

# See the Moment: Feel the Moment

Poems and photographs  
by BR. PAUL QUENON, OCSO



# The Moment: Seen and Savored

## THE IMMANENT MOMENT

Sometimes what is present, the now, the  
immediate, will present something from  
beyond—something drawn near,  
so immanent that it eludes your grasp.  
A something otherwise hidden lingers  
so closely in the visible  
you scarcely can see,  
scarcely can feel.  
Yet pregnant thought arises and  
nudges one on to a poem.  
Or passes by and brushes you briefly  
with a light enhancing some perfection  
that cries for a photograph.



SEE THE MOMENT

## TROVE OF POSSIBILITIES

Breathe in the day,  
the day grows in you.

The glow in the east, the chill,  
the silence, are here for you,

silence extending  
to the outer reaches of space.

Reach into this trove of possibility,  
rummage and sort.

Each possibility precious,  
whether it comes true or not,

for you are a child of possibility.

Earth leans toward the east by law.  
By law the sky comes onward  
in your realm of possibility.

Hear how the first dove sounds—hear the  
distant geese.

## ARRIVAL

Low sunrays brushed past  
fronds of grass, probed dense forest,  
bolted into its heart.

Tree trunks rarely touched  
by sunrays make manifest,  
bare themselves boldly.

Shocks of sun-gold flung  
around like scattered wheat sheaves  
saturate my sight.

My hope-hungry heart  
holds paradise in promise  
—almost—is it this?



FEEL THE MOMENT

## ELEMENTAL LIFE

The trees are breathing,  
all leafing out, breathing air.  
Stand, smell, share their breath!

The grass is breathing.  
That started weeks ago—  
change comes from ground up.

We all came from gas,  
even the sun, earth, and moon.  
You are what you breathe.

Be, then, what you are.  
Practice elemental life.  
We are all one breath.



FEEL THE MOMENT



### **SPARROW WALK**

Chipping Sparrow and I go  
side by side along the walkway,  
he with a little one note song,  
plucks five on a string.  
He moves, stops, and sings again.  
He takes the lead, I keep pace,  
slowed down to a sparrow's walk.

That's a fine thing to learn.

**GETTING BACK**  
**JERRY AND PAUL**

*A pantoum*

With wind at our backs,  
with road sloping down,  
we stretch our steps wide  
and glide our way down.

With road sloping down  
we sail river road  
and glide our way down  
propelled by the wind.

We sail river road  
as swift as Jesus,  
propelled by the wind.  
with Vespers in sight,

as swift as Jesus,  
with time catching up,  
with Vespers in sight  
we trust to our luck.

We stretch our steps wide  
with time catching up,  
we trust to our luck,  
with wind at our backs.



## ORIENTAL CARAVAN

Wealthy caravan  
spreads color array of clouds  
trailing horizon.

Traveling end to end,  
opulent feast to hungry sight.  
Such rare luxury!

Dream swiftly vanished,  
leaving day—plain, dreary day—  
clouds, old clumpy clouds.

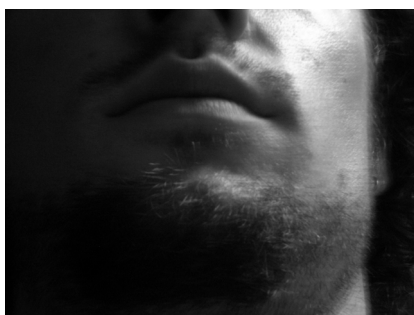
Lumpen elephants,  
cows limp'en in herds--circus  
ground left bare, empty.



## BYSTANDER IN JERUSALEM

Where's that man going on that pathetic ass?  
—that unbroken colt bucks not nor romps,  
some kinship of nature between them—  
man and beast.

I've not come to join a crowd.  
What a nuisance! But you can't resist  
how the kids carry on.  
Funny things happen on a full moon.  
I'd say it's a bad time to get trouble started.  
All I want is to get through this Passover and  
back home.  
The guy looks harmless enough, for all the  
ruckus.  
I wish him the best, but he must have put  
himself in this fix and should get out of it.  
God help him!



