

Montlake, First Rain

September always tastes like moss  
Purple beeches sag from drifting rain  
Branches weighing heavy from the mist  
Seedpods fall like droplets in the street  
oily streams are filling alleys fast, bursting  
copper gutters weep from every house  
patina getting greener every year  
droplets crash sink on window panes  
drains spilling out from dying leaves  
moss and houses dream of warmer days  
although the storm is quiet now  
horizons count the rhythm in the gray  
water sloshing sings a somber tune  
this season always dragging on till June.

## Sundays Below Villa

Today, the thunder is quiet. The grotto  
fills with gray and fry flank the shore on  
bits of shredded quartz, that slice my toes.  
The algae is thick, not like bedding, cold  
beneath my soles beaten smooth by thunder  
the dogwoods overlap the waves, their white  
petals turning into silt. Waves are turning green.

Daylight moon is pale against the sky.  
The grotto smells of mud, oozing cigarettes  
left here by dying fry. We came here from  
Madrona dock, drifted on your fathers boa  
the motor click and stops, we breathe the bilge  
sun is beating through the wheezing clouds.

We dive deep, grabbing cinderblocks the fry  
once used as nests. They drag you down, down  
in wheezing algae, the milfoil holds you tight  
like I once did, no sense in pulling up.  
The thunder echoes in my lungs, rising with  
the night. City lights reflect off clouds  
turning sickly purple in the wind.

Now I only walk through gates of iron to grottos  
never open on Sundays, to sacrifice the quartz.  
The rounder pebbles, softer than waves, are idols.  
On lake Washington, the silt drifts and boats drive past  
Never stopping here, and you never stop too.  
Thunder offers a gift to mountains, lost behind  
Eternal gray, the fry soon return to spawning creeks.

Stellar Jay

*"Le printemps adorable a perdu son odeur" -Baudelaire*

Good men never sleep. The wind is loud.  
In morning, stellar jays  
cry out to the blooming sun  
rising dew clings to their wings  
beating fast in the blackberry thicket.  
Black dawn fading into blue;  
their bodies are weeping mist.  
Whisper thick, the vile air  
claws out of the ravine, ivy maws  
where dreams fall off the cresting ridge  
into gentle and radiant sludge.  
Stellar jays sing awful songs.  
Mist, still turning frost in may  
like winter, when cars grind pebbles  
grating steel and rock, like jays.  
Blackberry holds the crash and sound.

On horizon lines the crags are saintly.  
Out there, mountain flowers bloom  
In shades of red. Snow is melting  
Rocks are coming back, and bone  
Is all that's left to hang in streams.  
Could the mountain turn to watch the hills,  
Or dissolve the sinking clouds? Is the city  
So bright the dust won't penetrate the dawn?

But spring is lonely now.  
Magnolias bloom, the scent  
Forever present in the dew, the petal  
Skin bleeding, seed pods falling.  
The stellar jays, now  
a monument in those trees.

Blackberry Pie  
*for Nik*

All I ever wanted was to live inside that photo  
your mother hung in the old kitchen, our  
lips stained from pie, the glow of rain  
that never came. Those sunset ripened berries  
soft on thickets edge we used to reach  
and summer echoes called us down in the ravine.  
August was always blackberry sweet. Sand Point  
always there at dusk, and stayed weaving into night.

Even in purple dark, we were whole. Golf courses  
are peaceful at night, although we never played them  
except to turn fields into bunkers, you  
imagined summers. In the distance, single story  
houses glow. Watch them, and they never watch back.  
Rebellion was pie for dinner, midnight slumber  
discussion of girls we lied and said we didn't like.

Sunlit days never seemed so short. You always said  
one day, the lake would end, and you'd sail off  
through dead rivers. August mellow ended, and sail you did.  
Memory belongs to March. Blackberries rot off vines,  
and now, you may rot too. The seasons wait for signs of your return.

I thought I would return. All hills steeped in rain  
filling the ravine, and now only ivy clinging to mud.  
They had torn the blackberries out, the thorns  
creeping in, your mother watched them disappear.  
Berry juice is cold and sour. The scent of  
August breeze fools us. One day, they may call  
us fools, but now, they call me lonely,  
and they call you sick, forever.

## Foster Island

Out where the trailhead bends to meet the sunken waves  
a lonely bench waits for you. There, the cool ground  
is firm with sand, and rocks guard the water's edge  
where our feet once stood. Gray skies always in vogue. Gray  
Like water and the whirling songs that clutch the will leaves.  
The short wind echoes the damp signs of your return. Dead rivers  
cry out and milfoil weeps beneath the wake of marching boats  
never topping their parade along this lake.

The year the sockeye came was when you came upon  
this muddy shore. Then, the trails were never empty  
paths full with the stellar jays' call. An island  
made of bark, with willow trees ripe in green.  
The cattails danced between your fingers. Around us,  
young boys fish for cutthroat and girls  
jump from dock that just into the lake. Merganser love in this grotto  
and here, we love too, our feet in water August warm.

I wish that love was firm like those concrete pile that  
grip the highway east and cut this lake. On this island  
the constant drone of cars is percussion to our  
wet music, music like rain. Even those highways that collapsed  
into the lake undying, trail off forever. Ancient  
in our young years. Eternal like gray or some  
wailing note reflected off a ripple's edge.  
But still condemned, our memories, Like bridges, will fall.

Years of solemn wind now have turned this island cold.  
Willows empty. All leaves in decay, to mud  
that would have lined our feet. Rust echoes in the piles that  
hold the road, those roads that pull and carry you eat,  
and here I stay, where the pavement is always wet.  
Still mergansers sings, and the heron's stare  
pierces beyond the fog until the sun splits  
the cold horizon of autumn, and all cattails wither.