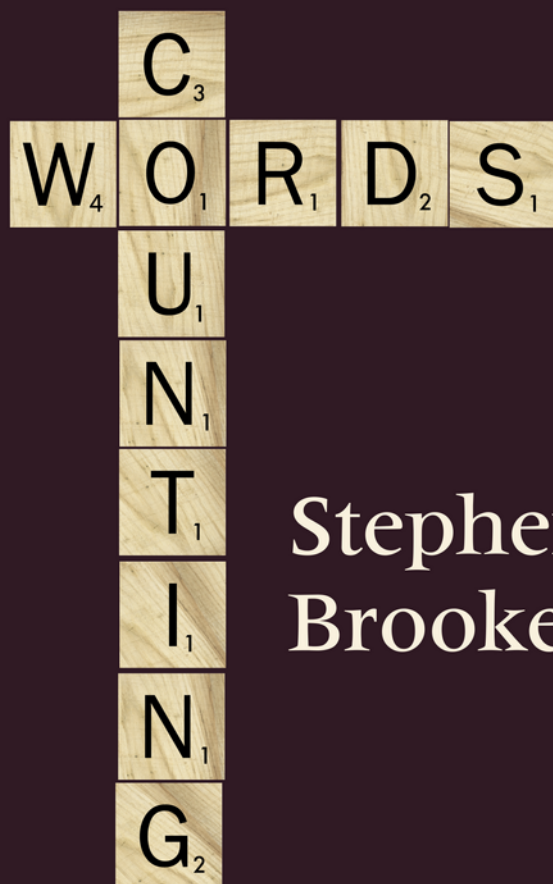




Stephen
Brooke

COUNTING WORDS



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Never trust a poet

COUNTING WORDS

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COUNTING WORDS

I count all the words
needed for this poem,
laying each one out
ready to my hand.

And perhaps they'll say
something to someone,
once they're put in order.
That is to be seen;

now they're only words,
part of some odd puzzle
I have set myself.
Will this one fit here?

POETS' LIES

Never trust a poet—
he'll only tell you lies
and pretty bits of nonsense,
pretending to be wise.

The words have all been crafted
to bring tears to your eyes;
he'll beguile your hearts,
he'll seek to hear your sighs.

But, in time, he knows
whatever words he tries,
you'll turn the page and read
some other poet's lies.

MOWING

It is not hard
to mow the yard,
but it takes lots of time;
so with each pass
through the grass,
I make up another rhyme.

I am not one
to just get done
and push that mower along;
but instead,
in my head,
I've written many a song.

Now I'll confide
it's nice outside,
blue skies and singing birds;
yet in plain fact
they only distract,
as I try to remember my words.

*how many words
are needed for a poem?
I have some here*

*come back tomorrow
and I should have more*

*I have all new lies for you.
Could you make some up
just for me?*

USEFUL STILL

I am the word unspoken,
found only in old books.
Remember me when you
play Scrabble or fill in
the Sunday crossword. I
am useful still, you see.

And now and then, if you
might say my name aloud,
for old times' sake, you know,
just sound me out for ears
that do not know me, I
would feel useful still.

CHEMISTRY

The words float, bumping,
unconnected, aimless,
dissolved in the subconscious
until my pen,
catalyst
to this reaction
pulls one and then another
from their solution,
linked into lines,
precipitated as poems:
words to thoughts,
thoughts to words.
From what chemistry
this formula?

AUTOPSY

Dissect this gurney of words
before they decay; clues
hide in every bone
scraped clean of my flesh.

Who left this body lying
unmarked in the margins?
Another casual victim
without identity,

without meaning, awaits
its moment's attention
before a pauper's grave.
The crime remains unsolved.



*Too many write from the heart.
Why don't they learn to
use the brain?*

KILL YOUR DARLINGS

Less is more
and more is a bore;
kill those darlings
that you adore!
They'll get in the way,
they'll lead you astray!
So don't fear to cut
close to the core!

*I remove crutch words
but my narrative limps on
to the finish line*

PLAGIARIST

To quote or not to quote:
that is the query.
Whether it is better
to paraphrase, seeking
help from one's handy thesaurus
or just copy it down,
hoping no one notices.