## PASSOVER MOON

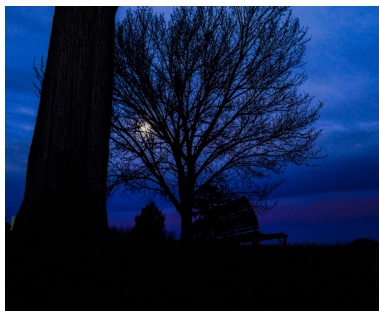
Full Passover moon  
passes high overhead from  
waxing to waning,

from Jewish Pasch to  
Christian Easter. Sovereign moon  
governs solemn feasts,

high holidays hailed  
by owl answering to owl  
across moonlit field.

Geese briefly speak up,  
barn owl yelps out once, then quits,  
not to make undue

hullaballoo at  
high mounted moon marking our  
death-defiant rites.



# The Fleeting Moment

IN A FRACTION OF A SECOND, a camera  
records an instant in time and space  
indefinitely.

Photographs shore up a barricade  
of denial against the transitory.

Likewise, a poem fixes in words  
a passing perception, treasures  
a feeling that can never be recovered  
just as it was.

We have an innate longing for things to  
last forever yet nothing will ever do so.

The artist therefore risks becoming an  
idolater, perhaps in fact he is.

Or he can become an iconographer  
and look through the moment,  
fleeting as it is, into the mystery  
of some far greater perfection  
than exists in time.



## UNPOSSESSED

Today is your most precious day in life.  
This moment your rarest moment.

For this moment is the only one you have—  
no other moment nor other day exists.

Do not spoil by using it,  
do not carpe diem, trap, hold or tame.

It's a wild beast that will stray,  
sense, and follow out its way

to wheresoever precious moments go,  
to where herds of rare days arrive, linger,  
then escape unpossessed.

## SLIPPED OFF AT NIGHT

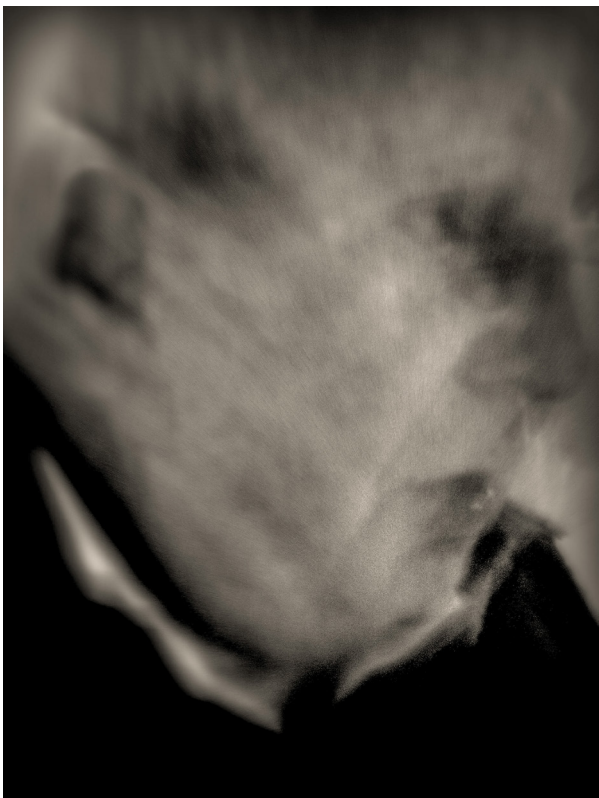
Infirmity monks  
spent years attending to him.  
He died - they embraced.

He'd slipped away slick  
as a serpent sloughing off  
dead peeling of skin,

squeezing slickly through  
narrow cleft, the slit of death,  
pared down bare, to grow

rare new skin, tender  
as light touch of two Brothers  
after work done well

for one hidden life well lived.



FEEL THE MOMENT



### SOUND-TONE PAINTING

Dawn, orange-gold, in small gradations,  
ascends the sky still sleepy with lingering  
darkness.

Wispy clouds catch hints of gold,  
earth languidly rolls back bedclothes of fog.

From field afar a cow bellows  
notes in resolute strokes descending  
quarter step gradations,  
intoning the mounting orange,

making morning, all the more intently,  
a sound-tone painting.

