

Windows

Two lovers recline on a grassy bank
Under an expansive cerulean sky.
The nearby pond is a darker, richer shade of blue,
And spring stipples the water with bright flecks of sun.

The lovers are silent, unwilling participants
In spring, in the pulse of life
And content with small, ephemeral bits,
With a facsimile of conversation,
A simulacrum of friendship,
A disembodied connection.
They are together but alone.

Each peers separately into a very small window
And reads a different text.
Their perception framed by what they see,
Their text--- the slight text of a distant, faraway muse.

Crusoe in Suburbia

Alexander Selkirk would have known
What it means to be marooned
On some suburban island
In the great American ocean,
Some small speck named Whispering Pines,
Or Huntington Chase or Sandpiper Pointe.

Like Selkirk's story
American Crusoes
May find some small footprint of humanity
On their own cannibal isle---

Such Crusoes are hopeful at first
But soon wary
Lest they be consumed
By their consuming
Shipwrecked as they are

These Crusoes
Tend not goats
But pizzas
Or Crusoe's Crispy Chic.
They do not tend gardens --
A bit of green in an arid waste--
But sell insurance or real estate
Fix cars or pull teeth.

All huddle together
On small suburban sand spits
Which quickly appear
There and there and there
Like the spawn of dragons' teeth
Or like mushrooms
In the erstwhile pastures they have replaced.

And on island or islet
The big box stores
As ugly as Caliban's teeth
Entice consumers like charmless Calypsos,
Beguiling those venturing from lumbering argosies:
Those seemingly in perpetual motion and chartless,
Those sailing –
Always sailing on ribbons of asphalt.

Swallows at the Mall

Attracted by small scraps
Swallows have returned to the mall,
Wheeling and darting amid the crumbs
And consuming all
Like an unsated fire----

Under the clear skylight-
That crystal dome of heaven-
The swallows can see the great world without,
But are content with the small world within.

Circling in an endless gyre,
They are but small links
In the great chain of buying,
Stopping only to partake of food or drink
Or to find comfort with the flock
That has roosted with them,
Billing and cooing amid the murmuring wings
Or the tread of many feet.

After a brief respite in a food court
Or by the waters of a trickling fountain,
They fly on,
Urged to flight by a small voice
That says they must do as they have always done.
Their harvest is lean,
But they still walk fallow fields.

Empty of purpose,
They survey shelves
Which will not empty soon.

The Grammar of Love

Gerund Participle divorced his wife
And left her dangling.
He couldn't modify her constant interjections into his life.
He had always believed in long term commitment.
In fact, it was an article of faith.

But she was simply too demonstrative,
Too possessive.
She had to be the subject of every conversation
And the object of adoration.
Her comments were reflexive.
Just me, myself and I.

He had always numbered himself
As a person who respected the opposite gender,
But he was not passive.
He had a voice.
He could take vital, active action.
He had had other loves.
There were antecedents.

And then there was
That trouble with his colon.
After hearing the prognosis from the doctor,
He was given to loud
Apostrophes such as
"Oh, my God!
Oh, if I were a young man again!"
This hadn't helped the relationship either.

To make a long story short, one night in a fit of pique,
Just before he had to dash off
To teach that English class,
He told her that he needed a brief period away from her.
She was upset.
And after interminable,
Seemingly infinite excoriations,
The infinitive used was to divorce.

And so Gerund joined the mass of divorced men,
A mass of men seemingly beyond count.
He exited from what
He once thought was a singular romance,
Learning that
Singular is sometimes to be preferred over plural.
Frequently life is subject to ellipsis.....

The Winter Count

Drawn on a freshly scraped white hide
During the chill of winter,
The winter count is a thin membrane
Stretched over distance and time,
A tissue of memory

Spiraling outward from the point of beginning:
A time of feasting, a time of loss,
A counting of victories large and small,
A count of horses and buffalo
Hunts and camps
Of young men killed, of enemies slain

The tug of time greater than the pull of life.
The spiral ends as abruptly as it began
Until the next season begins,
Color pierces the grey of winter,
And very different winter count begins.