*someday nature will
erase us and pencil in
a better answer*

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CONFESSION

Anything I say may be used
against me. I have the right
to remain silent but that
is not about to happen.

Sort out the lies in my confession,
if you can. I have more
where those came from, each plausible
enough, each asking you to believe.

I'll believe them, too, if you
ask. I'll believe but not one
of my convictions will stand when I
testify against myself.

ONE POEM

One poem— isn't love
said to inspire,
to be the muse of poets?

One poem—in all the time
we were together
she inspired but

one poem and then only
as I felt her
slipping from my life.

One poem, this, of many
that have flowed
from her memory.

MANY WORDS

Many words may not be enough
to express one simple thought,
but if I say, 'I love you,'
I think you will understand.

We misinterpret, do we not,
see what is not there,
see not what is there?
Yet, to say, 'I love you,'

holds a core of universal
meaning. You will understand
and all the rest, the many words,
need never be spoken aloud.

*We wrote
letters daily
as interest grew, then waned.
There is but one thing left to say:
goodbye.*

REASONS

We had our reasons, though not good ones, really—
they never are. You know the ones I mean;
you've whispered them each secret night and seek
no others now. Excuses hurt far less
than truths, our truths that failed to make us free.
I'll say no more but in the hidden book
of my heart all these things are written down.
Take it from its dusty shelf some day,
remembering again we had our reasons.

10 COUNTING WORDS

AN UNMAILED LETTER

At times I miss you more
than I can stand or understand.

It doesn't matter whether you feel
the same or have forgotten.

It doesn't matter whether you
and I are happier now

or still long for each other's love
on lonely nights. All that was,

was, and life tends to just go on
in its old cliched manner

for the most part. So have I,
for the most part. That part

of my past is boxed up
with all those other memories

I would like to hold
onto but keep misplacing.

*day old words
on sale now ~
half-price*

*the speaker is
created with the poem ~
ask him your questions*

CHEWED

I lost the words I meant
to say to you. Maybe
they're under the cushions, slipped
out of my pocket while I sat
writing on the couch.
Or could the dogs have snatched
them when I wasn't looking,
to play their games of tug
of war in the yard?
Well-chewed words, lint-covered
words are still usable,
I think. I'll just rinse them
off, smooth them, stick them
into another poem
while no one is paying attention.
Maybe they're in this one.

*I wrote myself a letter.
When will I ever
answer it?*

SILENT

Talk to me, you say, but all
that's ever done is drive away
those I loved. Talk to me.

No, I'll keep it to myself
this time. I'll keep my silent way;
walk with me if you will.

Allow my kiss to speak for me.

MESSAGES

drip
drip
drip
the rain
that drips at my window
drip
drip
drips
at yours
a telegraph's soft distant
tap
tap
tap
carries
wordless messages
back
and
forth

*an open book
with every page blank ~
read what you will*

*so I might have a story
for my life*

AUTHOR

You talk like someone in a book,
said my date. I nodded and smiled,
and started writing our next chapter.

DECIPHER

My story is written in invisible ink,
seen only by the heat of the flame.
Be my candle this night and we shall read
each secret message, decipher all

the hidden words of my heart. Other eyes
have not glimpsed these lines; no spy
has learned the truths I wrote upon the day.
Read them for this ink will fade

in time, become invisible once again.
So are the words of those who lurk
along the edges of life, trusting few
to decipher what is written.

YOUR SONGS

I could write a tune
and use your name
but I never liked
those songs built
on girls' names, Diana
or Suzanne.

Maybe Michelle's okay
but I don't
sing well in French, not
that it stopped Paul.
Anyway, all my songs
are about you

and I couldn't go
calling them all
by the same name,
now could I?
Not unless I used
numbers, too.

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HER NAME MEANS BEAUTIFUL

for Lynda

Her name means beautiful.

There is beauty in the small brown hands
that hold conversations with Beethoven
and with Chopin, breathtaking
reckless dialogues I could never follow.

