

Poetry Series

David Kowalczyk
- poems -

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David Kowalczyk lives and writes in Batavia, New York. He has taught English in Changwon, South Korea, and Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, as well as at several colleges in the United States, including Arizona State. His work has appeared in five anthologies and over fifty magazines, including California Quarterly, Bogg, Maryland Review, and St. Ann's Review. He was founding editor of Gentle Strength Quarterly. He has published three chapbooks.

A Short History Of Pain

No dream
could ever be
as sadistic as
the swift brutal pain
known as love.

Falling in love
often results
in radioactive dreams
and a festering liver.

As many, if not more,
crimes and murders
are committed in
the name of love
than out of anger and hatred.

Falling in love
is like having a dragon
stagger out of the sky
and fall into your lap.

David Kowalczyk

A Small Sacrifice

His innocence was erased
last year by the lion priest,
who consumes
young boys.

His childhood is forever destroyed.
He is lost in astral clouds,
in constant prayers
to obscure saints,
child martyrs all.

David Kowalczyk

A Sober Riot Of Words

Acumen agog amaranthine atavistic atrabilious
Baroque bovine bucolic chiaroscuro chthonic
Clandestine claustrophobic concubine discombobulated
Donnybrook embryonic entropy evanescent farthing

Fester fricative frottage gaumless gimcrack
Glockenspiel hamartia imbroglio impeccable inchoate
Intrepid jacaranda jejune lubricious malaprop
Mendicant migniard mesmerize mordacious nihilism

Onomatopoeia orexigenic ossuary paladin parsimonious
Pellucid prestidigitation purloin querulous quotidian
Redolent rococo rundle serendipity sfumato
Unctuous undulating zaftig zugzwang zwieback

David Kowalczyk

A Theory Of Snow

Snow falls
in a most
disturbing way.

It falls from
the lungs of
dead musicians.

It is cruel
when it strikes the earth,
more hungry than mean.

The snow is a dream.
And, almost, a call to prayer.

David Kowalczyk

A Time For Roses

Touching them, you sense
that beauty within you shall
also someday bloom.

David Kowalczyk

A Warm Red Hunger

Last night, I dreamt of her
for the first time in over
five years.

Her twilight face appeared,
a face which could neither love me
nor let me go.

The face she wore while
our love slowly withered.

That face grew fainter, and
soon her sunrise face appeared:
joyous, kind, and believing.

The face I first met,
the face I will carry
to my grave.

Last night,
a dormant volcano
in Mexico erupted.

David Kowalczyk

Afterlife

The only thing
I really dislike
about being dead:
there's so very little
furniture here.

David Kowalczyk

Agog

This word laughs
like cool running water.
Agog is a delirious munchkin
with eyes as big as ostrich eggs,
a child of the moment,
a child without parents,
a child far too impassioned
to ever speak in complete sentences.
This word is leaving you
for Joyce Carol Oates.

David Kowalczyk

Almost Haiku

Two little blue moons,
her little blue eyes
rise and shine.

David Kowalczyk

Apocalypse Moon

The wind becomes a knife,
cutting the edges of your eyes.

Begonias die slowly
on the scorched windowsill.

Shards of ash flutter
like moths through the faded light,
gentle settle on burnt blossoms.

David Kowalczyk

April Fools

Spring. A great yellow stain.
Forsythias burst and daffodils explode.
Swallows hurry back from Mexico
and are bitten by
the laughing snows of April.

Spring, the smile
of a ninety-year old man
who can't hear a thing you say
yet keeps talking to you nonetheless.

Spring and dreams
have that in common.

David Kowalczyk

Ars Poetica Haiku

To talk like the rain.
Words the color of oneself.
This is poetry.

David Kowalczyk

Ars Poetica Kowalczyk

The invincible moon
orbiting your heart.

A world tender with
sapphire eyes and

revelation multiplied
by music:

the sound of seraphim
making love.

David Kowalczyk

As If I Am Your Dream

Here, in the warm white fog,
our smiles contain miracles,
miracles only an ancient love
could ever manifest.

My blood turns to wine.
The edges of shadow harden.
Time fills with tears.

Let us surrender
the sky we stole
from the gods.

David Kowalczyk

Atrabilious

This word is
a forlorn distant rumbling
from the bowels of hell.

Its home is littered with
the carcasses of decapitated monkeys.

It glowers and sneers, both
gladiator and flea.

Its J. Edgar Hoover eyes
cause nightmares in most children.

It is composed of small venomous vermin
and a handful of jagged bones..

David Kowalczyk

Beasts In Shades Of Gray

As a boy growing up
on a poultry farm, every
Saturday morning would find
me collecting carrion from the roadside:
skunks, opossums, raccoons,
groundhogs, and an occasional
red fox or two.

Even as a child, I sensed more
than coincidence was at play
behind these legions of animal carcasses,
behing all that protoplasm splattered
across a winding rural road.

Some mornings, I could hear
angels talking to the dead animals.
'Stay still, ' the angels whispered.
'Stay still.'

David Kowalczyk

Beside The Beautiful

'My work is done. Why wait? '

-George Eastman

Twenty years ago, when I first read
these last words of George Eastman,
I was repulsed. What a tawdry, venal,
materialistic view of life!

Today, I must agree:
any life properly lived is
a life properly ended.

'My past three visits to Chinese
restaurants have yielded the
identical fortune:
'Good to begin well. Better
to end well.'

If ever was the time
for a graceful crossing,
it is now.

Thanksgiving but days away,
it is a perfectly delicious day.
A pristine turquoise sky.
A balmy seventy degrees.

This will be not a suicide,
but a celebration
of the soul's immortality.

Between Earth And Sky

Across tombstones ancient,
cobwebbed, and crumbling
slips a cold, bilious fog.

The dense, dismal breath
of beings never to die
or ever to be reborn.

David Kowalczyk

Big Butte

A mountain? Not quite.
Ten thousand years of dust,
a handful of stars.

David Kowalczyk

Bittersweet

Never has a day
been more perfect
for a funeral:
as fresh and clear
as the morning dew.

Yet at Berry Funeral Home,
four cadavers have resolved
to elude the final kiss of the the earth,
to rise beyond what the truly limited
term 'death'.

Their arms flapping in concert,
they're soon pirouetting about
the ceiling like eagles at play
on a mountaintop.

The mortician enters, and
stares in disbelief. His doubt
stuns their new winds, and
they slowly flutter downwards,
only to catch themselves, and
rise again.

They will fall and rise, rise
and fall, again and forever,
without ever touching the ground.

Is this not the definition
of heaven?

David Kowalczyk

Breakfast At Gethsemane

Here, in the absence of angels,
we live on common ground,
like the tender fragments
of a dying love.

The woods are full of
astonishing leaves.
Howling maples, elms full
of stoicism and disease.

I have been belched forth
from bastards. Shelter
my heart from grief.

This is lunar country.
The clouds gallop across the sky.
All the towns have
pale gray names.

In my dream, I'm
at the zoo staring at simians
reading mangled translations
of Rimbaud.

Cages full of mandrills
and crack vials, banana peels
and used condoms.

Shadows bend and wrinkle.
Voices bite at my brain.
The radio static becomes
a prayer.

