

## Mustin Lake

I.

The swampy heat, a leaden weight  
That slows the metabolic rate,  
Settles like a humid shroud,  
Languid, idle, and sedate.

The passive water laps with light,  
Liquid shimmer sparkling bright.  
Glinting undulations play  
As slowly day concedes to night.

Diurnal warblers quell their hymns  
From overhanging cypress limbs  
Preparing for a restful roost  
As deepening purple twilight dims.

II.

Buzzing insects bob and weave  
Dancing in the spreading eve.  
Their thirsty clouds of lazy haze  
Crescendo in collective heave.

From trees above and from the ground  
Their chirping cousins burst with sound.  
Cryptic broadcasts fill the night,  
As chatter and discourse resound.

At the bustling water's edge,  
Rustling in the weedy hedge,  
Nocturnal creatures hesitate  
To sneak from the protective sedge.

Splashing bass tails slap the lake,  
Concentric ripples in their wake.  
The turtles poke out timid heads  
And of the dusky air partake.

A heron stands among the weeds  
Gawky awkward he proceeds,  
Tip-toeing through the lily pads,  
Still somehow regal as he feeds.

The ancient cypress knees protrude,  
So soldierly their multitude  
That breaks the darkly placid calm  
In upright flanking fortitude.

### III.

The croaking chirping serenade  
Swells throughout the everglade –  
A timeless ballad, longer sung  
Than any music ever made.

Then nature's soft-sung requiem  
Like sweet ambrosial opium  
Bestows a brief tranquility  
On nighttime's live lunarium.

Anachronistic, eerie sense,  
An eras-long ambivalence,  
Remembering back to times long gone  
That hold no place in present tense.

Endless summer childhoods spent  
Hot and sticky, slow, content,  
Hoarse baying of the hunting hounds  
Chasing some exotic scent.

These ageless woods alive with tales  
Of pink bare feet and muddy trails  
Were standing here far, far before  
The fateful flap of foreign sails.

### IV.

Imagine what these trees have known.  
Here where they have stood and grown.  
Beneath their antiquated guard,  
Ghosts of a people overthrown.

Where wispy spirits join in dance.  
'Round phantom flames, their spectral chants  
Echo faintly as they romp  
Then disappear at second glance.

The solemn duty of the trees,  
As longest-standing live trustees,  
Encumbered with this noble charge  
To harbor long lost histories.

They hold their cypress secrets firm.  
Since sprouted from a tiny germ,  
Their prehistoric memories kept  
While serving out their senior term.

V.

Here on the lake, a soothing air  
That permeates the memory there,  
Recalling wistful fledgling peace,  
Not willful, vain, or self-aware.

Where recent spirits merge with old,  
Their time retired and stories told,  
Enfolded in a moment's close,  
As sweet hereafters must unfold.

A rustic place in plain contrast  
To grander waters, deep and vast –  
Just unassuming, quaint mystique  
And misty reminiscence past.

## Remorse

The bruised and beaten sky,  
Once alight with fiery rage,  
Scarcely flickers in the embers  
Of a desecrated night.

This razed and jagged skyline  
Jutting into twilight,  
An edifice to grandeur  
Both imagined and obscene.

Toppled in the cross-hairs  
Of some dark and violent frenzy,  
Encrusted in the cinders now,  
Their proud, indignant souls.

Crumbling opalescence,  
Some salt-begotten figure,  
Silhouetted against asphalt,  
Affixed to nothingness.

Solid does she stand there  
In such solitary blandness,  
In her sullen catatonia, still  
Awake to consequence.

Heavy silence, thick and dreary,  
In its abject resignation,  
Hangs an oil-soaked blanket  
Upon the vanquished air.

Engorged with leaden droplets  
Clouds darken with their burden,  
But no mercy can they render  
To unburn the scabrous land.

No vespers softly whispered  
Will soothe the smoldering shambles  
Dissolving in the drizzle  
Under gray, uneasy skies.

Snaking tributaries  
Run their slick and stealthy course  
Into the grated storm drains  
Of a ruined and wasted city.