Her name means beautiful,

and she is even now, though no longer
the prodigy, the crown-wearer,
who dazzled them back then, back there,
who made Ellington take notice.

Her name lives in her,

in face and in faith (more faith than I
will ever have), shining still,
with a little help from a strong
and stubborn spirit that does not forget

her name means beautiful.

VERB

Love is a verb.

To love. To have loved.

Object and subject revolve about it,
hoping to fix it in place,
but it moves, first here, then there,
for love is a verb.

To love today. To have loved yesterday.

Conjugate tomorrow for me.

To love again.

DISTANT LOVE

Why so distant, distant love?
What do I miss between the lines?
Is there someone else who pines
As forlorn as the mournful dove?
Have I lost my distant love?

Has the distance been too great
And, growing weary, did you find
Out of sight is out of mind?
So must our distant love abate?
I thought it a love too great.

Why so distant, distant love;
Have I lost my distant love?

CURVES

The road can be deceptive.
A straight line runs
through most curves,
a shortest way between
here and there.

Keep your eye focused
on that perfect line,
not following the curve,
not allowing yourself
to forget the road beneath you

for races are won and lost
in the corners.

LINES

There are no lines in nature;
they are but an illusion.
Yet our minds must create them,
increasing our confusion.

We seek to give things bounds,
a guard against intrusion,
when light goes where it will,
and color in profusion.

So think in form and color,
lines only an allusion;
ask any Impressionists—
they've reached the same conclusion!

*Each of us lives
the lie of his choice ~
make yours a whopper*

SCAT

The lounge singer's drunken scat
has lasted too long. Someone
whisper the right words to him
so we can get on with the song.

*I cleaned that closet
and found all you hid from me
time for a yard sale*

CLATTER-CLATTER-CLACK

I am the damaged promise.
I will make no more of myself;
I will leave no mark on this world.
What would you have of me?
I've never learned
where tomorrow lives
nor why I am not
welcome there.

I speak nonsense in rhyme,
I've learned to tell time,
but, as always,
I was too late.
My mother is dead,
she has worms in her bed,
and who will care
for me now?

I am full of me.
I run over at times,
like when I left the faucet
on in the bathtub
and white foam flowed
onto the floor.
I am full of me
and soap.

Clatter-clatter-clack,
the sky is black.
Your train sings to me,
passing in the night.
Clatter-clatter-clack,
don't come back.
I wish to sleep.
I wish to sleep.

THE ODD BOY

The odd boy can make no sense
though he wants to understand
sometimes and sometimes he doesn't.
Sometimes he doesn't care or says
he doesn't, which comes to the same thing.

The odd boy knows the names of the birds
and can whistle their songs. He wishes
he could fly but wouldn't like feathers.
He can make no sense of your words.
They are not like those in his books,

not readily seen. They are like the birds
that hide, flitting movement among
the leaves, too far away to identify.
The odd boy will ignore you, knowing
your puzzle is not worth the effort.

He has learned this, as he has learned
the names of the birds and all their songs.

CANDIDE

Voltaire wrote Candide in three days,
while God required six to create
the best of all possible worlds.

I would think it was all
the coffee that made the difference,
those fifty cups each day

that fueled the philosopher's
creative fury. But God, no doubt,
slept better on the seventh day.

ANIMALS

Your words are the wild beasts
you have tamed to your hand,
a petting zoo of courteous
crocodiles and cobras.

But my words are domesticated,
horses and dogs and roosters,
on guard, at work, carrying
themselves where best they serve.

Suppose, someday, a stranger,
an untutored tiger,
wanders into their midst?
Will it sleep before

my fireplace, purring
away its savage song?
Might it come to you,
ears begging to be scratched?

Or, wisely, it may turn
and disappear into
its jungle home; some words
remain wild animals.

*without the page
the poem still exists
until voices fade*



MY LOVE CAME SINGING

I've given you my heart
to do with as you please,
to break beneath your heel
or heal its injuries.
And nothing more I'll ask
of you, no words save these:
remember how my love
came singing on the breeze.

Oft wounded in the past,
I'll not avoid love's dart
nor falter on a journey
I once feared to start.
This starry, vernal night,
though we be far apart,
remember how my love
came singing from the heart.

