 (variations on a form)

THE GREETING

pilgrim's oasis
this cool and comforting palm
resting in my palm
a shoot from dry ground
the feathery frond unfurls
fingers press like crowds
shouting hosannas
joy rides in air tense gripped with
anticipation
palms clenched heavenward
jerusalem celebrates
triumphal entry

Palm Sunday, April 15, 1984

I visit mother in the hospital for the first time, after her heart attack.

THE CROSSING

She was no Moses
leading masses to mountain
peaks that scratched God's face;
nor a Miriam,
timbrel-whirling victories
over monstrous seas.
She had no gilt tongue
for free-phrasing, like Aaron's,
which fought Pharaoh. Still,
her passing over
this night makes herbs more bitter;
lamb less savory.

Passover, April 17, 1984

Mother dies in the early afternoon, just before Passover begins.

THE REMONSTRANCE

Mandatum novum
give us back the old command
this one Judas kissed.

Farewell footwashing
freezing rain on mud-caked boots
gravedigger's solace.

Chalice of blessing
blistered, bleeding, ice-cupped hands
they need no god-balm.

Slave's knotted towel
Carrizo Mountains wrapped white
in late April snow.

Maundy Thursday, April 19, 1984
My brothers and I dig mother's grave at Immanuel Mission, on the Navajo Reservation.

THE CURSE

Damn it all to hell
the witching rage demons smell,
smoky ash of death.

Dam this flood of tears
Satan's red-hot iron sears
every choking breath.

Damaged, worthless good
this sin-wrought flesh never could
outlive Eden's curse.

Damn God's double-cross
king's crown cannot cover loss;
thorns pierce beggar's purse.

Good Friday, April 20, 1984
We build mother's coffin and plan her funeral service.

THE WAKE

No battering shock
could raise this cold, hardworn corpse
set in hand-framed pine;
though blinking machines
and pulsing plastic held her
heart's charges four days.

When her memory
is etched in silicon dust,
perhaps Lazarus-
like laser cells will
be implanted and tie her
to some god's mainframe.

Holy Saturday, April 21, 1984.
We put mother's body in the coffin we made, and have her funeral.

THE STONE

Like friends at midnight,
we pleaded for bread, oh Lord.
But you gave us stone.
We took it, shaped it;
then grim-faced, rolled it upright
on a fresh filled grave.

Dawn came; it was gone,
crushed and mixed with blood-flecked sweat,
a finely ground flour.
Now, gaunt bellies roam,
stop and sniff the altered stone—
cryptic, hand-held crumbs.

Easter Sunday, April 22, 1984
Communion with family and friends at Immanuel Mission.

**Written on the occasion of mother's death
April 17, 1984 in Albuquerque, New Mexico**

SOPHIA

And she said,
“This is my body;
take, eat ye all of it.
Run your tongue
over its soft round smoothness.
Breathe deep its heavenly scent.
Gaze long at its fragile opaqueness.
Cup it in your hands, caress it tenderly.
Nibble its outer edges
slowly, slowly,
then swallow me whole.
Eat me up, up, up;
sup on me, one long,
everlastingly long sip—
dip in,
dine, dine.
Come to me,
oh come,
come unto me—on to me
now, now,
and I will give you rest.”

And it was so.

And she said,
“Here is my life blood
poured out for you;
drink deeply of it.
Savor its tangy afterglow,
linger over its richness.
Remember me
in the rhythmic passages
of your life;
wash your body
in my scarlet flow.
Find in its pale flush
yourself:
rebirthed,
unearthed,
a wriggling mass
of unumbilicled joy.”

And it was so.

MY FIRST HOUSE

I always wanted to live in two stories:

A house fenced with white pickets
and shuttered in pale blue.
It would have bright rooms upstairs
sheltered under broad eaves,
and bay windows on the ground floor
fluttering with snowflake-lace.
Tall maples would shield us from neighbors
and old fruit trees would shower the back lawn
with pink drifts of spring blossoms.

I always thought love would come
easily; a dreamy-eyed pear falling
in mid-summer heat. It would be golden,
the comforter mother
fitted so snugly
to the double bed in her room;
the same one a quavering-voiced boy of four
had once pulled over his head
while forming his first prayers
to a god-fearing forty-five.
(Fully loaded, revolving in an oak cabinet,
that hot cylinder used to fire heavenly bulletins
and send gospel choruses zinging
toward his brain every day at nap time.)