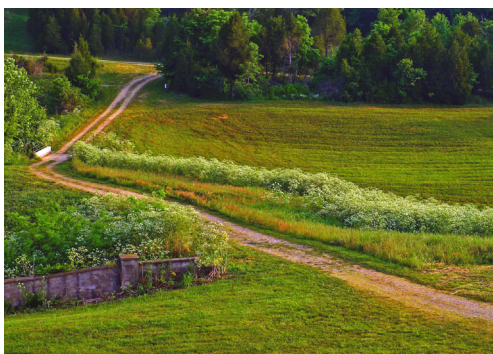
## ROBIN'S DAILY MORNING PRAYER

While light is still low, roosting mood remaining,  
before full throated singing begins,  
robin innocently pursues in this set of sounds:

Thank You  
Trick 'r treat  
Give here  
Hurry  
Right here  
Thank You  
Gimme it  
Trick 'r treat  
Hurry up  
Thank you

A rather degenerate devotion, I would say.

You're projecting, replies the robin.





### OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF ST. JOHN EUDES

Just another name, mostly un-noticed  
in the calendar of saints, gets remembrance.  
None the less,  
daybreak splendor visits this deserving one,  
mostly forgotten.

Should I not attend the sun,  
the sun will rise regardless.  
When I do, the sun comes up  
attentively.  
Earth, fog, sky display  
magnificently.

High span of white  
corrugated clouds  
stretch.  
The sun below  
covets colors,  
lost soon,  
passing through Ordinary Time,  
on a Memorial for just another saint  
mostly forgotten,

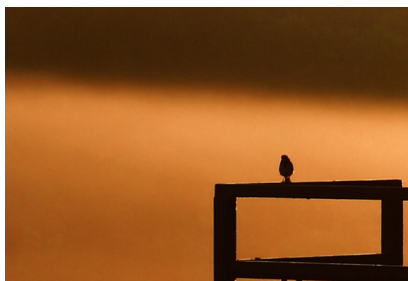
except for those attentive to splendor.

## SONG SPARROW

Song Sparrow tickles  
air—rings crystal dome arched high  
over waiting yard.

Bend low, pluck up one  
round cilantro leaf in grass.  
Tooth it—freshen breath.

Stale soul turns crystal clear  
as air clipped, joy tripped, rippled  
on song—feather spun.





SEE THE MOMENT

## THE MISSIONARY BEETLE

Up my scapular crawls, on six legs,  
St. Patrick's Breastplate,

shield-shaped and Erin green  
from pointy shoulders to rounded base.

With cautious pace, with circumspection,  
he bears a creed vital and verdant,

himself an emerald jewel with broad shoulders  
bearing a head too small to be smart.

Yet his soul is counseled by godly discretion,  
and reaching my hairy arm, he sniffed,

turned, and withdrew from  
my odious disbelief.

In due time, he parted shields,  
lifted wings and hummed off

to worthier mission territory.

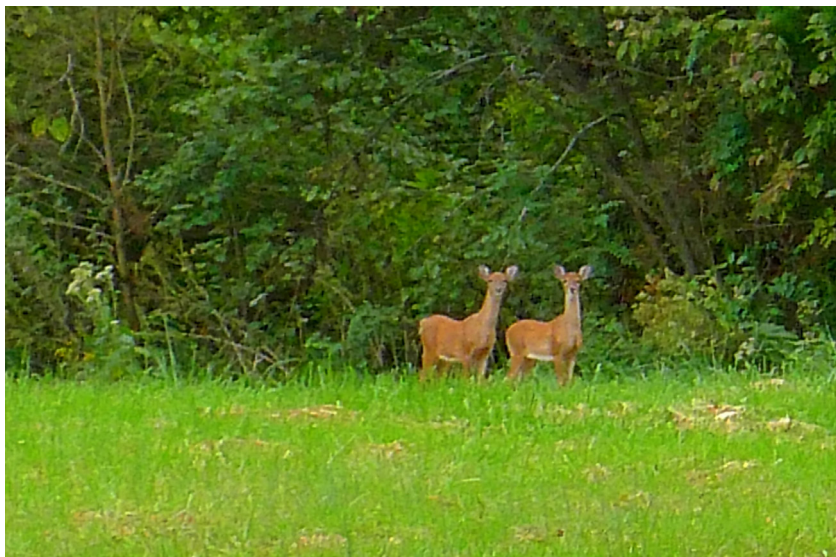
## IN DEER PARK: TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCE

With mind strayed elsewhere  
you look up  
and there it is, one deer,  
and you don't know where it came from.

