

## I Have Never Been

I have never been to Dublin –  
Ireland, that is – to walk  
the winding streets, to  
trace the trail of  
Leopold Bloom.

I have never seen Paris  
from atop the Eiffel Tower or  
stood wide-eyed marveling  
at the Mona Lisa.

I have never heard an  
opera in La Scala or  
ridden a gondola in Venice  
or eaten Tuscan food  
in Tuscany.

I have never tanned in  
the Azores or combed  
the Malagasy beaches  
at dawn.

I have never stood at  
the base of Mt. Everest,  
a Sherpa at my side. I  
have never seen the  
full moon rise over Mumbai  
or strolled the parapet of  
the Great Wall of China.

All that I have ever done  
I have done with you.  
I have lived my life  
in the shadow of  
our backyards touching.  
And yet, standing  
on the shoulders of  
our love, I have moved  
through time and space;  
I have watched this  
universe spin around me.  
And I have seen everything.

## Only the Silence

Two cars collide  
at Fifth and Cleveland.  
Five o'clock  
in front of the factory.

No cop.

More cars collide.  
All mobility has ceased.  
A hard rain begins to fall.

No cop.

And someone honks his horn,  
then someone else.  
Now everyone is honking  
and the rain is falling faster  
and someone screams for help  
but no-one can hear  
him.

And someone lies dying  
but no-one can get near him.

No cop.

Only the silence  
of the rain falling.

## Plain White Dress

There is poetry  
in a plain white dress  
furling and unfurling  
in the stiff autumn breeze.  
Making no promise and  
baring no secrets, it  
lures the mindless eye  
like a bakery window  
on a slow Sunday morning.

## The Experiment

I read on the internet (where, of course, it must be true) that when you put on your pants you always start with your nondominant leg. Naturally, I thought about this. I thought about never having thought about it before. But then, why would I? I've been putting on pants since I could walk, since long before I knew (or cared) which side of me was dominant or even knew what dominant meant.

Still, to an inquiring mind, this was a question demanding an answer, a possible revelation not to be relegated to simple irrelevance. An easy experiment one really can try at home. So, this morning, with all the pomp and flourish of a scientist on the verge of a great discovery (next stop Stockholm), I set up the experiment, feeling like Galileo climbing to the top of the Leaning Tower, a lead ball in each trembling hand.

Standing naked in the middle of our bedroom, with you as my only witness, I began to insert my left leg into the leg hole of my briefs. I promptly fell on my face. Stunned, I lay there, panting and humiliated and defeated, my nose and lips skimming the coarse fibers of the carpet. And you, always the practical artist, laughed, then lay down beside me and caressed my neck with your gentle hand. You said I could be such a fool sometimes but you loved me anyway. This was a good day, perhaps the best of days.

Two Thousand

$$R_N = \frac{D \times v \times 2r}{\eta}$$

Osborne Reynolds

I.

The lightning is the glimmer  
of a greater glory; the  
thunder is the echo  
of human misery.

And as the storm stabs  
deep into the ocean,  
tiny lights dangle  
in the darkness –

desperate lights caught in  
nature's finest fury, finally  
dissolving into endless night: the  
density of open empty space.

Another sailor lost, victim of  
his passion for the sea.  
Another unheeded warning –  
for did he not see

the red sky this morning?  
I see a red sky every morning.

II.

When the glacier retreated north,  
carving and sculpting the land  
as it moved, it swept aside the solitude  
and left behind a different world.  
A new and fertile earth was born,  
buried by forests, incised by  
raging rivers. We were alive  
then, hunting in packs like

wild dogs, cleaving the means to our  
survival out of volcanic rock,  
trading bat infested caves for  
the risk of living in the sun,  
laying waste to our ignorance,  
groping our way up the needs

hierarchy as though it were  
Mt. Everest in a blinding blizzard.

Love was brutally simple then:  
only the strong survived,  
sex followed the combat,  
babies were conceived  
and born, and the species kept  
flowing through an ever widening  
tunnel of existence.

### III.

Atlantis sank into the sea.  
Helen of Troy launched a  
thousand ships. Socrates  
drank the hemlock; Athens  
fell, Alexandria burned,  
Carthage faded. And even  
Syracuse where Archimedes  
once drowned heroic men

in their own ignorance. Then  
came Rome, then Hastings, then  
Madrid, Stockholm, Paris, London,  
Berlin – an endless chain of  
impossibly twisted dreams.  
And through it all La Goconda  
smiles, still believing perhaps  
the Earth to be the center  
of the universe.

And the drama persists, borne  
like a raft through the rapids;  
the fluid of human existence  
hurtling onward, out of control,  
accelerating through time until  
the critical velocity is passed and  
the turbulence is complete.  
Somehow I grab a rock just before  
the waterfall. But now the indecision  
becomes worse than the turbulence.  
Should I let go or should I  
hold on and starve to death?

#### IV.

A warrior sneaks into the back  
of a church hoping to justify  
his passion for war. But  
God has stopped listening  
and the honey of peace is  
dripping: faster and thicker  
and stronger and louder  
until the warrior begins to  
collapse under the burden  
of his own misconceptions.

There are choices that can  
strangle a man, that twist  
and squeeze like the tightest  
noose on the highest gallows:  
the choice between  
love and passion,  
benevolence and greed,  
coma and corruption  
of the soul.

I too have had such choices,  
and I flirted with what I thought  
I once wanted only to find  
slow death in a log jam.  
And now, when I watch this  
other sister fading in the distance,  
making the long reach for  
a brother's love, foretelling my  
sacrifice to an uncaring world,  
I can see that life has the viscosity  
of flowing lava. But at least lava  
flows smooth and freezes hard.  
Then they can make soap out of it.

The death that shadows failure  
draws its force from old age.  
It is never the joust that  
kills you but only that certain erosion  
of the senses, the insidious  
decline into inevitable stupor.  
So if I am to die in the midst  
of that stupor, let it be alone  
on a raft in the early spring  
in the whitest water of  
the Colorado River.

But for now, the windmills that  
tested my resolve have been  
destroyed, Rocinante has been  
put out to stud, Dulcinea  
has married the tavern keeper.