David Kowalczyk

Buffalo Is Full Of Surprises

The other morning,
lounging in Spot Coffee,
the ghost of Albert Einstein
turned to me and whispered:

'Art is not art
until it begets
miracles.'

David Kowalczyk

Bumper Stickers

1. Life Is The Path
2. He Who Hunts Two Rats, Catches None
3. Disregard Reality
4. I Think, Therefore I'm Dead
5. Common Sense Keeps Most People Common
6. Passion Is A Law Unto Itself
7. Where Is Heisenberg When We Really Need Him?
8. You Can't Lose Something You Never Had
9. If You're Not Rich Now, You Never Will Be
10. It's Not Really Your Dream Until It Comes True

David Kowalczyk

Canticle For My Great-Niece

To live is to dream.
Magnificent, glorious, uplifting
dreams of heart-rending beauty
even the saints tremble in awe of.

Dream them!
Every second of
every minute of
every hour of
every day!

Dream them!
Not with your mind,
nor with your heart.
Not with trust,
nor with hope,
but with your soul's birthright:
the faith of a mustard seed.

David Kowalczyk

Catch The Fog, Then Let It Go

Like a hundred jackals rapidly
licking the sun from the sky,
memories of my childhood
riot within my soul.

Their rage continues.
They are what they are.

Here, at the end of
all light, on a beach
littered with dead grunion,
I close my eyes.

I am he
whom I have sought.

Here, perhaps, I will
sing the songs
I was born to sing.

David Kowalczyk

Cheap Posada Blues

The raucous band playing
in the cantina courtyard
across the street thinks
you're throwing beer bottles
at them from your balcony
only because you have no
bouquets of roses.

They self-destruct throughout
the night, weaving in and out of
your over-easy dreams, until
the next morning, when you awaken
to find yourself on exhibit at
Ripley's Believe It Or Not.

David Kowalczyk

Chiaroscuro

dandelion eyes
a deck of cards
a field of burning moss

as delicate as joy
its hands are spiders
and its smile a faraway shore

it floats like a butterfly
and lies like
a lover

David Kowalczyk

Child Juggling Kumquats, Smiling

Tao
can never dance.
All dance
is Tao.

Tao
can never forgive.
All things
create themselves.

Dance is not
wu-wei, action
without thought.

Dance is not shen yen,
realization that natural
rhythm is absolute freedom.

Dance escapes
definition.
Dance can only
be danced.

Forgiveness
is not a way
of moving
both in sorrow
and in peace.

Forgiveness
is not the child
of experience wedded
to understanding.

Forgiveness:
the union of open mind,
spontaneous movement,
and pure spirit.

Forgiveness:
the basic function
of dance.

David Kowalczyk

Children Do Not We Forever Be

Your right index finger is broken
and will remain forever so.
You shall never again point the
finger of blame.

Accept responsibility for the fact
that you have always been you.
No one on earth can ever change that.
No matter how much they may think so.

Accept that everything that happens
in your life is a gift from yourself.

One small finger broken.
One eternal soul in process of healing.

David Kowalczyk

Cold Whisperings Of Bones

Fifty years after your death,
whenever I ask my uncles about you,
they turn distant and gray.

Light flees from their eyes.
Their teeth fall from their mouths
and clatter upon the floor.
Your name stops the world.

You began to die the moment
you first set foot in America.
The minute you began to beg
for respect as a human being,
the hour the English language
turned your leonine mane into
a tangled sorrow of scraggly wires.

Your first month in America
was spent mute and numb.
Your speechless world became
a virus which spread throughout
the family tree.

The art of silence
is one the Kowalczyks
are born masgters of.
'Never speak unless
spoken to, ' is the family credo.

Kowalczyk translates into English
as 'son of the blacksmith.'
Its deeper meaning, in this bloodline,
is 'son of silent shame.'

Tales are still whispered about
how you were drowning in vodka
the month after my father,
your first child, was born.

This alcoholic oblivion returned
twelve years later when my father
hopped on a bicycle and pedaled off
to shovel coal on the Erie-Lackawanna railroad.

This descent into hell's bowels
supposedly ended only after you
came within a whisper of choking
to death on your own vomit.

Or so it is sometimes told.
Whenever people ever talk
about you, a contradictory story
always surfaces within a week.

The gossip lingers.
Your wife became so homesick
for the hills of Silesia, so repulsed
by the groveling worm you had become,
that she refused to ever kiss you again.
Yet, three more field hands
sprang from her groin.

The rumors persist.
One star-crossed Christmas Eve,
you stole firewood from a gypsy.
After learning of this, he cast a spell
which left you trembling for the
rest of your life.

Your muscles gradually atrophied,
and you spent your final days
unable to wash or feed yourself.

The fact that your death was answered
a mere nine hours later by my birth
is more the irony.

We are the same soul,
spit immediately back to earth
to atone for the sins of a lifetime.

The most virulent, vile, ugly sins
of all. The sins of omission.
That which we have failed to do...

How many ways, on how many levels,
I died the day you were born,
Grandfather.

David Kowalczyk

Compassion

I dream of a world
in which the monster is not
always the villain.

David Kowalczyk

Consoling Ponce De Leon

To wake up
curious.

The best
anyone
can ever
hope for.

David Kowalczyk

Corpus Delicti

I must confess:
once I turned fifty,
I began talking to
television newscasters
while watching TV.

They neither hear me,
nor answer me.
Those things will come
at ages sixty and seventy.

Sunday mornings at ten,
Carole McNeill co-hosts
CBC's 'Sun Day'.

The instant she appears, I'm seventeen again.
I would never describe her
as beautiful or sexy, or even pretty,
though all of these, and more,
most certainly apply.

Winsome, alluring, gorgeous...
these suddenly become pejoratives
in her presence.

Am I the victim of animal lust?
Possibly. Quite possibly.

Though my predominant fantasy
is that we embrace so tightly
on Toronto's Front Street West
that we slowly and deliciously
become invisible.

David Kowalczyk

Daffodil He Will He Will

Why this imagined need
to look outside oneself
for direction?

Is it laziness?
Or, more likely,
the fear of discovering
the truth?

Divine creation
begins within you.
Accept this.

Otherwise, the sun
will always be a bit
too bright, and the clouds
a touch not gray enough.

David Kowalczyk

Dancing With Gargoyles

He limps and wheezes
into her life.
Silver sparks splatter
from his eyes.

His ears were stolen
from Mickey Mouse.
His heart, from
Attila the Hun.

Her voice is
a vacant dungeon.
Her heart,
a smothered dove.
Her every hair
is perfect, a stoic
yellow, the color of
truth tarnished by time.

Together, they will
share miracles.

Miracles falling not
from the stars,
but born of tears.

David Kowalczyk

Dark Blue The Shores Of Dreams

Beginning thirty years ago,
a desire, never a lust,
to be lovers. Our mask of
friendship more a sedative
than a truth.

Every ten years our mutual universe
spins, twirls, and stands on its head.
Hearts and minds surrender.
We fall, fall, fall
into a clear and perfect love.

David Kowalczyk

Days Eaten By Locusts

The godless August sun knifes
through the curtainless windows.
Another day sentenced to
animated amnesia.

Every step I take
will be swimming through salt.
My very breath will make
the odor of dead ridebts
seem like lilacs in May.