And children—they, too, would come in time—
bouncing tousle-headed onto my lap; girl first,
then boy. They would be blue-eyed and fair-skinned,
and I would tickle and hug them,
then finally tuck them into comfortable beds
far above the glowering cold
that crept across the floors
during long prairie winters.

Perhaps I have always lived in two stories:

A doll house set up
in my parents' bedroom
during quiet afternoons; pulled out
of a Sears catalog in late November, with pleading eyes.
(It had appeared like magic
under a Kansas Christmas tree in 1956,
while my two older brothers looked on,
grinning wickedly.)

And a blackened disk
still spinning, shot through the center
with a hole so large
that I can push three fingers into it:
perfectly round,
a marksman's bull's-eye.

ROYAL HARVEST

Ruth and Naomi,
sheaves gleaned from some stranger's field,
threshed on Nacon's floor.

CLAREMONT CALIFORNIA, 1975

I see the mountains only twice a week
now that summer has come.
Early in the morning when the smog is low,
when the air is dark and cool,
I sometimes catch them
springing up on haunches
to scratch the dawn away.

I see the mountains only twice a week
now that summer has come.
Like old friends who stop by in the evening,
they stay for a cup of coffee and a quiet chat,
then say they will return again—
perhaps on Tuesday.

PROTESTANT PRAYER AT A BACCALAUREATE MASS

Perhaps this mass of atoms
clasped in my hands
will rub off on me;
this piece of yeastless immortality, nourish me
in its going down.

May this hastily gulped, fortified wine
dislodge the particle
now caught in my throat,
and sustain this adam
until the disrobing.

ling/lang*

i lie
restless
on the damp green
ideas sleep
furiously grow
ling
wistful mutations
in drab rain

*with apologies to noam chomsky and louise m rosenblatt

APRIL'S FLOWERBED

lovers in spring rain
tulips pressed against soft earth
cheeks slippery wet

EHUD'S DOUBLE-EDGED BLADE

Benjamin, my son,
my right hand is thrust hilt deep
in fatman's belly.

THE DREAM

What makes this night different
from all other nights?
This groping madness, deeper
than any other dark?

Surely other endings
have been more tragic
and more cruel.
People have died younger,
accomplished much less
with far greater gifts;
left more majestic mountains
unscaled.
So what
keeps my tear-stained cheeks
from being just
another drugstore's
fading cliché?

Perhaps these lines should be rephrased,
read as a resounding no
to earthly joys—
love's subtleties;
taken as the clashing,
cacophonous symbol
of a divine coda.

Or perhaps they are some piper's dream
drifting off
into notes so high
only gods can hear
and scream.

NEAR MONTEREY BAY, CALIFORNIA

Restless, the hills wander
in drunken-poppy madness
only to kneel
beside the still sea.
And wild-eyed pines,
untamed by the wind—
turn to the call
of an unbending sky.

TOMORROW

Tomorrow,
father will lift
the first shovelful of grief
over this gravesite,
as though straining against heaven itself.
His shoulders will heave,
and his arms will slash downward
through the mound of clay,
like a killer's mad knifeblade.
His back will tense,
straighten;
and the heaviness will fall,
leaving dusty prints
on hope's latched door.

REMEMBERING (My Father with Alzheimer's)

my father remembers
his years with us
in fistful snatches

in pieces of the past
slowly un
wound

he sees each child real
ize
d
within
r
each
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fe-filled
mom
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be

ring us for
hi
m is a re
membering

THE MORNING AFTER

Death does not change things.
Morning coffee with whiskey
and tears still tastes black.

JACOB'S LADDER

God you trickster,
usurper, you
took away a great ladder,
a restless and mighty wrestler
when this woman died.
Now we must learn to climb alone
in stony trance,
struggling,
grasping slick-fingeredly
rung by rung.

FOR BARBARA

Strong, earth-souled woman
I have explored your canyons
and cliffs in June heat;

I have slept through cold
winters, nestled in your clefts
of coal-blackened grass.

THE COUNTY FAIR

Sun-soaked, low-cut tee-shirts
barely disguising
pubescent curiosities;
hot, fleecy, summer clouds
of county fair cotton candy;
two sticky sweetnesss never quite displaced
by other coin-jangling fancies.

**SUNSET ON SLEEPING UTE MOUNTAIN
(near Towaoc, Colorado)**

Mountain chieftain dies.
Earth in raven-feathered black,
dreams of turquoise skies.