ACT

Life's the tale we tell ourselves,
a song we force to rhyme—
jumbled, empty metaphors,
lines in ragged time.

The truth we shape to our own needs
is no more, no less, real
than any other lie believed,
tenet we might steal.

Act upon your faith or simply
act, it's much the same:
what matter if the rose is known
by another name?

HISTORY

Things happened, then
other things happened
and the first things may
have caused the later
ones but no one agrees
on just how or why.
They write books, anyway,
explaining it all
while things continue
to happen. I wonder why.

*the latest outrage
came and went on our screens ~
we scroll to the next*

EMPERORS

After Augustus comes Tiberius
and we all see our mistake. Where now are the knives
of the Senate? All the blood of tyrants
dried years ago, was scrubbed from marble floors

and Caesar made a god. It's not so hard
to be a god; old actors take on the role
with aplomb. Some even believe themselves.
Can we raise up some new god to be savior?

Young Caligula seems a promising boy.
Maybe he'll make Rome great again.

*the driver can't see
his own bumper-sticker mind
layered in slogans*

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GENERAL LEE

a triolet

The soldiers of General Lee
Came marching all in gray,
And proud were they to be
The soldiers of General Lee.
Those who lined the road to see
Till their deaths remembered the day
The soldiers of General Lee
Came marching all in gray.

*writers of poems
and winners of elections
speak their nonsense*

MIRROR-WRITER

Handwriting, in general, being
a lost art these days, I don't
get much practice but still I
mirror-write pretty well.

Right, like Da Vinci. Or left,
more precisely. And I suppose
there's no good reason to keep it up,
as handwriting fades into

notes written on misted mirrors,
to be wiped clear and forgotten.
But it's something I can do,
something a little different,

and we all like that, don't we?
Even if it is only visible
to ourselves. Even if it can
only be seen in a mirror.

PLAIN SPEECH

My speech is plain speech,
no “isms” for me;
no schisms nor schools
nor rules to bore me,
and tell me what
each word means.
It doesn’t mean beans
unless it says
what it means,
and what it means
to say, it does say.
Okay?

ON BUKOWSKI’S BIRTHDAY

Not Brautigan—the other guy
who starts with B. Yeah, Bukowski,
that’s right. I get them mixed up.

Used to like his stuff. Liked both,
to be honest. Plain speech poets.
I don’t do that much, now,

my inner Beat has lost his cool.
I think it stepped in front of Sexton’s
speeding Cougar. Or was that

a mirrored tiger, in a coat
of many colors? Psychedelic,
man. Let me hide this stash

of words and we’ll head to the party.
Wouldn’t do to take them along;
you know? No one there is a user.

No one there smokes this shit.

24 COUNTING WORDS

HALF AND HALF

I wrote half a poem
when I was manic
and half when I

was depressed.
Could you tell which
part was which?

I leaped from word
to word, shouting
across the pages,

and cowered between
the lines. Someone
must take the blame,

me today and you
the day after tomorrow.
There is no difference.

BEEP

That small beep, barely heard
from the next room, announces
that the phone is charged.

I'll unplug it later,
if I remember, place it
somewhere on my desk,

ready at hand for calls
that never come.

INSTALLATION

I'll not be seduced by your clever cliches,
your Post-modern wit, your wiseacre ways;
go find another to be your amigo,
to see to the feeding and care of your ego.

So self-indulgent, so full of your self,
a glittering statue posed on your own shelf
waits anticipating the phrases that flatter—
when rubbish is godhood does anything matter?

I've lived in your world where every mistake
may be elevated as art for art's sake
and rehashing Duchamp once more brings one fame—
ironically, irony must take the blame.

Now carry on, you sheep leading sheep,
for you've made your bed and it's ready for sleep;
but don't allow me nor good taste to inhibit
you entering it in your latest exhibit.

I once was seduced by what now must appall,
the sheer arrogance, the galleries' gall,
to show us, quite literally, refuse and shit—
yet all of it was truly, I'll now admit.