Standing steady and tall,  
a principle truth you'd never thought of,  
alive in its time and place,  
and its consequence—  
a fawn, heads raised,  
dropping and lifting,  
flicking tails,  
snatching grass,  
quick and golden—  
such vital truths, free in the wild!

Slowly they recede  
toward darkened forest.  
Consequence skips to catch up--  
bright tail raised as  
exclamation mark—  
so happy its alive in being.

Your vision fades.  
They sink into forest covert  
and flip, flip tail gestures  
saying darkness is the refuge of truth



FEEL THE MOMENT



## FINCH ASCENDING

In the lake's reflection  
appears a finch ascending  
until a leaf descending  
smacks the water  
and the landed bird  
is a leaf.

Haiku, like snowflakes,  
live briefly, no two alike.  
Don't touch them, they'll crush.



Each snowflake descends  
bearing secrets to whisper  
soft intimacies.



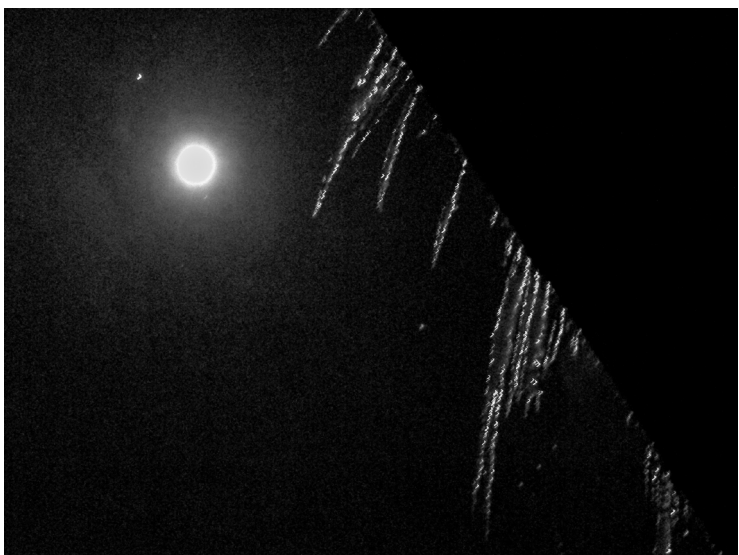
One crystal of snow  
single scintilla, reflects  
growing light of dawn.



No silence is so  
silent as silence of snow.  
None but slow winds know.



Jeweled moonlight glints through  
icicles hanging from roof—  
Orion beyond.



FEEL THE MOMENT

## BELLS CALLING

Pebbles and walls string out the sing  
of bells - pleas of desire  
ring through halls of longing  
unto the everlasting.



## Inside the Moment

Do I exist in time, or does time exist in  
me? There is more in a moment  
than you can fathom,  
and within us are tides of time  
swayed by relationships  
over a lifetime.

Ranging along those inner moments are  
hope, understanding, self-knowledge.

There is never a way of plunging  
all the way into the moment;  
no way of plumbing the depth of time  
within me

without crossing over into eternity.

Meanwhile, I also exist *in* time,  
constantly washed up  
on the rocky shore  
of passing moments.

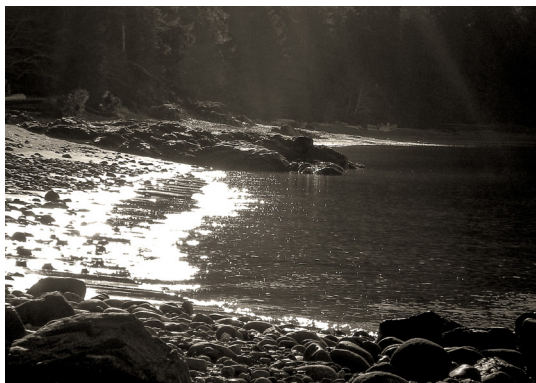
## SEASHELL OF TIME

This moment, cast up on your shoreline,  
is from the sea of time.  
Hold it to your ear and listen.  
The whole ocean is inside sounding.