I will:
go to work
eat my lunch
work some more
come home.

I will:
eat some more
watch 'Joe Millionaire'
go to sleep
with an index finger
lodged up my anus.

I will:
do this without pleasure,
without pain, without interest,
without thinking, without doubt,
without meaning to, but because
I should.

After all, it was good enough
for my parents.

Days Of Practical Sin

Kith and kin to poisonous reptiles,
cobwebbed lawyers wash down
huevos rancheros with gin-and-catatonics.
Infinitely greedy and patient vultures
circle a sun which obeys no laws.

The gila monster wind slases
scorched sagebrush like scythes.
Parched bougainvillea shrivel beneath
the demonic sun.

Miss Spindle's first grade class
obediently shuffles and stumbles
towards school, their faces smothered
beneath great voracious horseflies.

Their brains boil in their skulls.
Their blood bubbles in their veins.
Demons fornicate in their lunchboxes.

Welcome to
another David Kowalczyk
morning.
Chimichanga, Arizona.

David Kowalczyk

Dazzling Hearts, Shivering Mirrors

She's almost chemically dogmatic.
She smiles like she wants to cry,
and whispers in my ear.

'Time is music. Time is poison.
Time is a mirror without glass! '
Her eyes swell to the size
of small pancakes.

God, save us from the truths
revealed by funhouse mirrors.

This is the birthright
of all pagans: slow, lingering
sex, fueled by Jose Cuervo,
a Pacific sunset, and
outlandish lies.

The golden trance
of seamless communion.

David Kowalczyk

De Minimus Non Curat Lex

You breath like a poodle.
Your veins are dry.
You are haunted by a
past perceived as omniscient.

In the enchanted present,
every day is Christmas,
even in the land of burning
strawberries, where ghosts
rollerskate on the edge
of a nightmare.

Drink the wine!
It will unlock your heart,
give wings to the stars
within you, and calm the
multitudes of menopausal crones
waiting to steal your soul.

Change your name to Mars.
Realize the known
is your greatest enemy.
It forces you to
ignore the miraculous.

David Kowalczyk

December

Imagination
running on empty.

A gray breeze
blows cold as sleep.
A black wind
cuts deep as death.

A table of drunks
smash their glasses
against imaginary walls.

The sum of the
dreams slipping through
the holes in my soul.

David Kowalczyk

Delicious Life

Each time
I pass a mirror,
my image
is sleeping.

Lucky man!

David Kowalczyk

Difficult Blood

Pani barely made it past Ellis Island. Her hunchbacked sister was ordered back to Poland. Pani had to plead officials to allow her sickly husband into America.

She insisted on being called 'Pani' (pah-knee) , best translated into English as 'madame', rather than 'Babcia', Polish for grandmother.

Pani pulled her frosty gray hair back in a bun so tightly coiled it could explode.

She dreamed and schemed of ways to keep her family alive. She scraped to put porridge on the table. She scrimped to buy shoes for her sons. She squeezed every penny until tears of blood trickled down Lincoln's cheeks. How she saved!

Life improved for her brood after they departed the dirt and din and clutter of Buffalo. They settled forty miles to the east, outside the small city of Ossuary, where they sharecropped with other Poles until they could afford a small farm of their own with pigs, geese, chickens, and a cow or two.

When times were lean, here they could forage for food: sour gooseberries, withered turnips, stray possums, wormy apples. Anything which could serve as cement for the gut. Every scrap of rancid meat, every stale bread crumb, was salted and spiced and made into stew.

Thanksgiving dinner at the Kowalczyk abode was usually an unholy broth made from some vile and ancient hen which was full of tumors and could no longer lay eggs. Pani never ate Thanksgiving dinner, claiming always that she had 'a bug in my stomach.' My father recalled, decades after her death, finding her in the kitchen one year, sucking the marrow from the chicken bones left in the kettle.

After dinner, Pani would don her wire-rim glasses and write long letters to the relatives in Poland, bragging that the crows shit gold in Ossuary, and the sparrows silver. She sent magical American dollars, to prove she was a wealthy woman, blessed by God.

Perhaps it is true we see life most clearly as small children. In grade school, I always pictured Panis as made from pig farts and donkey brains, snake eyes and cobwebs. Thistles, thistles, everywhere around her...

Now, forty years after her death, no human face comes to mind whenever I try to remember her. Instead, the dust upon my back slowly turns to stone.

David Kowalczyk

Dime Store Santa

As a child, watching things scatter
in the wind tickled my heart.
Bus transfers, Styrofoam cups,
losing lottery tickets...

Today, I find myself in a suburban shopping mall,
disguised by a cotton beard, pillow strapped to
my waist, and a red polyester suit.
A long line of children about to burst with
secret desires wait to sit on my lap and have
me make their dreams come true.

A demon is strangling my soul.
I am overcome with an obsession
to whisper in the ears of innocence:
'I don't care what you get for Christmas,
you little monster! Like every other phony Santa,
I'm just doing this to pay the rent! There's no
Santa Claus, no Easter Bunny! There's nothing magical
at all in this sick, disgusting world! '

Then I see a child who is my kindergarten picture
come to life. He smiles at me.
A thunderous 'Ho, ho, ho! ' instantly emerges from my throat.
I pat the children on their tender and trusting heads.
In the great dismal slough of my heart,
a faint light flickers.

David Kowalczyk

Discombobulated

Take this word
out for breakfast
at Denny's every
Sunday morning.

Let this word dance
upon your tongue.
Let it fox trot.
Let it fandango.
Let it polka.

Buy this word a perfectly
preserved Edsel to drive
and cartons of Gitanes to smoke.
Let it listen to The Kingston Trio
and guzzle bottles of Chivas Regal.

Let it twist
and slide and
slip and stumble
across your lips.

David Kowalczyk

Discovering Grace

The faces
of God
are revealed
in dreams.

They are
almost invisible,
like rainbows
on a cloudless day.

David Kowalczyk

Donnybrook

Sprang into the lexicon
in 1852 after a wild brawl at an
annual fair in the Irish town
of the same name.

It entered the world
with fists clenched and
a scowl on its face.

It has frothing purple blood.
Its face consists entirely of mouth.
It smokes Cohibas and wears a fedora.
Rides in gleaming black limousines.

A sweetly sinister word,
a cauldron simmring with menace,
yet possibly the most lilting
description of brutality
in the English language.

Whenever I read or hear this word,
blazing crimson splotches cover
my body.

David Kowalczyk

Doubt

The mother of
internal chaos.

The color of suspicion,
a darkness deeper,
more malignant than
fear.

Your right to know
is your right
to be.

David Kowalczyk

Dream Music On A Cold Dark Afternoon

We all dream of
what we are not.

Buffalo dreams of being
a gracefully aging geisha
dancing for a samurai lover.

A city once a volcano
erupting with wealth and culture
was catapulted into the abyss
with the dawn of the Information Age.

Buffalo is now made of rust and
spider webs, of gently festering
purgatory gray days,
of the slow whistling of ghosts.

There is no now now
in Buffalo.

There, history is written by assassins.
The past is always watching.
The past is not a shadow, but a mountain.