*I write the same glib nothings.
Will I ever say
what I feel?*

*the empty can
makes the loudest noise ~
bang on me again*

CLICHES

I love your way
with a cliché,
how ever day
you seem to say

the same old thing:
your love takes wing,
your heart must sing.
You never bring

a thought that's new,
a thought askew.
I always do
depend on you

to write more of
your hopeless love,
angels above,
the snow white dove,

waves on the shore
and hopes that soar.
Use them once more—
they worked before!

*when the painting
grows muddy we rub it out
and start over*

STALE

Bonbons for the banal,
candy-coated cliché;
make a new batch daily,
place them on display.

Powder-sugared poems,
junk food for the soul;
empty calories
will never fill the hole

hunger has created,
existence claims as toll.
Stale words in the window;
throw them all away.

*today's artist
takes not being serious
too seriously*

FIRST DAY

We learn to stand in line
on the first day of school.
Is any other lesson
truly needed?

*you were that novel
I couldn't stop reading
though there was no plot*

THE REVIEWER

Don't send me your book,
it's best I don't rate it,
nor ask me to look—
I surely would hate it!

For I'll play no games,
though it is your baby;
I'll call it bad names—
atrocities, maybe,

monstrosity, too.
A bottle of wine
might help, it is true—
enough helps things shine

a little more brightly
and even turns prose
that limps more sprightly.
Or I might just doze

and hate it tomorrow
as much as today—
so best avoid sorrow;
send no books my way!

*we are all
figments of our own
imaginations*

*some more original
than others*

NOVELIST

It's great to be a novelist,
allowed to make up lies;
and if someone offends you,
you write him in and he dies!

Your fans will surely inflate you
to at least twice your size;
We think your book is wonderful,
both tell you with wide eyes.

But let me end this ditty
with just one word for the wise—
it's no good being a novelist
unless somebody buys!

HOTCAKES

Should my books have more sex?
This I've asked myself.
Would they sell like hotcakes?
Come flying off the shelf?

Not that I've spied a hotcake
on any shelves nearby;
nor for that matter, truly,
have I seen one fly.

But sex—that was the question.
No, I'm not talking porn;
just enough to warrant
a label meant to warn.

Discreet and tasteful, surely,
with euphemisms galore;
but hot enough, of course,
you'll want to read some more!

STATIC

People following the latest fanatic,
giving up logic for the charismatic.
How can a country be democratic
when every radio is tuned to static?

Spend my nights with a super model,
drinking wine from a screw-top bottle.
Not holding back, we're going full throttle,
talking 'bout Plato and Aristotle.

Talking all night, like artists in a garret,
pass the bottle 'round, we'll share it.
Nothing out there we're going to inherit,
never gonna win on our own merit.

American dream was another illusion,
rich have robbed us in our confusion.
Gonna run away, gonna live in seclusion,
won't let the world be an intrusion.

Makes no difference, they'll find a replacement
while you hide down in your basement;
never understood just what the rat race meant—
survival of the fittest, universal debasement.

Who's gonna bring us all together,
a flock escaping this change of weather?
We'll fly away like birds of a feather,
fly till we reach the end of our tether.

World today is cinematic;
need to make every scene dramatic.
Society's oppression is systematic
but every radio is tuned to static.

PILES

When the sky is torn in pieces
and scattered like confetti on sawmill
winds, when dark ocean leaps
to swamp the stars, gather up
your baskets of prayers. Throw them before
your god, saying, 'Count them, O Lord.'
Later, an angel will sweep them into
unruly piles to be thrown away
with all the rest of eternity.

*I sing harmony
to the tune in my head
none other hears*

BOX OF PRAYERS

I've emptied out my box of prayers
in hope of finding one that still
might work. I never throw things out,
you see. No matter how well used,
how worn, into the box they go.
This one seems broken—it rattles some—
but just might light up if I plug
it in. It may just need some juice.

*religion, poetry
and a good joke ~
some get it*

*and some forever
will go huh?*

FOREVER

I have never made love
to anyone I didn't love,
to anyone I couldn't see
spending the rest of my days
and nights beside.