Within each moment  
tides of hours are surging.  
Within each hour fathoms of years.

Do not discard this present moment.  
It curls inward to resounding canyons.

Hold the precious conch shell awhile and listen.  
It's awash with centuries beneath centuries—  
awash.



FEEL THE MOMENT

### MAD MONK BY GRAVES

Mad Monk sits by graves,  
waiting for Resurrection  
while mourning dove prays;

sits and watches how  
weather is changing. You know,  
someone should keep track.

In thickening rain  
the whole range of hills vanished.  
It's a different world!

Even the doves have left.  
Indomitable crows and  
hawks alone remain

while persistent rain  
brings purifying promise  
of burgeoning life.



FEEL THE MOMENT



### DONE SET DOWN

glanced at moon, checked clouds,  
be they where they ought to be?  
and they are— just so.

Breathed in deep here/now,  
odors—cut hay, drying leaves,  
earth herself breathing,

cricket right, at work—  
cricket on left, all things fine  
encompassed in now—

now, 'till sunrise cries Hello.



### WANDERING IN PLACE

I need not wander the land like Basho,  
 since every month the moon returns  
 from circling earth and shows me  
 on her face amazement at all she's seen.  
 Her mouth is open with astonishment  
 at wandering pilgrims, at cherry blossoms,  
 at faces up turned to gaze at  
 her moonrise above temples and shrines.

Or does that open mouth howl in anguish,  
 witness to every child abandoned by parents  
 on riverbank or kidnaped at border wall.  
 A howl too distant to be heard,  
 silenced by empty space, impossible to hear  
 except by standing with a silenced heart.



SEE THE MOMENT

## CONSULTATION WITH THE MOON

High nocturnal moon,  
where are you going?

Have you not traveled  
this track before?

Where have you been?  
on same old trail, no doubt.

No sir, absolutely not.

I follow around the earth.  
The earth follows around the sun,

and the sun never stays  
but follows a fleet of stars

circling the galaxy. And where  
goes the speeding galaxy?

No, I have never been here before.  
Nor you, sailing incredibly swiftly

on course through uncharted space.



SEE THE MOMENT

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF PRAYER

The first thing to do is  
be aware you're not praying,  
and second, forget it when you are.

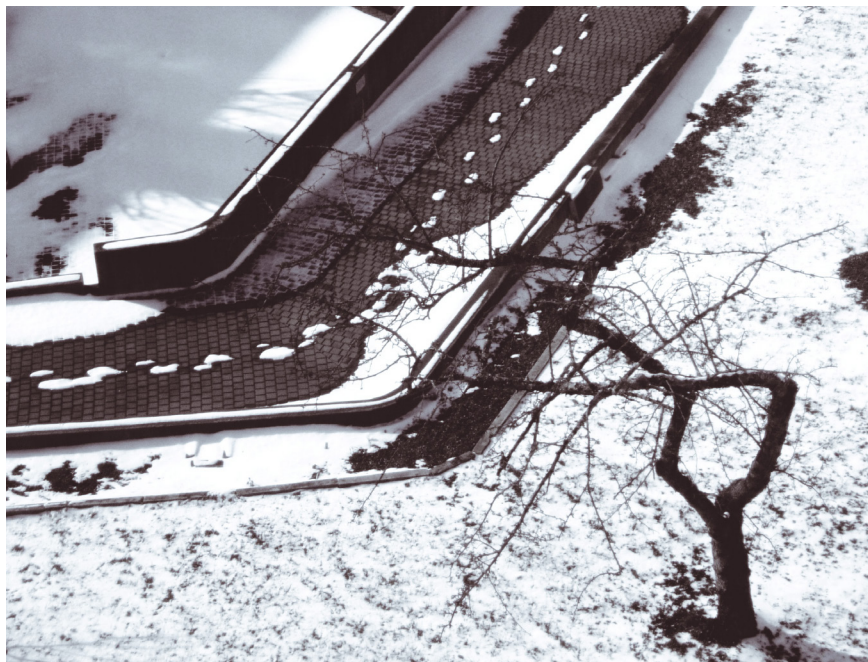
Made aware you're not praying  
puts you on the threshold, already.