CITY GARDENER (BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 1983)

I have four redwood planters sitting on the breezeway
outside our faded coral stucco apartment.
Each year in April I go to a nearby shopping center,
buy sterilized soil,
and fill them to the brim.
I usually purchase morning glory seeds
(this year I'm experimenting, trying a giant blue type);
then I push them, with my thumb,
one by one beneath the planting mix.

Somehow, with occasional watering and bemused attention,
they grow (although this year I did have to spray them twice
with Malathion to kill an aphid infestation.)
The seeds sprout and climb high and out of reach,
winding around brown twine
which I tie to the balcony above.
I try to remember to fertilize them at least once a month
with the best: "Indoor Gardener"
("Spoon it! It makes things grow!").

All summer long strangers stop on the sidewalk below,
stare up, and marvel at the verdant growth
and sapphire blossoms protruding
from our crumbling, cracked building.
We've been known to attract golden, nectar-seeking bees,
nephilim-like climbing spiders, silver-winged dragonflies,
and even an occasional ruby-throated hummingbird
to our boxed paradise.

This year, one serpentine plant rose up
clear, white as light,
as though conjured by an alchemic Merlin.

THE BLACKSMITH

God, great ironist
that he is, takes leaden prayers
and forges spearpoints.

NAVAJO SUPPER

Smoky cedar smells
smacking lips in mutton broth
bleating sheep corralled.

FOUR MONTH INTERLUDE

During Advent
my grandfather quietly slipped away;
my friend of many letters.
Parents came to the farewell
and stood beside his casket
(circled with crimson poinsettias),
talking in low tones
of muted things:
the measure of lostness in a generation;
the pale blue of a favored plaid.

During Lenten season
my sister married,
clothed in her mother's creamy-lace gown.
A family rose and turned
to watch her walk down the white-ribboned aisle;
parents raised eyes in a salty toast.

Then during Holy Week
my mother suddenly died.
Children stood in scattered groups,
arms heavy with holding;
we watched her body lowered into the grave.
She was buried the day before Easter
in red Arizona soil.

Surely this was an unusual four month interlude
a perfect chiasm:
chrism of joy
engulfed
in chasms of grief.

OVERGROWN

The lawn needs mowing—
perhaps reseeding—a head
too
overgrown for words.

HOLYLAND OBSERVER

Palestine lies spoiled!
Jerusalem's golden dome
mere palace of stone.

SUMMER EVENING PICNIC

My wife makes sweet love
with food, while next door neighbors
barbecue in bed.

FROM GRANDMOTHER'S FRONT PORCH

With so much clover
in the lawn, one wonders why
bees should overlook
the only dandelion—
sun's golden honey.

THE ARTIST

When I was young, I
painted bright oil portraits in
a darkened storefront.

Now, in my old age,
splashed water colors myself
in each passerby.

UNDONE

I
do
not know
how to
knot two
untied
untried
(
now
no one
un
won
ought to
try to
knot two
who
are untied
not two
nor
should one
try to un
tie
two not one
for one
might
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and
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ally
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do
I
try to
knot two
do
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MY MOTHER-IN-LAW'S FRONT YARD

fenced hysteria
wisteria wildly climbs
the stuttering stile

DAYBREAK AT CANYON DE CHELLY

(written for Poetry Writing course at Wheaton College, 1973)

watermelon dawn
cliff swallows tiny brown seeds
in one huge pink gulp

HORSEWIND

(written for Poetry Writing course at Wheaton College, 1973)

I rode the horse bareback only one time,
yet I remember the ride well.
My hair was a mad river spilling over my shoulders
and the smell of warm sweat was strong and sweet in my nostrils.
With trembling and excited hands I tangled in its wild mane,
urging the horsespirit on faster;
shouts mingled with laughter.
Like a desert whirlwind, our muscles contracted.
Pushing downward and thrusting forward,
we were trying to touch the earth.

UPON READING A FRIEND'S POEM

(written for Poetry Writing course at Wheaton College, 1973; Honorable Mention, Wheaton Literary Magazine [Kodon])

A poet tries to paint the truth he feels
with simple strokes from vague emotion's brush.
And words become the medium which seals
a splash of truth in time's receding rush.
But your words never seem enough to stay
that surge of time. And truth? The truth I find
revealed in your small frame—one more cliché,
a cheap pastel, with hundreds of its kind.
Yet, if in my devotion to this art
I wrench that liquid brush from what you are
intrinsically, then I become in part
a healing hand that leaves a maiming scar.
So let me criticize, and you then be
the final judge of my integrity.

