

What I mean to say

**Eternity is either a very long time
or a very short time**

I occupy these steps between
a stone bull
& bear guarding a bank

Here I enjoy a commanding view of
men
& women swimming upstream along
Sutter Street

Their spawn had better take
since these ones have stopped eating

Lather rinse repeat...

Sharing this common winter lunchtime
w/me are half a dozen other guys perched like cormorants
w/their feathery laundry hanging out to dry prior to
setting out over
the sea that stretches before
us each

A few steps away a short-cropped gray-haired citizen bends over
the Sporting Green like a pathologist
as he gleans evidence of
the poor prospects of
this season's Giants
while below me is the facsimile of
another man whose feet have forgotten what the inside of
a pair of
shoes feels like
but whose mad mats of
hair offer a pillow on
which to rest his woozy head
as he sprawls athwart
these steps every bit @
home here
as if this were his living room
& we the interlopers

I would like to believe in
many things including how well the cold January sun reflects on
me
& my white shirt
& my well-tied shoes
& my clean-shaven face

Q: Who am I kidding?

A: I haven't the foggiest

I returned from
overseas two years ago now
& it's still too damn difficult to say whether I've returned home
or left it behind

Nothing is as it should be

I can hardly breath
b/c there's @
once too much oxygen
& insufficient nitrogen in
the air
or else something else dismembered
& gone missing for
good

Nothing feels right nothing looks right nothing sounds right

Securing food is impossible under
the supermarket fluorescence that render merchandise so shiny
& so bright that everything tastes like the end of
something

It's all been switched around

Mirrors hang backwards forcing me to read my image right to
left

Clean sheets are sandpaper against
my skin
so I sleep
w/out

Exposed

2:00 am silences stretch me to
pieces each night
as I stay vigilant for
clues to
the movements of
other living souls enemy
or friend

... my hiccupy heart taps out
the jangling rhythm of
my gaunt life
if this still is life...

But then the old guy looks up from
his paper
& swivels his head
as do the others
& so on
& so on
& so on until
even the drifter's head rises to watch

What I mean to say

Which means it could only mean *one* thing
& so I monkey the men
& turn my head
& open my eyes
& they fill up
 w/a billowy blue skirt
& olive-skin legs
& a fury of
 red hair

A woman walking westward t r a v e l l i n g s l o w m o t i o n
though not like on
TV
but rather deliberate motion instead

Fluid graceful
& strong all shoulders
& hips propelling her body forward
 even as she sustains herself in
 place in
 time in
 mind each movement telegraphing her intent to
 the planet
 so that it may shift
& so benefit from
 the blessings of
 each
 fall
 of
 each
 foot

Feeling drawn down to drown I move from
my position
& pick my way toward
 the sidewalk all the better to watch her move her thick red lips
& a meaty tongue over
 a wad of
 gum like...
 well...
 well...
 well...

Only now do I see that there is also this blond @
her side

A woman
w/the kind of
looks that were she to walk into
a bar alone she'd just cold-stop all talk on
the spot
but here today hers is a mere rivulet of
prettiness downed by
the flood of
beauty flowing from

What I mean to say

the woman in
blue

The blond says something that makes her friend laugh

She laughs
& laughs
& laughs
& as she laughs she folds @
the waist then whips upright like a fountain then folds again
as the mirthful hem of
her skirt bounces @
her knees
& her breasts sway under
the fall of
the fabric of
her blouse

She laughs like today is the only day

I reach the bottom of
the stairs when @
last she comes up for
air

Her eyes lock onto
mine
& mine to
hers
as if we knew all along we'd be standing here face to
face in
this instant

It's this instantaneous thing electric + mutual + raw

It also strikes me dumb
& in
the silence
that follows she walks on by

This moment like every one before passes to make room for
the next

Buffeted in
the woman's wake I watch her backside retreat like a beacon inviting
& denying me

An ember growing small
& cold

I can no longer recall whether eternity is a very long time
or a very short time.