Call me a liar,
but the only lies I tell
are to myself. Think me a fool,
if you will. Perhaps I am,
and shall remain—

remain yet another believer
in love's promises
and in forever,
forever.

*the picture begins
with a single daub of paint
the poem with one word*

*the canvas fills as I
discover its meaning*

*the words I put
in order and called a poem
might mean something*

LIKE

We were very much in like
with each other and maybe
that is enough. We could
have settled, I think.

That time has passed and now
friends means only friends,
while I go seeking the sort
of love that knots

me up, makes me sick,
demands more than I have.
If only I could once more
fall in like.

*plein air painting ~
the colors on my palette
dry too quickly*

DEFINED

I am not one to wear a label,
sorted, on my shelf;
in fact, some days I'm not quite certain
that I'm even myself.
I'd be no one at all, if able,
hide behind the curtain;
yet I find (I am resigned)
that by my deeds I am defined
even to myself.

PUMPKIN

Life is like a pumpkin.
It is also like a cabbage
or a potato or any other
vegetable you might prefer.

It will sound profound,
unless it is a rutabaga.

Folks will nod sagely
as they attempt to understand
your metaphor, saying,
Yes, life is like that, isn't it?

In the end, you might even
believe it yourself.

*words grow from words;
without my materials
where would I be?*

*life is like—
any metaphor you choose
to plug in here*

*they all work
they all fall short*

*the best actor
does not act
but becomes*

JUMBLE

There is a jumble here,
a this-and-that and maybe
something else over there.
Go look in the corner

if you care. It won't
matter, of course; any jumble
is only because it doesn't
matter enough to sort it

out and put this on its
shelf and that in its box
and all the rest of life hung
on the proper hook in the pegboard

above whatever workbench
you chose for your work. A jumble
doesn't work. A jumble lies
there and drinks beer and goes

unshaven, day after day,
and the cat explores the empty
boxes. Too many of those
make a jumble, too.

PIECE

Each of us is a piece
in God's jigsaw puzzle,
trying to find where we fit.
Until we do, neither we
nor the picture is complete.

JUNK MAIL

God sent the future in a plain brown wrapper.
This looks suspicious, Man thought; I'm not about
to open it. Into the trash it went,
with all the other junk mail of the day.

Hey, what is this? exclaimed Man, tearing open
a garish envelope. The lottery
in hell is at an all-time high. I need
more tickets! It's worth maxing out my credit

just this one time for such a big payoff.
And, after all, somebody has to win.
Indeed, somebody does, the Devil chuckled,
while opening his plain brown envelope.

*I find nothing new in me.
Should I cut and paste
some old words?*

SEPIA

Feed me on a diet of word and color,
of tunes in D minor and Conte crayons.
I'll draw you the blues in sepia tones.

*the artist dabs here
steps back and squints ~
the artist dabs there*

ROSARY

Before the bedtime story
came rosary.
One decade only, each night,
as we were small
and would have fallen asleep
before we finished
the whole sixty-six
(or sixty-seven, if you
were one of *those* people)
prayers. Mom recited
the first half of each,
we—my brother and I,
pajama-clad supplicants—
completing, moving our hands
to the next bead,
anticipating the *Glory Be*
that would mark the end
of one recitation
and the start of another.
Both were religious experiences.

*I head for home ~
the heart and the catcher
await me there*

*the words you read
are not the poem
I once spoke*

OUTSIDE

There's no need to think outside
the box, if the box we're in
is large enough. Just be sure
it has room to hold your dreams.

We need boxes, you know, or all
those dreams would float away, be lost.

Poetry is a box. We fill it
with words and mail them to ourselves.
I've so many now I think
I need a box to hold my boxes.

God must have the largest box
of all. No thinking outside that one.

*each light goes out
all knowledge is forgotten
darkness abides*

JASON

My shoe is wet; I almost lost it in the stream
but I am not one to fulfill your prophecies.
Another knows the way to Colchis. Let him find
your fleeces and your witches and return to sit
uneasy on your throne. The Argus sails; I watched
it find Earth's edge and turned away, forgetting fate.

*In the end
we all succeed in reaching
the end*

EDGE

I've been laid on the forge of life
and hammered into something you
could never understand. No knife
has such an edge, so sharp, so true.