HER FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE

Baby Allison
doe-eyed, creeps through sylvan glens
and spies reindeer prints.

THE WEAVER (A meditation on John 1:1-18)

creative is the word
spinning and weaving

thought-shaped
by one great whorling act

suspended by delicate threads
god sucks in

then squeezes
into rough peasant cloth

AUTUMN PENTECOST

I scrambled down the old, rusted fire escape
without thinking to look where I placed my feet
for my eyes were focused
on the faded frame belfry above me.
And though the fire I feared never came,
it felt good to sink my toes
into the deep, uncut grass
of the overgrown lot.

I lay back, panting.

Overhead the oaks and birches
tongued red and yellow.
Chills ran down my spine
and I began to run again.

SHIPROCK, NEW MEXICO

Feathered galleon
swooped and petrified giant
left a bloody trail.

THE CRAFTSMAN

Winter, an old master
in the art of glassblowing,
throws back his shoulders,
draws in his white-smocked stomach and—foof!
frost-fingered, mist enshrouded trees
become crystal chandeliers
lit by a newborn sun.

NAVAJO GRANDMOTHER

(written for Poetry Writing course at Wheaton College, 1973)

Toothless man's widow,
tear-christened child of Long Walk,
grey wintry woman,
your wind-chiseled smiles
push spring down sandstone canyons—
children laugh upstream.

CHICAGO SPRING

Lazy spring slumbers
through February afternoons
on the south sides of brick buildings.
In late March it awakes and stretches;
like a sleepy-eyed lover
it reaches out to touch the strong back of the city,
then turns drowsily, sighing—
lost in a dream-world
of past summers' pleasures.

PASSOVER

splashed blood on lintels
jacob's reddish gruel spills
on egypt's stone hearths

RED AUTUMN LEAF

What would I give
for a woman's soft touch?
For a mind-wakening embrace,
a deepening trust?

I'd give a red autumn leaf
caught in full flight;
or a raindrop's reflection
on a moon-filled night.

MISS ALICE (IMMANUEL MISSION, 1969)

She was a blustery spring huff
in the dance of bright-eyed pupils
and bare-desked squirms.
In the mornings, her callused hands
and well-schooled tongue
filled a multitude of coffee-stained cheeks
with warm spoonfuls of wisdom.
And in afternoons, she would clothe them all
with a puff of puddle-dodging laughter.
But evenings found her
all grey-knotted hair
and wind-swept canyon eyes,
setting a table
for a cold-toast party
of one.

FOR DAVID KILLEN (On his sixtieth birthday)

Crocus blooms in snow.
Bright start of whimsy, perched on
winter's frozen brow.

CHILD'S FIRST COMMUNION

peanut butter with
some concord grape jelly would
make this wonder bread

A LIMMERICK FOR DAVID GREEN (GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARY, 1981)

A poetical student once took
a tough course from professor N. Glück.
So he wrote, when he failed,
a few lines—and then wailed,
“But does Glück rhyme with prick or with fuck?”

WILD BLACKBERRY PARISH

(written for Fr. Thomas Hosinski, University of Portland)

I know a priest,
a compassionate man
and a lover of animals,
who feeds stray cats growing wild
in tangled blackberries
firm white breasts of turkey
boldly stolen in daylight
from the refectory table.
He has the cats trapped
occasionally, in wire cages.
Coaxed there by the sweet smell of dainties,
they are spirited away, examined and sterilized,
then returned to thorny safety.

Sometimes, over glasses of dark red wine, he and I reflect
on the rights of animals and wombs,
and other tangled things.
He finds it an inconceivable horror
that my father, farm-bred,
could bury newborn kittens naturally
alive, saving a solitary, eyeless, furry ball
to bear the love of a mother
who can't count past one.

CHRISTMAS SPELLS

Caught in the spell of
Xmas, we often confuse
presents with presence.

RAIN (for Benjamin)

My son once asked
whence comes the rain,
and in reply I sang:

“In oceans deep
the droplets sleep
till stirred by winds of chance.
Then up they dance
on lightning wings—
gold gifts that heaven brings.”

But when he left, I whispered to myself, and soft:

“Behind the gifts, the angels kiss,
and behind the kissing
godeyes wink.

And behind the winking
darkness reigns.”