The ache of history makes everything
heavy and slow.
Nostalgia is the secular religion,
memories the only prizes awarded
for atrophied lives.

David Kowalczyk

Dream, Brother To Memory

Let us pray to
the demons of time
and old age.

Let us beg absolution
from our wrinkled skins,
and our hair, the color
of cremated doves.

Let us beseech the heavens
to stop this constant loss
of joy, this slow dulling
of the heart.

We are
silent old soldiers
alone with our terror.

David Kowalczyk

Drinking The Night

Some instantly dismiss
my writings.
I use terms
which make
their rectums itch.

Phrases such as 'soul', 'God',
'angels', and 'magic'.

Even worse,
I use them
without having
the slightest notion
of what the hell
they mean.

David Kowalczyk

Driven Snow

Clear, wild honesty:
the heart of every kindness.
Winter, soft blue sound,
erases all pretense.

Perception escapes from
dreams, delusions,
heartaches, nostalgia.
The world now as it must be:
simply, perfectly as it is.

David Kowalczyk

Einstein's Favorite Oxymoron

Conventional
wisdom.

David Kowalczyk

Electrical Mysteries Of Heaven

(My conception, and yours,
were truly immaculate.)

First, we are made of words.
Flesh and blood follow.

We were conceived not
when some wild and reckless
sperm swam past mind-boggling obstacles
to fertilize an egg,

but when our parents first
looked into each other's eyes
and murmured, 'I love you.'

David Kowalczyk

Eloquence Of Frozen Daffodils

I.

Laugh hard, when the
elders speak of freedom
and love.

Answer them
with bloody fists
and see how far
you can run.

2.

Forget seeking
reasons.

The dead are
stronger than
us.

David Kowalczyk

Ennui

This word causes
the stars to cry.

It turns
my eyelids to lead,
my brain to oatmeal,
and my heart to 'Off.'

Ennui was born
when fallen angels
started to play with kaleidoscopes.

Ennui has anonymous eyes,
and the soul of a bedbug.

David Kowalczyk

Entropy On Mount Olympus

Neptune dares not dream.
That which is invisible
ceases to exist.

David Kowalczyk

Epiphany

The phrase 'unearned epiphany'
first assaulted my eyes
while reading The New York Times.

Derrida was one thing.
Chomsky was another.
This transcended mutant philosophy.
This was blasphemy.

Epiphanies are miracles.
Like parting the Red Sea.
Like virgin births.
Their mother's name is Grace.

They fall from heaven
to hearts that are open
be they butcher, bishop, or thief.

They can no more be earned
than the tang of damp sycamore
the splash of dolphins in the sea,
or a sky splendid with the aurora borealis.

David Kowalczyk

Evanescent

This word has
the specific gravity
of smoke.

Fragile as a doe, frail as
the dreams of a hummingbird,
keeping this word
on a page is a task
worthy of Sisyphus.

Sly, slippery, and cunning,
nailing mercury to a wall
is easier. So is making
a statue out of shadows.

David Kowalczyk

Falling Leaves Never Cry

Vermillion leaves
tumble slowly
from the wary maple.

Their fall
made gentle
by the presence
of angels.

David Kowalczyk

Father Of Hunger

His heart a wound
brooding and dark,
he prays for days
when the clouds
will burn.

His heart a bruise
tender and shy,
he dreams of nights
made of marzipan stars.

David Kowalczyk

Father: A Winter Storm

I realized today
that winter would
not exist without
you, Father.

In a world where death
is confused with life,
your breath crystallizes
fear into snow.
Mounds and piles of snow.

Only when your breath
stops
will this snow ever cease.

David Kowalczyk

Father's Pants

Because the past five months
of chicken wings, television,
nostalgia, and stale beer
began splitting the seams of my
38 wwaists, inherited curses surfaced.

Father's lament, 'If it ain't one
thing, it's another! ' became mine,
as did his habit of slapping a frustrated
hand against the back of a neck bent
with defeat.

Staring at the threadbare denim
which covers my flesh and buries
my soul, I start to sweat.

David Kowalczyk

February

bleak, bitter, barren
dull, dreary, dismal
gray, grim, grinding
stark, shriveled, sullen

David Kowalczyk

Fifty Hour Minute

Sharp rocks in
my dreams stumble
into my waking life.

They don't like me.
Please tell me why.

They have no feet.
They never smile.
They never laugh.
They have no souls.

Could you please
move them into
someone else's dream?

Isn't that what shrinks
get paid to do?
No problem, right?
After all, the rocks
aren't even real.

And neither,
it seems,
am I...

David Kowalczyk

Finding Uprooted Chrysanthemums

by the side of a dumpster,
branches torn, roots shrinking
in the harsh air,
I sense death's mercy
and walk on.

They're only two plants.
Don't bother.
Go home.
Go to bed.

Minutes later,
I trace my steps
back to the dumpster.
Glimpsing a hint of spirit
within the faded amber blossoms,
I tuck a mum
under each arm
and make my way
home.

David Kowalczyk

First Sight

I awoke this October morn
to find a double rainbow
glittering in the western sky.

I walked into the field,
and said 'Thank you! '
to this most generous illusion.

Then I spun around
and waltzed back to bed.

A miracle was mine.
My work for the day
was done.

David Kowalczyk

Franz Kafka Meets Ernest Hemingway For Cocktails

Ernest laughed like
a butterfly: all air
and ice.

His smile spread
like a stain
across my soul.

We shared something
very unusual.

I am absolutely certain
of this.

What we shared
was something
less than love.

David Kowalczyk

Frottage

This perfectly clever word
casts multiple shadows.

What other English word
denotes both an artistic technique
and a sexual aberration?

This word is best
pronounced after a volcanic belch
or a protracted ethereal sigh.

Frottage.

David Kowalczyk

Genius

Delicate delicious dreaming
Dark restless burning
Wicked intrepid scheming
Clean quiet cunning
Wretched raw perspiring
Furious caged screaming
Twisted relentless yearning
Soft ruthless shining

David Kowalczyk

Gertrude Stein In Shanghai

Genius
must
remain
mystery
to
remain
genius.

David Kowalczyk

Getting Drunk With The Moon

Darkness upon the waters,
a plague upon the sky,
the tired old moon rides
low above the barren trees.

His edges remain intact.
In his life, he has touched
far too little.

When children ask him,
'What are nightmares made of? ',
his reply is inevitably the same.

'Real fear takes imagination.'

The sky becomes a field
of burning stones.

David Kowalczyk

Gimcrack

This word wears
the stolen face
of an circus clown.

This word was expelled
from Sid Vicious High School
in Rancho Cucamonga, California.
It grows extremely atrabilious
whenever confused with
its brother, Gewgaw.

This word has the sensibilities
of a dead opossum.
It bathes only during the full moon.
It has big red potatoes
growing in both ears.

Whipped by the wind
and scorched by the sun,
it is afraid of miracles.

David Kowalczyk

Goddess Of Animal Crackers

A passion which refused to ache,
I found her shadow,
with all of its colors,
beneath my pillow.

A kiss made of memory,
a breath five decades long,
a distant stain upon the stars.

She is slowly becoming translucent.
Soon, she will be transparent.
This is no accident.
Eventually, we all disappear.

Please see her as
she truly is:
full of light
and illusion, like
an uncut diamond.