Cross the threshold and leave behind  
all sense of threshold, limitation,  
and free fall like rain.

No rain drop is special to itself. Nor are you.

Many raindrops make better rain.  
Yet with no raindrops there is no rain.

And when rainfall is over  
you don't much notice how its already over.



Winds feather snow on  
black asphalt. While patterns shift  
mind elsewhere drifts.



Snow melts in cold rain—  
lost dreams of Siberia  
and long, sad novels.



Yesterday's foot tracks  
resist snowmelt of today.  
Strange—those steps were mine.

## DUKKHA

Why does this grip of dissatisfaction  
take hold of me? I would shake free—  
but no - wait, take it in hand,  
keep as yours, hold it lightly, palm open,

a common coin, worn smooth,  
passed through many hands.  
the bus token, admission for a ride  
unto what destination?

Dissatisfaction is all of what you are.  
Hold it - as all yours to give.  
It is your raw element, pitchblende  
yielding radium. Give it to Me.

Mine is dissatisfaction  
from time immemorial,  
the substance of everything  
I ever brought into being.



## DISCONTENT

I step outside after Mass to my prayer nook  
with vague discontent.

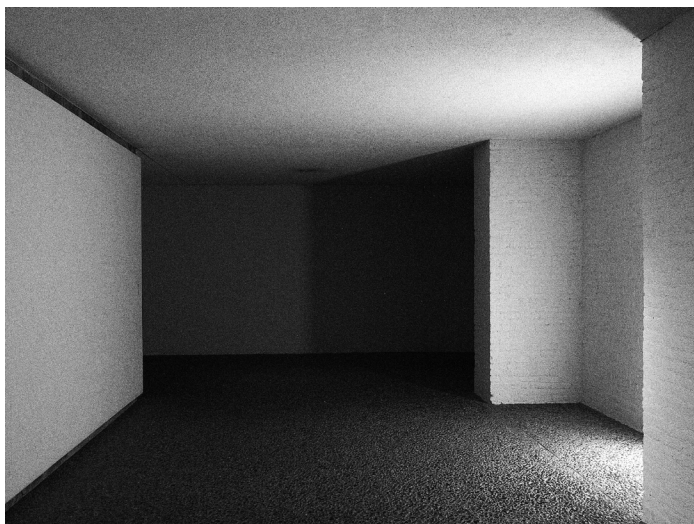
The clouded sky shows earlier light—  
the spring equinox seven days past—  
the temperature's milder, the air fragrant,  
birds are sounding,  
but none of this satisfies.

I sit and hold on to discontent,  
indisposed for prayer,  
indisposed for anything else.

After a while my inability  
speaks from its poverty:  
Nothing within human capacity  
could ever be adequate for prayer.  
Truth alone is of any real worth.

Let the truth of this moment then,  
my discontent,  
be my prayer.





### HELPLESS WITH NOTHING

I cannot bring You even my nothingness,  
which, of all things to be borne, is the lightest.  
I only bring this deplorable clutter of mind,

a languid slumping into  
an opaque slough.

There I meet Your care,  
your endless reserve of knowing-not,  
meet Your forgetfulness,

wherein my nothingness  
can take its rest—  
to make me over anew.



## The Timeless Moment

ST. AUGUSTINE said eternity is *toto simul*, all things in one. The eternal now contains all time as one moment. Our moments are fragments of that now, but sometimes you approach nearer to the whole, and know it as your own. Or are rather owned by it. We wish such moments could last forever. For all we know, they do, but meanwhile we are scuttled off from one moment to another.

The poem, the photograph, holds a hope that goes beyond itself. For the time being, see the moment, savor the moment then let it go.

### DRAWING A BLANK

I search and prod myself for a poem,  
but only draw a blank.  
The stubborn paper stays a blank.