JIGSAW PUZZLES (For Benjamin)

So like the father is the son,
matching color to color,
shape to shape, with quickness and precision;
with flashes of intuition.

Surprises are interlocked
with carefully crafted solutions:
Sometimes he follows shadows to light,
or bright hues to near whites;
at other times, the mere
slippery force of gravity
pulls pairs together.

But, curiously, he does not begin with borders.

He leaves, without speaking,
those straight edges
that protect the slow-forming picture
from the chaos creeping
across the dining room table,
for another to shape and fit.

RACHEL'S CHILDREN

Like Joseph of old,
I, too, have been troubled by dreams:
the peculiarity of the one sheaf
before which ten bound stalks fall;
the star-crossed luminary
to which other knees shall one day bow.

Why does the angel's icy finger poke me, rib-eyed awake?
Startle, with nascent fear, my nocturnal yearnings
to put away the woman I thought I knew
(to say nothing of the hard kicking inside her);
to remain in this house full of bread
(though royalty seeks the life so strangely thrust upon her)?

This child raises questions before it can kick;
before it has the strength to lift its head.
Before it can mouth its first round word,
It empties me.

Where were the saving angels,
the hidden angles
for Rachel's other children?
Where were the fleshy fingers pointing
to their Egypts of pharonic safety?

This infant's instant
insistent rage
at mother's milk denied
mocks Rachel weeping.

So many other tattered stars have fallen
like ashes. The chaff of sheaves
harvested by a different angel—
another Joseph,
counting still
in Brazil's red soil.

HOLY HOLDEN WONDER

There they were in late August,
poised at the edge of Copper Creek Trail
like two children, impatiently
trying to break into an adult conversation.
“Calypso bubosa,” said the Village botanist.
“A native Pacific Northwest orchid. An endangered species.
Some call them fairy slippers.”

Dangling two inches above the earth,
they balance on slender lace legs—
purple ballerinas turning summersaults
then falling in petticoats of crinkled green.

EASTER MORNING

So strange to see snow
white bend yellow daffodils.
Cracked eggs spill golden.

JANUARY IN SEATTLE

It is sometimes difficult
to trace the thin lines of life
connecting bare branches
wet and aching for spring
cold metal rainspouts swirling angrily
grim skies full beating
against old panes of mottled glass.

HOLY WEEK RAIN

Dogwood blossoms sweat
bloody red. Easter Vigil
ends with soft green head.

RESERVATION BURIAL (April, 1984)

so lovely the grave
feather-dusting of white lies
on muddy red skein

PAIL IN A STREAM

(first written in 1967; Honorable Mention, Wheaton College Literary Magazine [Kodon], 1971)

A pail lies in a stream.
Half covered by silt, it sleeps there.
Dandelions and coarse horsetail ferns
nestle near its rim.
An inscription states boldly:
“Beautiful rich colour
Philadelphia, 1923.”

A pail lies in a stream.
Half covered by silt it sleeps there,
waiting for someone to waken it
from its dreams.

The night descends softly,
but the pail never wakes—
even when moonshafts playfully
jingle its hinges.

FATHER TOM’S CATS

He speaks of his cats
as though they were children.

We discuss them at meal times;
how they wake him from deep sleep,
scratching at his front door in the darkness.

They can’t wait to tell him
of the nightmares stalking them
just beyond the dimly lit porch.

Do their luminous eyes
see differently than ours?

THE THRESHHOLD

Who are you,
Who seeks entrance to my most secret treasures?
Do you not fear the fiery-speared guardian
at the threshold?
Swift is he to destroy the unwary,
And merciless are his blows.
Where now is your armor?
Do you dare to approach empty-handed?
Or do you think that you can climb so high
as to peer through the barred windows of my soul?

Ah, but stay near.
I have spent many restless and sleepless nights
praying for your arrival.
Come, tear away the walls that prevent me from weeping.

LYING IN THE GRASS (A Lament)

Oh! If I could be
Just what I see—
This lady bug,
Or perhaps this flea.
I see,
I'll choose.
For what's there to lose?
I'll live today
And flee the flooze.

Ay! But what is that sound I hear?
That strange noise—
Doth it bring doom,
Or bringeth it cheer?

Oh, woe is me!
It is a mower, and it cometh near.
Alack! Alas!
I am mowed with the grass.

To see my life so quickly pass—
Makes me think I made a stupid mistake.

