

**Five Poems
including “Retirement”**

Prophecy

In the future humanity will be optional,
not available in all areas. Most of us
will be hooked up to machines,
with constant opportunities to offload.

There will still be people who are interested
in the arts, who drink wine and wear
interesting clothes, but they'll live
in out of the way places that don't

look the way we remembered them,
with different weather patterns.

The conversations will seem familiar,
but after we've been in one

we won't remember a thing about it.

Directional

people say the west

is the direction of death

probably because the sun and moon

seem to die there

(does the moon

have a green flash too?)

likewise

if you say you came from the east

you wouldn't be far wrong

but then all those people who gather for sunsets

really make up a death cult

not really seeing anything

just looking back inside themselves

(Untitled)

imagine pulling the trigger
bodies crumpling and bursting
in front of your weapon
pure instinct now

eighteen more shot
if a few seconds later
the bullets pierce your armor
the rush of death

the twisted synapses
the seamless transaction
the endlessly repeated tweets
conferring legitimacy

the bestowal of blame
the strict poetic form

Goodbye La Jolla

man on freeway
punching his cellphone
near stalled car
aggressive Mercedes drivers

whiz past at 85
gardening truck in the slow lane
languid pines drooping
in hazy sunshine

eucalyptus slender graceful
all the other trees
too snotty to change colors
the calm of the entitled

hoodies and sunglasses
in 70-degree weather

Retirement

nothing to do

old Sherlock Holmes movies

snowy new moon Pisces

the comforts of etymology:

re means “again” so this

isn’t anything *new*, just

(remembering “attire”)

different clothes, thick

sweaters, flannel shirts

for the “Great Northwest,”

refugees from SoCal sun –

the OED calls it “withdrawal

from the world or the society

of others” while *The Faerie Queene*

mentions “this safe retyre of life”

in opposition to the “vaine shadows”

that confront us in the world –

“the act of falling back,

retreating, or receding from a place

or position” – certainly what’s

happening here, as teaching’s

now confined to the screen,

privacy rights undisputed,

invisible, no longer part

of the favored demographic,

not catching anyone’s eye –

“just cleaning things up

“so the invaders can come in”

wrote Spicer – long slow lesson

in learning to disappear.

I've made it to Innisfree
Uncle Will, clothing optional,
whether my body goes
underground or scatters
to the far winds or waves,
starting again, as if
none of the past years
had meant anything at all . . .
who goes with Fergus now?

*

the great Northwest
always had a bit
of an inferiority complex
beavers and ducks
on the Pac-12 Network
never quite the equal
of glitzy California
or sun burnt Arizona
this night the beavers
prevail over the ducks
but not those ducks
floating down the Willamette
temporary back yard view
reading Gary Snyder again
rivers and mountains without end
what makes a poem
“maximum fancy” said Nada
on her Facebook feed
but that was never it for me
being plain isn't great
but at least it's instinct

not paraphernalia
n'er so well expressed –
words don't capture
what I want anymore,
watching the river's
faint tides ebb and flow . . .

geese waddle out
in broken formation
I'll follow them tomorrow

*

“I was really caught up at that time
in looking for the simplicity
what simplicity I could find

in the English language
and so I thought
well, pre-Norman English –

the Germanic lineage
of the English language –
has a lot of monosyllables

and monosyllables are like rocks
and I was used to working
with these rocks, and I thought

I'm gonna try to work
with monosyllabic English,
like I was building

a little rock trail”

I'm in pieces
bits and pieces

*

looks like we won't see
total blood red eclipse –
skies too rain-soaked –

blood red total eclipse
total red blood eclipse
red total blood eclipse

have to pay attention

to things closer to home

like *True Detective*

the main character haunted

by his ex-wife

at different times in their life,

alive and dead – he forgets

when he's old and also when young –

“don't go in for remembering stuff” –

links between everyday repression

and senility cyber technology

the war against memory

old and confused seniors

inability to get with the program

what the hell were you doing

why did you join the army

at the end of Mishima's tetralogy

the 80-year-old Buddhist nun

didn't remember her childhood friend

from the first volume had no idea

of what he was talking about

what if the ending isn't

really the ending at all

what if there's another story

a premonition from an old lover

I have this condition

I forget things

*

the titles of my two last poems have been
“Proclus on Place as the Luminous Vehicle”
and “True Detective 3” –

now the dental office waiting room
occasionally catching a glimpse
of people in offices through windows
of the building across the street –
the other window has a view
of other downtown Portland buildings
which I’ll need to learn to identify,
many under construction, impassive
in grey skies, yellow cranes bifurcating
their verticality, like a Léger painting.

I subscribed to the *Times Literary Supplement*
three years after I heard Lydia Davis say

she was obsessed with it at a reading –
don’t mind the lag, it’s built-in.

Anyway, this Paul Muldoon poem

in the issue I brought along,
“American Standard,” isn’t bad:
the title is the brand name of a toilet.

It’s big and digressive like many
of my own poems, juggles
lots of different themes.

Elsewhere in this issue I learned
that “ubermensch” doesn’t mean
a really good guy but

Nietzsche’s Superman – how did *he*
get in here? I’d recently liked
Muldoon’s poem for Leonard Cohen

in a small volume of resistance poems

I picked up at my first visit

to my new local bookstore –

that's the thing about Portland:

lots of trees, pages, books . . .

I dream about teaching every night.