The gloaming sky is  
vague with uncertain forms.  
My life is a tabula-rasa, a void,  
and as the philosopher said:  
Nature abhors a vacuum.

Space is full of such abhorrance,  
from the inter-galactic to the single atom.  
Throughout time such horror expands at ever  
greater speed.  
Why then should I count myself an exception?

Make me, Lord, one with nature,  
and on the blank page of this my life  
write your own ineffable name.



FEEL THE MOMENT

## RIPENING AFTERNOON: HAIKU SEQUENCE

*(at the hermitage)*

i.

Daylily blades cast  
tapered, lance-like shades on white slab.  
Noiseless ant speeds through.

My mind gathered, with  
senses stilled—I would stay put  
until evening falls.

But slow, late afternoon  
gathered a sigh, and breezes  
stirred through branches.

My resolve unraveled,  
senses picked up, fresh with joy,  
as day turns to evening.

ii.

Obedient to  
ripening afternoon,  
distant Vesper's bell

softly filters through  
forest leaves, spreading fields with  
cordiality

with gentle graces  
of time and space, enhanced by  
sunlit, swaying weeds.

This moment knows not  
haste, nor cares should time stand still,  
never to pass on.

But pass on it will  
to leave beyond time imprints—  
fresh, ever exquisite.





I have seen Pan  
I have seen Dianne  
spirits of woodland, shade, and dell  
the cleft-footed, the web-footed,  
the furry and the clawed.

## NIGHT RAIN

Night rain has stopped.  
The air retains a distinctive stillness  
as of a modest duty well done.  
In this corner of the country,  
weather can simply be weather  
without forecasts, comment, and measure—  
its vastness known by sense alone,  
moment by moment.

FEEL THE MOMENT



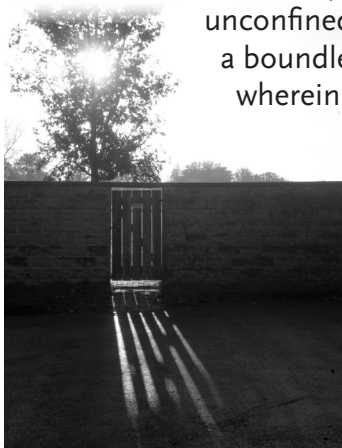
## SLEEP DEFICIT

I must pay my debt to sleep,  
pay on time or sleep will wrest  
from me my mind and thrust me  
into mindless time, imprisoned  
until I pay my last penny to rest.

My debt to death I must pay,  
pay on time to me unknown,  
when at my door, open or closed,  
Death claims mortgage  
to the dogged Bank Mortis.

I wake to briefly knowing not  
place or time, whether right or left reclined,  
knowing pure, refreshing kindness  
shown of knowing not,  
fleeting as walls of where and when close in,  
difference and same,  
of equal and not,  
of life as distinct from death.

Is death only debt, or depth of freedom  
unconfined by place and time—  
a boundless treasure of all for all  
wherein nothing is mine?



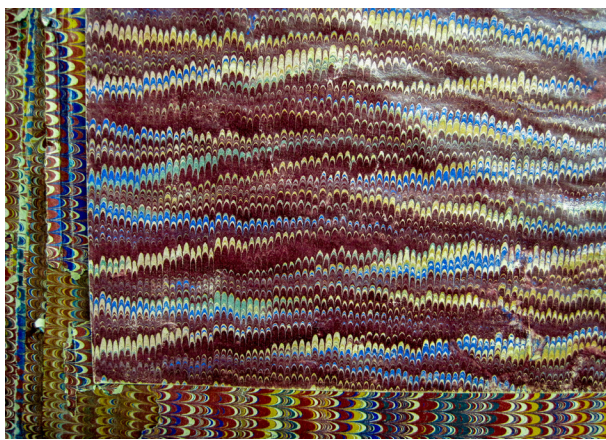


### FOCUS COMPLETE

Consciousness focused,  
Whose consciousness, whose focus?  
Mine alone, no more?

Pure, simple regard—  
but who's regarding whom?  
Sight immersed in sight.