ODE TO THE NOSE (written for Becky Holter, 1968)

The nose is an unusual thing.
It pops up in the strangest places,
On even the most ordinary faces,
And in all phases
Of existence.
And it quite amazes
Me, that even with all the latest crazes
(Such as Halloween mazes
And Eastertime vases),
Nothing has yet replaces
The nose.

POCKETS

(Selected for Wheaton College Literary Magazine [Kodon], in a volume devoted to "Writing for Children")

I like pockets.
Pockets are nice.
You can hide all kinds of things
in your pockets:
Like string
and crayons,
and pretty rocks,
and dirty socks.
Yes, I like pockets.
I think I'd like a shirt with four,
and some pants with six more,
just so I could put in them
the things that I need.
Like spiders for girls,
to keep them away,
and marbles for boys,
'cause that's what we play.
But some day
when I'm big,
when I'm much taller and brave,
I'm going to scrimp and save.
And then I'll put in a pocket
a penny.
Perhaps two or three—
but not very many.
Just a few pennies
to jingle and jangle.
'Cause that's what pockets
were perfectly made for.

BUFFALO HOP

O give me a top
Where the buffalo hop,
And the dear old cantelope sing.
Where seldom did swim,
An encouraging whim,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Hymn, hymn to the strange,
Where the dead, cantankerous twang.
Where seldom did squirm,
A vociferous term,
When the dash danced away with the verb.

A VALENTINE POEM

Oh if thou wouldst
be but mine,
if I couldst
alone be thine;
if that wide-eyed Cupid with thoughts benign
should send his winged arrows—
my love to thee I would resign,
and thou wouldst pledge to be my Valentine.

So take, fair maiden of the dawn,
this poem; and if it toucheth truly upon
thy secret wish, then let it be a sign
from that messenger divine,
that thou shouldst be my Valentine.

JUST FRIENDS

(written in the fall of 1969, for a girl who thought I was too young for her)

Two little birds
sat on a shed.
One was named Fred,
the other, named Ned.
Said Fred to Ned,
who turned quite red
(or was it bright pink?),
“I think
a romantic
relationship isn’t as nice
as a just friends-ship.
Because being ‘just friends’
depends
only upon being friends.”
“Yes,” said Ned to Fred,
“And it doesn’t matter
what age you are,
or how near or how far—
it’s more than that.
It’s ‘just friends.’”
“Oh, I agree,” said Fred,
as he hitched up his jeans,
“It means
two people who are just naturally
drawn to each other—
not because of any mushy feeling
or silly squealing,
but just because you are
what you are.
It ain’t jealous,
it ain’t possessive.
It’s just close friends
who understand each other.”
Said Ned to Fred,
“That was quite profound!”
“Yes,” said Fred, “it was.
Pro? Perhaps.
But found? Found?
Ah, it wasn’t found by I.”
And with that they both
flew away into the sky.

FOR MY FATHER WITH ALZHEIMER'S

I remember my father when his memory was good
when the world was good; before the onset of Alzheimer's and before a dark depression
grabbed hold of him and held on to him and would not let him go.
I remember him as though it were yesterday
when life was good and his children were young
and he knew who he was and I knew who I was
and we were all together as one.
And it was oh so good.

We all knew what death was
but not the loss of memory—time, times, and a half time.
Synapses snap, strength saps, brain-shrunk punks flame
on off on off on off again
never knowing when the he we once knew will not be
here or there.

He is no Lazarus fresh-sprung
flung from some living stone-hinged tomb of Bethany
Baptist (independent of course, but) mostly dependent
on the words of others—mothers brothers sisters blisters poised on the nerve endings
that spike the mind up and out and back down to the edge of nothing.

And my sisters, Mary and Martha-like come and see and cry dry-eyed heaves of dirt and shit
hit the ground with fists of full flexed force.
But the mind-gaped grave-gate don' open heah no mo'.
Like me they want to be held like children like babies like fetuses like sperm like eggs
microscopic beginnings all over and under and inside breathless
by hunger and desire and kisses caressed
and cared for forever
but knowing now that never.

The one mind they loved I love
which knew them when
has been somebodyed out
zombied off
crumbles before their varied huged eyes heavy with what is gone
but not quite yet.

Signs During Rush Hour

Every bloody hand
at city crosswalks, blinks stop.
Jesus! Let me go!

Tsé sa'ááh (near Sweetwater, Arizona)

Silent sentinel
of the sun, slumps sleepily
as snakes slither by.