

Metaphor

You translate death with your very last breath.

You translate the world into the world
for the sake of the all that's fallen in between.

People ask you "What have you done?"

It's their wonder you translate from your soul
through examinations of grief.

A woman comes up to your hands
as you translate gestures of absence nightly.

You show her, by not explaining, but by translating,
because she hasn't asked.

A street begins at the suddenness of your failure to sleep.
This you translate as *tomorrow*.

Shadows watch from the dark to see where they'll arrive
as soon there's light. This you render as *the past*.

If you couldn't translate—you tell yourself as you study
January and other names for remembering—everything might be the same.

Or, the period at the end of the last untranslated sentence might rock
back through the afternoon like a tumult fructifying a grave.

Greg, you say, translating furiously, which holds
one atom together, thus saving and condemning the world.

Greg, you try again, but can't quite capture its meaning,
so you take it for your name.

Dasein

1. Dasein

The possibility of escape thru knowledge
is the possibility of rain after 1st breath
the truth of being dead & alive

And whence comes the aforementioned of which...?
More on that later.

2. Later

How death waits forever
& this is life reading a book by Barack Obama
the Barack Obamaness of wistfulness of the book
is the wistfulness of the death of belief
but certainly
there is no belief in the death of flavor

the Barack Obamaness of the fleeting
how coming here until I can't stay anymore

but the body & the soul how they would

like to leave together again as George Bush
as they have lived together and here I'm thinking Nancy
and Ron like darkness on a lake
& the forest how it would break down
into trees at the advice of its birds

what do we the living know of the dead
except that we have come from them
and that we are not their future

and that Nietzsche is now more dead than god
or just as dead or they're both alive and aren't metaphors
and all eternity is personal which is what I'm afraid of

3. Regarding the Imagination

It seems unimaginable to fly w/o grief
thus the lightening of bones as unto god
some monk held up a candle

and so it was that we only dreamed
so that we might need ourselves

& the dead who are brave to say nothing of angels

& the alive which is pondering seen from miles away
out a train window through the snow

4. So, Forgive Us

1's death & 1's life
how they are there in the twining

so forgive us the John McCainness of the palpable
that our infinitudes are sore from voting

and forgive us our Sarah Palinness of having to read
and of sex then later scattered in death camps of leaves
the Colin Powellness of that smell of burning

the bone's soldier brought to leaves by rain's fidelities
the voraciousness of squirrels concerning how babies
fall from oaks and what is alive is dead in between the getting

of "thee" & what is dead was alive to the suddenness of nuns
to want grace more than birth how the tongue
can't talk to deliver itself from thirst

5. But the Dead Wait

in trees for December
& work in droves for the sharpening of claws

& think that life is remembering
those who are their own dead
such as fog in some marshes

but to live out the McCainness of 1's statue...
to be born unto the Obamas...

how the dead pray & then suddenly go away

and the McCainness of 1's fingers
and the Obamaness of 1's fade away

jump shot

how the alive store cloth in the breast
how the dead are likely to freeze solid

how the deads' parishes are the Kennedy's
& their motorcades & how the Obama comes out of the kitchen
and the dead sensating around themselves just sensate

& we notice the absence of bees

6. But We Come not again

Well on our way to the dead the alive
banquet on snow & the dead
suffer through pleasures of rain and cold

& the forest comes to us
but we come not again

O, the dead, the dead certainly they are
bereft of their toys

thus the Obamaness of hospitals not open until dawn

the dead when it's all whittled down
are the last to know

the McCain who has armies upon armies to get over it

& the Obama who must choose and there's no
aliveness in choice such are the demands
of the understanding...such is the aloneness of visiting

who waits for the dead and pretends

For the Dead

For the dead paint the dirt with their movies
& we call that living by being astute

for the dead are our addictions
and the poem is our abstinence

Between The 1st World And The 3rd

In the 2nd world, the president believes in ghosts
and tectonics, in magic and coal.

In the 2nd world a millionaire's dog gets rabies,
senators marry gypsies, plays are performed on the radio
and everyone, including beautiful men, ride bicycles.

If you and I lived in the 2nd world, we would meet
late at night, at an outdoor café. I'd cultivate basement
mushrooms. You'd sell stolen window glass.

The second world, located provocatively,
mysteriously, inside the 1st and the 3rd.

The second world, composed of the hopes and aspirations of the poor
combined with the awarenesses [of the existential pointlessness
of fulfilled desires] of the rich.

The second world which is born, for just a moment,
when a tourist enters a hotel built by the military;

where Europe, Russia, India, China, Indonesia,
and America struggle over the moon.

The second world, whose dentists sink the teeth
of the poor into movies of the surreal,

whose Santa Clauses murder turtles using cattle prods,

and whose children take the milk from their siblings
and use it to water lemon trees.

I'm sure you've guessed by now that a safety deposit box
in the 1st world is a novel in the second and a waste-ditch in the third,
each world having its own special relationship with the truth

so that a lie told in the first becomes a ghost warrior in the second
and a stadium where bodies are buried in the third,

such is the progression of laboratories into museums into abattoirs.

The Great Butterfly Collapse

1. Deep Breathing

By way of my son's tree frog,
brown, of humble birth.

By way of falling asleep while driving,
I see that you're only halfway there, invented,
by way of playfulness and eroticisms.

By way of easy access there in the crowd at a movie,
hands falling into corn, withdrawn at the graze of a hand.

As you said, handing me coffee softened by rain, standing outside a tavern,
"there is survival and there are rivals, with little in between."

2. Flocks of Birds

Bird is a thing come apart, a flock broken as from the symphony
a dropped bow; the grass, fully loaded, swaying with birds,
the moon wet like a glass spit in by a ghost.

By way, then, of your dove, found in a windrow, clinging
to dawn and healthy as a priest.

3. Pawn to King 8

By way of the knight moved forward then pulled back, moved forward
then pulled back, till the king collapses at the base of his queen, a tobacco
stained finger brought to the lip at the end of the affair.

To then put on one's coat and to walk out the door, alive.

4. The Return After Death

By way of porticos covered with leaves, beneath which linger shadows
hoping to enter; a man older by twenty or thirty years, naked now
except for his clothes, who wrote you a book once and offered you praise.

By way of surrender, as sleep is the only escape from the stomach,
the pillow, a stove for hair. Yours, placed under mine, taken from a comb
thrown in haste. By way of yellow liquor, a game of croquet,

a Saturday afternoon, blackbirds, crushed by heat, weaning over a grape,
then later rain billowing in kitchen drapes. A woman lifts her blue dress
towards your hands, by way of assumption, by way of the basement stairs,
by way of binding one's friends to one's past.

5. Fisher of Men, The Farmer, The Long Drive

By way of the sand bar at dusk, its carp gorged on filth at the bottom
of a beer glass, too full of scales, too strong for the net, yet easily lifted
by the moon, cleaned by falling asleep,

eaten by crows in my car, a cue stick left on the back seat.

By way of apology, for the barns, the silo, the wrapped bales of grass.
For the windrows filling with snow. For the one car passed at night on the highway,
three kids asleep in the back, mom and dad safe, almost home.

For the brother salvaged from salt, put up in a cream of winter, left
as a bread on the rise. By way of the hammer that's breath,
alone when wind turns from west to east, the sun risen on steam,
the creek filled with dartings of gold;

to return there, to walk
in memory, unable to sleep, to be buried.

The First Rap Is Often 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 cloister, 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 generosity, 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 wind rattling the window
that makes us sad?

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