

## War Reportage

“I began to look into why...” – Nick Hawton, Bosnian War Correspondent

The war began about six feet from victory  
and crawled there over the eyes of a child.

In the beginning soldiers walked up the road,  
never minding that as they did so the road got them  
pregnant with map in their own private Gethsemane.

Then a mother, crucified on coming unwantedness,  
bled son from the poem nailed into her trees.

Therefore, one by one, the Europes came to explain themselves.  
After that we hoisted up crows and made love in stones.

Satan then picked up the throat of the town  
and drank from it until there was no more sleep.  
The town died then woke up again because of its smell.

“That’s when Satan returned, sir,  
and ate what happened in the field.”

But here in the camera one can see  
where bleeding and bleeding, and where “so on.”

One can see where two men revenged themselves on a dog,  
where a moiety revenged itself on a people, and where a ditch  
revenged itself on a shovel by spitting up church.

But then you knew all that, from the gap  
between fingers and from the distance between wolves.

You knew it, but you forgot it somehow.

## **A Rap Of Introduction**

As I walk down the street wind throws birds at me  
whose shadows pass through my indeterminate slowness.

Dogs leap against my fragrance hours after I've gone,  
and my hands hold together the small chapters of 10 a.m.

Dreams enter my movie and sit down in my death to watch.  
I am, after all, my own skeleton.

That's why you might think to row me gently.  
That's why, when you put on my shirt,  
the weight of my expectations hits you like a rose.

I am, after all, the absence of the multitude,  
a tumult in a closet, the one humility plunged into a vibrate of egos.  
In other words, a small manufacturer of dust.

Last night you woke up afraid, dreaming you slept with a ghost,  
the bed sheets still warm from my lie, although I was beneath you,  
two stories down, raking leaves in the dark.

I am, after all: what the desert did to rain,  
an envelope full of last year, a blush of dry wine.

Is it the wind, or is it the rattling window  
that makes us so sad?

Do we look at the stars, or do the stars look at themselves  
so hard that we feel it through our animals?

## Long After The Fall Of Communism

I stopped my run, supported my head, shoulders, my hands on the shelf of my legs, panting for a moment on the sidewalk full of sun. There she was by her car, her child in a stroller. She saw me leaning there looking at her and said: Would you like to come in? She pushed the stroller into the dark and I followed, inside the garage, through a door, into a kitchen.

The smell of pot roast. She took me to a back bedroom and then past the bed with a crib next to it, to a bathroom with a shower. She left. I got in. This house one showers in, certainly. This house, in a neighborhood where all houses are fine. I got out and took up a towel.

Meantime she'd come in and left her husband's clothes. I put them on. The odor of clean clothes. There she was, asleep on the bed, her child asleep, the afternoon, so complex; the sleep ongoing even as I went to them and passed into the kitchen, the smell of water carrying its burden. The table set for three. I went into the den and its family pictures.

There was no presence there but wind entering drapes, floating out and dropping back onto... would I be staying for supper? There she was, her baby in hand, chubby, fat caught on hooks, this baby, this living room with its lack of wound perturbation and next-moment in a room with no habits.

Later, her husband, myself, and her at the table eating supper. Talking about what the moon does, the grass, the last stages capitalism, etc., the sound of the wind, dust, letters, the meaning of bees; the night open to its last linguistic page; the dark looking in at our movie through a window; the west doing its final burn.

After supper her husband and I walk down the street and then further, through a park to the river. We sit by the river. From the other side, every now and then, the sound of gunfire. He asks what my plans are. I say, "Well, you knew by the way I came that I wouldn't be staying."

## Thanksgiving

I was having dinner at a restaurant with a friend  
who asked me, “Greg, what’s the best possible life?”  
And I said I could think of nothing

better than to sit around with people at a restaurant, eating, talking.  
If I could smoke the odd cigarette—great! Or have cash.  
If, outside from wherever this meal is, at the curb: an Indian motorcycle,

that would be cool, and if I had a woman sitting next to me, say my wife,  
who would counter my anecdotes, challenging me, but who could be said  
to believe in me, who, in other words, laughed at my jokes,

and if I could stipulate that I have a son or daughter, a son *and* daughter,  
who would sit near me, how could I be happier, unless there were  
also parents, grandchildren, and the return of my brother.

Then, for desert, we’re joined by my sister and her husband  
and some friends, a baby or two, older children, and perhaps  
everyone there could drink wine and the food available to us

would be universally available, and there’s a fireplace,  
with snow hitting the window, and the light from the room  
goes out to end in darkness, never the other way around.

## Funeral

Just prior to mine, I'll make a pyre on Lake McBride,  
the lake of my ancestors, or a larger one, Lake Michigan,  
such float suitable for my departure and rise,

the pyre stacked with guitar, high school ring, yogurt  
container full of change and dust, paper making tools,  
almost honorable discharge, a watch, plus everything

I've ever written, so my people won't have to, up to  
and including this poem. So poem, if you feel yourself  
rising, not on wings but on fire, you'll know somewhere

in the outer kingdom, near the irony, a one act play is closing.  
See, a woman sinks to her knees, finally free, and a son tightens  
his coat in the wind. Baffled by reflected fire, his face hardens

to his years, as, now too late, or not late enough, he realizes—  
what? And underneath you, poem, the waster, light,  
eats both darkness and bones. The water, accepting our sift,

larger than any storm it might fund, mourns and waits  
to ravish us a bit with its licks and cold fell.  
So, goodbye poem. I suppose I could have done better by us,

but now it doesn't matter, does it? Look, the stars—