County Fair

what a popsicle-sucking fan-waving shade-hogging hog-hauling arse-ogling tongue-parching donkey-stopping feet-perspiring slurry-seal-melting fig-gnawing grape-seed-sucking cigar-chomping tobacco-smoking chad-hanging milk-carton-reading iceberg-melting answer-machining little-girl-fondling nail-biting carpet-bombing Hitler-longing cuck-olding Lord's-name-in-vane-taking totally-tripping brown-nosing pencil-nibbling knee-jerking water-wasting loose-tooth-wiggling whore-whispering oar-duggering scull-scrubbing horse-whipping skull-scratching autoerotic-asphyxiating chain-smoking blister-peeling chin-chinning social-networking mother-stabbing father-fearing tumor-palpating granma-fleecing gas-lighting Berlin-lifting baby-dangling Treasury-raiding cheese-racing Sata/n-sitting pressure-cooking water-boarding turkey-plucking love-handle-grabbing cleavage-leering hem-pulling leaf-blowing pig-sticking scrotum-scalding beluga-bludgeoning harp seal-strumming level-heading nipple-twisting nasal-excavating global-weirding needle-pointing nit-picking likker-slurping tea-partying craptastic-poetry-generating slow-dancing three-times-heel-tapping dog-snatching cat-scratching snatch-dogging hardly strictly loafing afternoon.

**Astonished
& alive**

Weary of
wandering the bewilderment of
my heart
w/out you I consult a map
& choose San Diego for
 how it's wedged there in
 the lower left-hand corner
 w/the ocean @
 its back
& the remaining nation fanning out north
& east

On the way down I see in
my mind's eye a sun-bleached exile replete
w/hot-white beaches
& friendly palms waving fronds
& grim tattoo artists carving fleshly visions
& wave after
 wave of
 water to grind
 my hopes into
 smaller grains of
 sand

What I did not expect is that the sea would be the same color
as your eyes the last time I saw you

Not daring to wade into
those waters I sit up on
the dunes for
three days

The sun bakes my back in
the morning then my head @
mid-day before
moving on
to blind me

On
the third day something moves me I don't know what
& I find myself abruptly jumping up
 & tearing off my clothes
& running into
 the water
& diving into
 the face of

What I mean to say

an ominous wave
as saltwater greets my sunburnt skin
w/thoughtless astringence

I stroke for dear life until
I work myself into
shelter beyond
the breakers
& into

a kelp forest where I bob for
hours of a wave then down
w/the otters crest of the other
as each surge of the other side
surf draws me up onto

But safety is tedious
& anyway the Pacific is cold
so I point myself shoreward
& decide to ride the waves

When my timing's right I travel all the way to
the beach
but more often forces beyond
my ken
& control toss me around like a paper cup leaving sand in
my hair
& seaweed in
my shorts
& a crick in
my neck
& water up my nose
& rocks in
my ears

Astonished
& alive

As the sun comes to rest on
the horizon I come in
& dry off
& walk over to
Ocean Beach Pier where I look across
the waters to watch the final colors of
the day dribbling down the canvas of
sky
as night steals light from
the undone day like a promise never made
& replaces it w/
a slivered silver moon @

What I mean to say

pier's end

I walk the length of
planks
& pass a burly black man wearing snow gear
& playing space music on
his synthesizer from
which hangs a sign that says Jesus Is A Fisher
of Men
& there's a Vietnamese guy casting
& casting his bait onto
the waters
& a pair of
lovers loving one another against
the railing
w/half-empty soda cans dangling from
their still-free hands

The further out I go the fewer people I meet until
it's just me
& the moon hanging there in
the sky like an open palm just beyond

my reach

Jesus had it easy

He wasn't fishing for
the moon

What I mean

Truly I say a lot
but what I mean to say is I have this habit of
following your hand
w/my eye...

I say a lot
but what I mean to say is that song you hummed that once in
your kitchen you know the one about
the seamstress of
the soul

say a lot
but what I mean to say is I'll just go over
here to
your window
if that's alright
& light a couple of
these candles you got here left over from
the one before
me

a lot
but what I mean to say is sorry for pushing your cat off
the sofa now come over
here
& sit @
my side

lot
but what I mean to say is the taste @
the corner of
your mouth
but what I mean to say is being out in
the sun all day
what I mean to say is your eyes are bright brown
& perfectly ready
mean to say is I will grab you
& throw you
& catch you
& hold you

to say is please take
as you much as you'd like please
say is you whet my frayed ends
& draw me through
the eye
is you know the song.