Sinister the eve's advance,  
Now waxing deep and black.  
Eternally the question burns –  
– why did you look back?

## **The Last Prom Queen**

Remembering the once ago  
Upon a time of maybes  
When countless futures flirted  
With a youth of unspent chance

Ousted from the gala  
In some self-sequestered solace  
Still waiting for the magic  
Or just waiting for Godot

A phantom of translucence  
Peripheral and distant  
A fluttering lost ransom for  
An unrecovered self

I cannot help but see them  
Clearly through a one-way mirror  
Their sure one-way momentum  
And lifestyles of enough

Breezy days on sailboats  
Cozy nights in fire-lit cabins  
Lounging on plush velveteen  
Spooning with warm men

Bright and sunny beauty,  
Sparkling teeth, and shiny cars,  
Tight-fit tops and low-rise jeans  
And pretty without makeup

Gatherings and cookouts  
Lovely "splendor in the grass"  
Indeed it's greener over there  
As seen from forts of stone

How fleeting is their heartbreak,  
How gentle seems their worry  
Countless are their platelets  
Imperceptible their scars

How can they live minutiae  
Unaware of desperation?  
How do they balance checkbooks  
Or fold a fitted sheet?

I envy them their blindness  
With the option to see promise  
I envy them their willingness  
To hand it back to God

From this side of the fault line  
They can never see my realness,  
Discern my gray-cloaked spectrum,  
Or my need to paint with words

This singular existence  
Much-maligned in self and spirit  
In perpetual suspension  
Ready, waiting for the cue

I have dabbled in the blinding light  
And flirted with desire  
Partaken of forbidden fruit  
And basked in other's envy

I have played the lovely prom queen  
I have been the small town scandal  
I was once considered widely  
The Most Likely to Succeed

I rattled in their porcelain shells  
Was swallowed in their clothing  
I couldn't seem to fake or feign  
Unmedicated bliss

Such petty social dogma  
Mr. Prufrock's pretty cousin  
Relinquishing the promise  
Of a day not black with doubt

But this is what it means to be  
Alone beyond the normal  
This is what it means to be  
A watcher of the dance

## **EULOGIUM**

Far gone the verse of black, sepulchral night  
When on a bust of Pallas perched a foe,  
As up a winding stair of gothic height  
Faint wailings waft from catacombs below.

The tell-tale beat has silenced 'neath the boards,  
No stealthy beast affects malignant will,  
No masque the new vernacular affords,  
Nor tintinnabulation sharp and shrill.

Seeming now the passion has grown stale,  
The beauty of the language looming tired  
Darkly dreaming verse now waxing pale  
And stilted seem those words that long inspired.

So brick by brick sealed off from treasured lore,  
These gravely precious words ring nevermore.

## **Junkie**

Initially the faintest hint gives way to agitation  
Tugging at your shirttail like the begging of a child  
Steady swelling – mostly subtle – slightly ticks a light refrain  
A menacing crescendo creeping lithely up the spine  
Now-familiar tauntings dangle just beyond the reach  
Banshees in the cavern, screeching faint but drawing close  
Drowning out all reason with apocalyptic fervor  
Exhausting is the prospect of resisting their advance  
Shrieking ever louder, jagged claws scraped down a slate  
A dark and secret lurker, skulking well beneath the surface  
Sequestered in the midbrain like some dark, malignant growth  
An alien invader with its metastatic tendrils  
Thriving in the shadow of delusional intent  
Insistent, the synaptic fire incites the flame of thirst  
Covetous and quenchless with luxuriant indulgence  
Parasitic gnawings burrow deep into the gut  
Barbs of raw nerve pulsate dictatorial demands  
Adversarial awakening of some deceitful spur  
Distant the event horizon, swirling in black violence  
This portal pulling, pleading, ever starving, always eating  
Never belching up its burden by surrendering to purge  
Seductively aggressive now this wrenching, rending force  
And the sweet capitulation of a transitory fix.