Her magical self
carries the knowledge
that death is not an injury.

She is the pause, the gasp,
the moment of wonder
between one incarnation
and the next.

David Kowalczyk

Goddess Of Beautiful Atrocities

Elsie takes deep breaths,
and strains to count the times
she's crossed her heart and
sworn to flee this blighted city.

In the frying pan,
two eggs are smoldering.
Smoke chokes the kitchen.

In the basement,
Walter's baritone horn makes
its usual farting noises.

Walter disappeared three years ago.
He left Elsie with zero dollars
and a pair of demonically possessed twins.

In Elsie's mind, Joe Bob and
Jim Bob are eighty feet tall.
In reality, they paint each other
with cat turds and cigarette ashes,
and scream and squall like banshees
on the brink of death.

Their cacophony consists of
two-fifths public rage,
three-fifths private terror.

Fur brushes against
Elsie's legs. She glares down at
the gimpy old calico, then repeats
the curses which have replaced
her prayers.

Clyde, the mange-ridden furball
too stupid to die.
The ghost of Walter, hideously
off-key on his perverted baritone.
The twin drooling monsters
spat from her groin four years ago.
By morning, all must be but dust
on the windowsill.

Clyde chokes and retches.
This always happens when
he tries to purr.
Elsie slowly scrapes
the charred eggs into
Clyde's dish.

Elsie suddenly starts to squeal.
Squeals two-fifths resignation,
three-fifths disgust.

David Kowalczyk

Goddess Of Floods, Tornados, And Earthquakes

Her braided hair hangs
like great black ropes.
She cracks her knuckles
twenty times per waking hour.

She was born with an audio
anomaly. Mozart's Requiem
blares through her skull
whenever her world quiets.
Consequently, she is addicted
to loud noises.
Birth also blessed her
with supernatural stigmata.
Her eyelids and lips are gun-metal gray.

In kindergarten, she mastered
the art of photosynthesis.
Every October, she sustains herself
with sunlight, water, and air.
The remainder of days, she eats
only krill and kelp.

Her smile is a tiny torn star.
Her voice is full of dusk and brandy.
Her heart cradles howling beauty.
Her soul, the bittersweet wisdom of pearls.

David Kowalczyk

Goddess Of Frostbitten Reptiles

On a face meticulously sculpted
from melancholy memories,
her smile remains one
of cool poison, of beauty
carefully woven into pain.

Her dreams always take place
in January, in fields of snow.
She dreams of giving birth
to an octopus, to a head of
cabbage, to the shadows of herself.

Once a month, she dons a wig
and sunglasses and buys a
round-trip Greyhound ticket
to a city one hundred miles
to the south.

There she changes into a
nun's habit and wanders
the streets, loudly praying
the rosary in French.

After five minutes, her menstrual
flow begins and her eyes sparkle
as the strawberry blood trickles
down her thighs, making mystic swirls.

She prays so loudly not so
God might better hear her,
but because this is the one time
in her life when she believes
every word she says.

This is the only time
she is ever free,
the only time
she can see herself
for what she truly is:
infinitely tired,
eternally frightened.

Half here,
half gone.

David Kowalczyk

Goddess Of The Sirocco

Thoth concocted her
from his three
favorite adjectives.

Calefactory.
Harumscarum.
Mordacious.

Each of these,
magnified by the others,
sculpts her.

She is the messiah
whom your parents
once crucified.

Her heart is a
magical blue ice,
the frozen tears
of saints.

Her lips are more sensuous
than two copperheads in heat.
Her eyes, two wise blue wounds
which never close, were stolen
from an eagle.

She eats only Spam.
She speaks Urdu, Sanskrit,
and Aramaic.

Made from three words,
yet known by three dozen names.
Pity that none will ever be hers.

David Kowalczyk

Goddess Of Yodeling Mermaids And Fire-Eating Pelicans

Beneath the crescent moon
she dances the tarantella
with mammoth Martian crabs
of Burracho Beach.

Wildly she skips and twirls,
weaving veils of electric sand
between her and the leaden world
of sleepwalkers.

She invented polyester.
The graveyard shift psychic
at Henry Lung Fortune Cookie Works,
she plays alto sax with
the jazz quintet Wind Chill.
She has a pet ocelot named Leon.

Her bruised, brooding eyes
make Frankenstein's seem
shy and small.
She will convince you
the corner panhandler is
the second coming of Christ.
Without her, the seas
must turn to sand.

David Kowalczyk

Gospel According To Beaver Cleaver

Everything

that is

fun

will

get you

into trouble.

David Kowalczyk

Hamartia

tiny bits of hunger
a small mountain of thorns
eclipsing the sky

David Kowalczyk

Hard Frost

Maples turn scarlet.
The hills now painted dreams.
Wild geese cry 'Autumn! '

David Kowalczyk

Heart As Imaginary Island

Nothing changes
very much in a day.
Not even your nightmares.

My veins are full of
fear stolen from my ancestors.
My heart is full of
ghosts cloaked in shame,
of demons bursting with guilt.

My heart is raw with sins
not even God could imagine.
My heart is a foreign storm.

My heart is an imaginary island
where butterflies go to die.

David Kowalczyk

Heart Distant As Stone

Here, where all flowers
shrivel and wilt,
where all saints become
beggars and thieves,
I sleep with the ghost
of St. Cecelia.

Our eyes engaged, our neuroses
entwined, we cling to each other
with a desperation bloodles
and dull: like husband and wife.

David Kowalczyk

Hegira

Sometimes
I doubt
there's more to life
than what meets the eye.

Then, I sense mystery
in the laughter of a child,
and my spirit is renewed.
I want to laugh again.
The way I laughed as a child.
Sin razones.

David Kowalczyk

Hello

Every time
you smile,
my heart
shivers.

Please.
Break it
quickly.

David Kowalczyk

Hemorrhaging Aboard The F Train

'Spain is also a truth, '
the Blessed Virgin Mary once whispered
in my ear while we were riding the F train,
nearing the Fort Hamilton station.
She was cloaked in blue light.
Her eyes shone like those of
a small shivering jaguar.
The mass of humanity squeezed into
the F train clattered in a Babel of noise,
frenzied prayers to the cannibalistic deities
of their native lands.
Like some drunken goose,
I nibbled on Mary's neck and earlobes.
The Mother of God's
hot and messy heart exploded,
splattering its divine love
across the train and all of its passengers.
The train fell silent.
Staring at what remained of her,
I realized that every man
must one day dream
of his sperm
becoming
the stars in the sky.

David Kowalczyk

Her Face Is The Color Of Iodine

You would think
that by now
I would know

that
love
is
an
illusion

After all,
I've had
the very
best teachers.

David Kowalczyk

Hope

Siamese twin of
doubt.
Synonymous with
'maybe'.

Assassin of
dreams.

David Kowalczyk

Hubris

When all my words
are sipped like fine champagne,
when, in my dreams,
Roman candles explode
within the heart of every reader,
then, and only then,
must I grant myself this
most foolish of all fantasies:

A poem is now complete!

David Kowalczyk

Impeccable

This word contains
thirty-two pristine, pearly teeth.

It purrs when spoken,
and smiles and winks.
Flash bulbs erupt
as it streaks across the stratosphere.