Deep contemplation—  
deep into what? Depths within  
vast reaches of nowhere.



SEE THE MOMENT

## RADIATION

The most important sound ever heard on radio  
is raw static.

On television the most cosmic sight of all -  
screen snow.

Radiation from space shown  
as snow on the screen -  
the universe manifesting its presence.

I saw and turned it off.  
Static hissed, I dialed the knob,  
knowing not its the most important news,  
old as time, sounding in my ears.

Radiation on my cheek from the sun  
is the kiss of life.  
Poor Mother, what did she think?  
She called, the boy came, she kissed,  
I turned, tough and manly, walked away.

Poor boy never knew  
he needed that to get on in life.

She got me, let me go, and now she's gone.

The sun let go, I was gotten, and to the end I go  
where radiance never ceases.

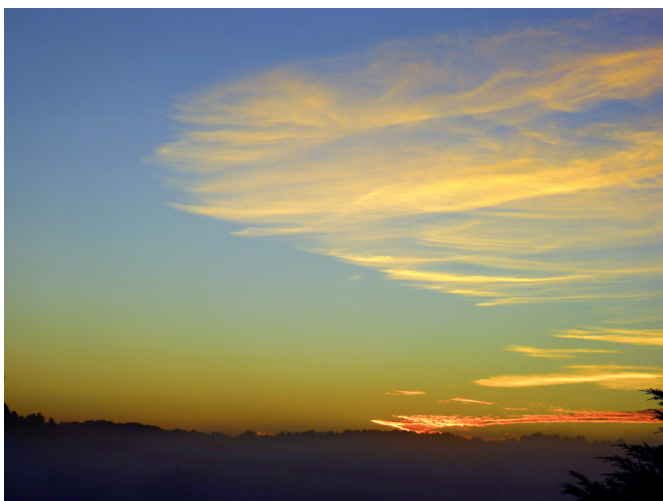
## SOL INVICTUS

For centuries now  
the sun has ceased to be a god,  
but this morning, by all evidence, the sun is a  
god.

A long preparation awaited his arrival  
with equipage of red and purple canopies.  
And a golden carriage of fine silk veiled his  
arrival.

I peered, unable to see inside it, until  
He stepped forth and spread abroad,  
Defeating my sight. I glanced away,  
not presuming to look upon such a One.  
Only at my own peril could I stare.

I am one to be seen, not here as one to see.



FEEL THE MOMENT

**BLISS UNFULFILLED: THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY***after Rainer Maria Rilke*

Who would have thought,  
before she arrived,  
heavenly spheres  
remained unfulfilled?

United now with  
blessed saints above  
she takes, unassuming,  
her place in the light.

Majesty long held  
bound within her,  
bursts forth to blind  
archangels, who cry:

Who might she be?  
Amazement swept all.  
Trembling, she bowed  
to Christ's longest ache—

his loneliness - borne  
of her long absence  
which darkened his throne.  
She slipped in a swoon,

angels swept in,  
on song bore her up,  
exalted her high,  
completing Christ's bliss.



FEEL THE MOMENT



***I know my own  
and my own know me***

know me in the very act of  
my knowing my own.

I am this act of knowing,

knowing my own  
from the beginning,  
my own knowing me.

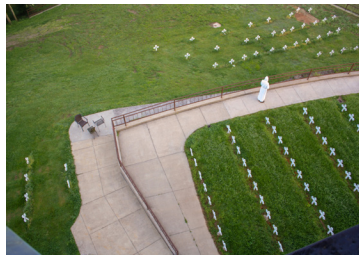
In their knowing act,  
in my knowing act,  
I am.

## OUR GARDENS OF WHITE GRAVE CROSSES

On the curved walkway in early light  
I stride high above old, old gardens,  
growing fuller yearly, spreading,  
adding white blossoms, each bearing its own  
name,  
each smiling upward like children in a  
schoolyard.

When wild geese fly over, what must they  
imagine  
of these three white flocks,  
each chick extending baby wings.

One day they might rise in sudden torrent,  
flapping upward toward a vaster migration,  
swept along with rushing wings of angels  
towards the utmost bound of the earth,  
unto the finality of time.



**END**