Take care, should you hold me too near,
that such a blade finds not your heart;
I would not shed a single tear
when all that holds me here might part

upon that razor. To divide
is not to conquer but make way
between these things I might decide,
to draw thin lines upon the day.

Some other hand must drive the wedge;
these cuts mark only what might be,
as we seek balance on this edge.
If neither of us is set free

what anvil and what hammer ring?
'Tis but the forge where I have lain,
'tis but a tune the gods might sing
as all the fires that formed me wane.

*I reveal one more facet.
Would my entirety
dazzle you?*

*young women flee
at the poet's approach ~
his speech is too strong*

CROWNS

This throne is not mine—
I renounce it.
He who would be king
of your realm,
who desires all that you
desire of me,
is weak.

These chains are not mine—
I shed them.
Not even for you
will I wear them.
Not even for you
will I wear
my crown.

Only this heart is mine—
I give it
to you, wrapped up
in borrowed words.
Don't tear them;
they might be used
again.

*the old pencil
writes but no longer
erases*

PINE TREES

I have added pine trees to my poem,
pine trees on the mountain. I do not know

why they are there, growing toward that sky
and that yellow moon. Those I may

have added as well. Or maybe last night I fell
asleep, watching the stars, and they found

their own way onto the page. No matter;
they all fit and the pine trees grow tall.

*the moon shines in ~
poems about nothing fill my head
at midnight*

*I lose myself
in the song of my muscles
biking at dawn*

*any direction
will put you on the road
to nowhere*

*morning bike ride~
I find words to carry home
but always lose some*



LEAVING

Day follows day until that day
I must leave; it grows closer
with each dawn, with each bird song,
with each poem I pack for my journey.

I have put the moon in my satchel
and as many stars as I can fit.
I have filled it with memories
of the sun on the tall viridian pines

of the hills and of you.
Give me a kiss and I shall slip
it in with all the rest before
day follows day and I say goodbye.

WE ARE

We are they who find
beauty in the sunset.
We are they who count
all the stars of night.
We are they who know
every bird of morning,
every bird that sings
to the morning star.

All these are the things
that mark us as human.
All these are the ways
that we seek our God.
All these fill the songs
rising from our hearts,
rising as the sun—
all these things we are.

JOURNEYS

I've glimpsed the shores of Neverland
(I might have been flying above),
and taken passage on *Bird of the River*
to sail the length of Yann.

I've sat beneath the mulberry tree
and listened to Kai Lung's tales;
the mountains that border unknown Kadath
in misty distance rose.

And watched the twin moons hurtling
through long nights on Barsoom,
as Ouroboros swallows his tail
and the road goes ever on.

*my window frames
the music of red trumpets
hummingbird dances*

MEANING

This poem has no meaning;
it's but a string of words,
dancing to some rhythm
I once piped up and lost.
And if that music's flown,
I do not weigh the cost,
for it has no meaning
more than the songs of birds.

WONDER

I have pursued the sense of wonder
beneath the hurtling moons of Barsoom
and through the caverns of Moria.

I followed its tracks in jungles where
Mowgli and his brothers howled,
and on the shores of Gitche Gumee.

I once held it for a moment,
off the coasts of Treasure Island,
and voyaged on, to seek new worlds.

I yet hear it calling me,
calling me again to follow
across the hills and far away.

*glass half-empty?
drain it, raise it high, calling
for another round.*

*two tree frogs
debate outside my window
words not needed*

*their audience whispers
conversations in the dark*

WORD

A poem is a word followed by another word
usually. I guess just one word's okay, too, but I'm
already past that point. One breaks those words up
into lines
like these. Unless, of course, one went with that whole
one word thing.

A poem should mean something to someone. It needn't be
the poet. It's enough to make words follow one another;
they are unruly little beasts and like to hide them selves
just when one needs them. They have learned to spring
the traps I set.

A poem has to stop when there are no more words
to follow
words. Some poets don't know where that is but I
would say
right about here. Ah, but I have yet one line to finish,
one more word, and one more, followed by another.