The most popular word in California,
it can make the truth become the rain.

David Kowalczyk

Impeccable Eyes

The air
given distance
becomes visible.

David Kowalczyk

Impecunious

orphan of the void
a dagger between her teeth
face dark and haunted

David Kowalczyk

Inchoate

This word always
tugs its shadow behind it.
This word has a great affinity
for morally bankrupt leprechauns.

Inchoate is a blind old general
with a lantern jaw who lies five
minutes from Neptune.
Its birthday is February 29.

It likes to pretend it is Donald Trump,
but it really is the tongue of a Kimono dragon
slobbering across your face.

David Kowalczyk

Interiors

Primitive myths paint
death as black,
life white.
Between life and death,
we spend our days.
Not as zebras, nor rainbows,
nor shades of gray.

But as beings far finer
than light alone.
As invisible to angels
as they are to us.
Colorless,
even to God.

David Kowalczyk

Jejune

The sad eyes
of a mildewed newspaper
found in your cellar.

Or else: eyes like blueberries
and a mouth like a candied plum.

Loves to go to the circus-
and the zoo, and to gasp
and groan and grumble.

P. S. Always wears a watch on both wrists.

David Kowalczyk

Keep From Crying

Heart is
 made of tears
and you
 only have
so many.

David Kowalczyk

Killing Ringo Starr

The past five years
I've been driving a
Bloody Mary '69 Corvette
from Woodchuck Holler, Kentucky
to Sushi Beach, California.

Seventy miles an hour.
Nine hours a day.
Seven days a week.

Every night, a demon
hops into my Corvette
and zooms ninety miles an hour
in reverse, checking to see
if I paid the proper tolls,
remembered to tip at Denny's,
and always said:
'Please. Thank you. You're welcome.'

Every morning, I awaken
five miles closer to Hoboken
than the day before.

Perfectionism.
In my youth, synonymous
with saintliness.
In reality, a disease
which permits only one ending.

David Kowalczyk

Koan For Willy Loman

Some people
just can't
miss.

No matter
how hard
they try.

David Kowalczyk

Last Angel Death

The night is wet.

The moon hangs in the sky
a dream too wicked and

The breath of stars
is now the howling heavens.

This world
will own no secrets.

David Kowalczyk

Last Gypsy Church Of Buddha, Indiana

Tears falling from a weeping willow,
virgins ascending through the clouds.

Sighs from the night's last moonbeam,
monkeys whistling through your mind.

Panthers licking blood from the wind,
homeless angels landing on your nose.

A tickling of your heart,
butterflies sailing from your soul.

The sound of one eye winking.

David Kowalczyk

Laughter Of An Old Magician

The desert never leaves you.
This graveyard rich with dust and
tears is like the imaginary friends
you cherished as a child, who are
waiting, still, for you to join them.

Like the aching eyes of famished
children, like saints breathing fire,
there is a hard purity to the desert.
Patience sculpted the desert.
'Leave it all for the lazy future, ' whisper
the roadrunners and the tumbleweed.

The desert is full of
shape-shifting eings.
You never know what
disguise they will take
next.

David Kowalczyk

Leaving Kansas

Rambunctious August night,
teeming with sweating fireflies
and hypnotic Klezmer music.

I leap out of bed
and open the window.
Satars the size of dimes
shoot into the room.

A tiny pain squeezes my heart.
I am bleeding.
I am bleeding.

I must change my life.
My tribe lives by dreams,
not by compromise.

Clicking the radio on,
I hear George Shearing
dancing on the moon.

David Kowalczyk

Let Death Be A Small Thing

Demonic mosquito bites my arm
and sucks my blood.
Staring at the pernicious insect,
I become amused by its petulant bloodlust.

I suspect the reincarnation of
a late, despised uncle. Like most of
my relatives, the mosquito seems secure
in a smug solipsism, enabling it to drain
the life force from everything it encounters.

Raising my arm to the afternoon sun, I become
convinced this is indeed the return of Uncle Ray Paduchak.
I chuckle quietly as my blood transforms it
into a tiny red zeppelin. I bring my thumb down with
alacrity upon its gorged, greedy world.
A shit-eating grin creases my face.

Droplets of blood trickle across my sweaty forearm.
I walk to the bathroom. In the mirror above the sink
hides a stranger. He has stolen my face.

David Kowalczyk

Levitating Hitler

(In which, Adolph Hitler
discovers Transcendental Meditation,
learns how to levitate,
and invades Poland.)

Today is Ash Wednesday.
The ashes on his forehead
give him a migraine.

He is quickly approaching
the commonly accepted
definition of 'total ruin'.

He can not imagine
that evil could ever be real,
nor the sky gray clouds
he sails through, while pretending
to be Christopher Columbus.

David Kowalczyk

Life Before Latte

It's
time
I

got
down
to
work.

Maybe.

David Kowalczyk

Life On The Sun

All thought is visible.
Everything sparkles and
glimmers like vaporized gold.

Harp music fills the air.
Breath is the only food,
and dreams, the only laws.

David Kowalczyk

Like Portentous Shadows

Of a stern and ancient November
afternoon, life retreats from us
slowly yet incessantly.

As it inches away, how precious
becomes the bus driver's warm
welcoming nod, the sincere smile
of a bank teller asking, 'How
have you been? '

How magnified by a thousand
become these small gestures
of kindness, recognized now
for what they have always been:
priceless, irreplaceable treasures.

David Kowalczyk

Lilacs And Late April

Every season
brings its own
unique wisdom.
Spring shows us
that all life
is but one life.

To remain detached
is to be somehow
broken.
Join in the dance.
Bloom...

David Kowalczyk

Listening To My Parents Talk In Polish

In elementary school,
I would often imagine
translations of the conversations
my parents would hold in Polish,
a tongue they shared with each other,
yet refused to teach their children.

This is what I would
hear them say:

'Our natural state
is to be lost.'

'Learn to be
a stranger in
your own home.'

'What would I give
to become invisible
each morning.'

David Kowalczyk

Listening To Strauss While Dead

Snow sparkles like
sand, magnifying the
winter sun's temerity.

Sky, the most
triumphant turquoise.
Thermometer, the perfect
ten degrees Fahrenheit.

Biscotti crumbs
beneath my tongue
gently hum.

David Kowalczyk

Literary Genes

My mother is
a trochee.

My father, a
pentameter.

I is
an oxymoron.

David Kowalczyk

Live Wild. Never Die.

Live as if today was
conceived in the savage
warmth of prayer.

As though spiders
were now busily
connecting all which
has unfolded with all
yet to unfold.

Live as if you were
a malignant child
whose demons were
bursting into flames.

As though your dreams
were a way of singing
and every day
was October.

Live as if
you were finally
ready to breath.

David Kowalczyk

Logic Of Conspicuous Consumption

Robert DeNiro
eats
at Spago

I
am eating
at Spago.

Therefore, I
must be
Robert DeNiro.

David Kowalczyk

Magick

reality
 and
 fantasy

begin
 to
 kiss

David Kowalczyk

Mandamus

Give all
of your clocks
to the Salvation Army.

Throw your Rolex
into the trash,
along with your guilt.

Now,
live.

David Kowalczyk

March Enters, Leonine

Cold.

Gray.

Granite.

Ice.

Sky.

Heart.

David Kowalczyk

March Rains, Ossuary, New York

The cold tears of ghosts
fall upon the garbage-strewn
alleys of Ossuary while
gaunt die-casters stumble through
the furious damp morning.

Last month, Rigidized Metals bolted
its doors. Five hundred lives suddenly
became irrelevant. Anaconda Brass
went bankrupt, leaving unpaid bills and
children's dreams kicked and scattered
like empty beer cans in the gutters
of Little Poland.

Today, thick plywood covers Kujawski
Die Casting's windows. Men now jobless
huddle in packs outside the factory.

Their hearts are rags.
They stink of fear.

Their fists clutch dented
steel lunchpails as they gaze with
cavernous eyes at the twin brown
smokestacks, now and forever
shorn of their billowing grey clouds.

David Kowalczyk

Masked Woman At A Poetry Reading

An ache in her gut,
her faith in existentialism
more numb than lost,
she clings to the romantic fantasy
that Lacan is her biological father.
Louis Lacan, Jaques Lacan,
any Lacan will do.

She is emaciated, possibly anorexic,
and addicted to migraines.
Her face is adrift with pain.
Salt spills from her nostrils.

She labels herself 'a closet Luddite',
yet spends twelve hours a day
on the internet. She can only
achieve orgasm in graveyards.

Her type is common.
Some would say generic.

David Kowalczyk

Measured Lives

The green time
of the green world

is not, has never
been, nor ever
will be

the red time
of the red world.

David Kowalczyk

Meditating Like Mencius

Seemingly mummified in
the huge bamboo chair
upon his veranda,

he stares at
the blazing orange sunset,
heart/mind focused perfectly,

until both he
and the sunset
disappear.

David Kowalczyk

Memories Of Pagan Gods

For as long as I can remember,
my life has been something
inflicted upon me rather than
something I've chosen to live.

This room smells of sick animals.
I struggle to scratch hieroglyphs
expressing my hideous descent
into perceived sanity.

Down and down my heart goes,
wriggling out of a hole in
the sole of my left shoe.

I nod my head, clap my hands,
make a joyful noise.
I stare at the sun until my eyes
are cinders.

I can never claim the title
of victim until I identify exactly
what the victor has separated from me.

David Kowalczyk

Missing Syllable Haiku

The only virtue
greater than forgiveness
is amnesia.

David Kowalczyk

My Father Wills Himself Deaf

How he loved the sound
of sound itself, when he
was young enough to be
wild with love, when his
blood boiled with desire
and crashed in great breaking
waves against his heart.
Now, the faceless dark god
of the pagan masses proclaims
'Noise is power! '
The sky seems crazy
with the din and holler
of monster trucks and boom boxes.
'This is a good day to become
like stone, ' Father tells himself.
In a world sick with noise,
to be deaf is to be blessed.
Nobody makes good sound anymore.

David Kowalczyk

My Favorite Graffiti

On the concrete wall of
a very small bridge over
the Tucson River is scrawled:

'Blow something up! '

Underneath it is written
'Forget yourself, and all
will go well.'

David Kowalczyk

Mysteries Of The San Fernando Valley

How in the hell
am I supposed to take
anything seriously when
I'm living in a town
named after Tarzan?

David Kowalczyk

Necromancer

His heart is made of
intolerable wisdom:
fairy tales and thunder.

David Kowalczyk

Never Stop To Be Between

The sky is white.
I am afraid.
I feel tiny crocodiles
swimming in my veins.

My furious little mind
fills with greedy-eyed
mosquitos and insomniac children,
with noise and toil and
hurricanes of shame.

I feel the presence
of a murderous Czar.

The rain falls like knives,
like shadows boxing, like
a slow parade of undertakers.

The dead are all anonymous
and identical. Those once mighty
are now the breakfasts of maggots.
An endless geometry:
fate. insane with desire.

When I move,
the fog moves
with me.

I smile.

It's almost
what I wanted.
It's almost

David Kowalczyk

Night Train To Nowhere

1 a. m.

Group Therapy Lounge.

Love is

the meshing of neuroses.

2 a. m.

Hungry Ghost Saloon.

Love is

a samba silenced by

fear of the unknown.

3 a.m.

Sunset in El Paso Cantina.

Love is

two hobbled souls

too weary to tango.

Broken.

Scattered.

Alone.

David Kowalczyk

Nihilism

This word owns no dogs.
This word has no face.
This word likes to shout
and scatter things about

It was born in Ossuary, New York.
Its clumsy little hands constantly tremble.
Its bedroom walls are covered
with sandpaper.

Nihilism idolizes the death metal band
Insane Clown Posse.
Nihilism is a sick monster.
Nihilism is eternal adolescence
made intellectually prestigious.

David Kowalczyk

No Child Left Behind

My name
is
Charlene.

I'm nine
years
old.

People
say
I'm pretty.

But
I'm
not.

Sometimes
I wish a car
would

David Kowalczyk

October Opus

You shield your eyes
from the scarlet brilliance
of the seven majestic maples
standing sentry in front
of your home.

The trees' painted wings
float towards earth,
humming arias and madrigals.

You cry out,
(to yourself, to God,
to the universe)
'Love might be like this! '

You are wrong.
Slighty, yet drastically,
wrong.

Love must be like this.

David Kowalczyk

Ophelia Before The Waves

I await her still,
the one whose words
are more than the
small sounds of dying mice.

She who is blessed
with wild things racing
within her brain, and
whose smile is a debt
demanding repayment.

Together, we will solemnly
drink the velvet from the night,
and I would learn the meaning
of being lost at sea.

David Kowalczyk

Paladin Dreams: The Muse Of Tarzana, California

One hundred and three years old today.
Her silver beard of a single hair stretches
from chin to floor.

The fruit of Poseidon's rape of Cynthia.
Her lovers have included Cleopatra,
Hercules, Frieda Kahlo, and the god Pan.

In the dark, fetid gloom of
her basement apartment,
her belly stretches and ripens
with each passing day.

She awaits the miracle
promised by Pan:
the birth of Earth's second moon.

A moon eternally full,
the moon of limitless
possibility, a moon visible
only to hearts shorn of shadows.

David Kowalczyk

Parsimonious

This word beats its tiny fists
against your ears
with an eternal sorrow.

It makes fruit rot on
the vine, vegetables wither
and animals turn blind and deaf.

It should only be whispered.

David Kowalczyk

Patience

Sitting at the kitchen table,
waiting for black pearls
to tumble from my heart,
while my typewriter purrs
like a puma.

David Kowalczyk

Perfection Of Desire

Last week, she took a Louisville
Slugger and slaughtered over one hundred
cans of Campbell's Cream of Reality
soup at the Circle K outside Bloody Basin, Arizona.

Medusa in the morning.
Starving piranha at noon.
Cleopatra in the moonlight.

Destiny Dalton's eyes set lizards afire.
Her smile makes angels scream.
Whenever she kisses a man, the lights
in every city west of Denver
flicker and die.

Why this happens puzzles
some people, but the truth is,
every watt of electricity west
of the Continental Divide
goes into her kisses.

David Kowalczyk

Poem For A Balding Ballerina

Some fall apart
too soon.

She is lost,
unable to be found
on any map.

Her pain is so deep
it has become contagious.

She will spend this morning
staring out the window,
counting all the miracles
in paradise.

In a previous life,
she was a sea creature,
drawing strength and power
from the salty depths
of the ocean.

Now, she is drowning
in the past, in a ceaseless
stream of spilt wine.

Her face is a dream
buried in shadow,
and her heart...

David Kowalczyk

Poem For A Morbid Monk

Never equate silence
with entropy,
nor confuse it
with inertia.

Far more happens
in worlds without sound
than the eyes can ever see
or hands ever touch.

It is in silence
that we discover
all love is suicide.

David Kowalczyk

Poem For A Naughty Librarian

Kissing you
was like drinking
mango nectar
from the marble breasts
of Venus de Milo.

Though I must confess:
more delicious,
far more thrilling, and
infinitely more
miraculous.

David Kowalczyk

Poem For A Truculent Optometrist

His eyes are full
of wandering demons.
His lips are poisonous snakes.
His hair is red, although
it once was brown.

His life consists of the
slow, constant dimming
of the heart, and the
relentless loss of play.

More angry than hungry,
he is gnawing on a plastic fork.
The voices inside him
begin to chatter once again.

'I hope you find what you
are searching for, ' is all they
ever say. He shivers with disgust.

He remembers what his grandmother
told him as a child: 'That which we
love, we can never see.'

He gazes at the sky
towards a mysterious world
invisible to human eyes.

He gets up
from his chair, and walks
towards the strange and unseen world.
The voices fall silent.

Poem For A Whimsical Mortician

The sky is overflowing
with dysfunctional messiahs.

They are young.
They have the eyes of boys
and the hearts of kings.
They are trapped by
a ruthless aching for
brigher lights, greater warmth,
life more holy and free.

Tomorrow tehy will realize
time grows the way
we want it to, and that
all anyone ever searches for
is a place where love is possible.

David Kowalczyk

Poem For Leon Czolgosz

He has been a dying man
all his life. Small beasts
gnaw at his liver, at the
marvelous darkness of his heart,
and the beautiful emptiness
of his eyes.

His mind is full of
imaginary castles where
panic and cunning copulate
in an anguished fervor.

He softly begins chanting
Hare Krishna as he bandages
his stigmata. He pauses
o gaze out the window,
over the edge of death,

and wonders how he can possibly
undo the prayers of his childhood.

David Kowalczyk

Poem-By-Numbers

_____7_____

_____9_____

_____8_____

_____4_____

_____12_____

_____13_____

_____6_____

_____10_____

_____2_____

_____5_____

_____1_____

_____3_____

_____11_____

KEY

1. cold
2. Deborah
3. egg
4. hitching
5. inside
6. memories
7. Misty

8. morning
9. October
10. of
11. roll
12. Route
13. 17

David Kowalczyk

Poems In And Of Themselves

abbatoir angst avuncular badinage
brouhaha callipygian charivari clandestine
cyesis doyenne effervescent endemic
gargoyle hegira insatiable keen

maculation nimbus opprobrious ordure
pedicular pedologist perambulate persiflage
puissant putrid quoin schmozzle
schnorrer sesquipedalian shibboleth simulacrum

suskin tectonic tinctuous traduce
trepidation vagary woof zeugma

David Kowalczyk

Pollock's 'Convergence' In The Eyes Of Alice B. Toklas

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necromancy

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fettered

blasphemous

inspiration

tempestuous

lush

sOliPsism

i d i o s y n c r a t i c

divine

COMMUNION

David Kowalczyk

Pollock's 'Convergence' In The Eyes Of Richard Milhous Nixon

Wicked

Exuberant

Syzygy

Opulent

Osmotic

Necromancy

Charming

Unfettered

Inspiration

Blasphemous

Pristine

Dynamite

Lush

Tempestuous

Solipsism

Divine

Idiosyncratic

Communion

David Kowalczyk

Portrait Of Richard Cheney

If death
was not
death,
it would be
his smile.

David Kowalczyk

Possibility Thinking

Let me cover
your body with
sweet sloppy kisses
in the event
just in case
you may possibly
perhaps, maybe
turn into flame.

David Kowalczyk

Prayer

Be not surprised
when the gift
you receive is not
the gift you asked for.

Prayers are worms
destined for metamorphosis,
much like caterpillars.
Accept what you needed.

David Kowalczyk

Praying Lessons

Lift not your prayers
skyward. Beg not favor
from any who claim heaven
is not here and now.

Sky gods have yet to hear,
much less answer, the prayers
of those burned at the stake
during the Spanish Inquisition.

Go, instead, to the nearest graveyard.
Go while rain or snow choke the air,
and the sky is small and timid and gray.

Pray, eyes downcast, to the god of muck
and earthworms, the god of ragged pants
and shoeless souls.

Saturn, god of common sense,
transformer of gold into lead,
of spirit into matter.

A god less romantic but
infinitely more pragmatic
than Zeus, Zoroaster, or Vishnu.

Saturn, father of earth, child
of the sky, recognizes the most holy
in the most profane.

'As below, so above.'

Praying Like Mencius

His prayers
vanish instantly.

Leaving no clues
as to dreams or desires,
no traces of attachment,
no evidence of being.

David Kowalczyk

Prestidigitation

This word is best pronounced
preceded by an extended gasp.

The epitome of this,
the antithesis of that,
it loves to rush about
with a dagger between its teeth,
and to play Hungarian rhapsodies
upon the violin.

Laughing its silent little laugh,
it is both mother and father
of the wind.

David Kowalczyk

Quotidian

This raw obscenity is
the word most frequently
spoken by American morticians.

A pleasant and balding cyborg,
it dresses always in
clam-shell gray.

Colorless. Odorless. Tasteless.
It signs its name 'John Doe',
and waits for something
or someone to make it whole.

David Kowalczyk

Reckless Abandon

A blue polar bear
dancing the polka
with his Aunt Bertha
beneath the pumpkin light
of the harvest moon.

David Kowalczyk

Reckless Scent Of Titans

Approaching Penelope's bed,
home's meaning enters
a wandering heart.

Her sleeping body is
a small miracle.

Ulysses measures her breath.
He breathes only as she does.

Within minutes, a halo
envelops them both.

David Kowalczyk

Recovery

This, then,
is perhaps
the birth
of
wisdom.

Admitting
that
you
do not
know

how
to
live.

David Kowalczyk

Recuerdo

Selecting slivers
of the past,
the soul finds
solace from memory
in memory.

Orange blossom dawns.
The Sex Pistols for breakfast.
Green corn tamales.
The pungent desert
after winter rain.
Lingering mimosa sunsets.

Everything
that was
us.

David Kowalczyk

Remembering A Perfect Future

I am the past.
I ask the questions.

Your mission:
imagine the answers
that are true

for only you,
and the world
which you have
created.

David Kowalczyk

Saints Most Always Be Mute

Words.

Bloodless assassins
of ordered peace.

Silence
is
law.

David Kowalczyk

Satori In Buffalo

God's face
is
everywhere.

Especially
the
mirror.

David Kowalczyk

Secret Life Of My Widow

All Soul's Day.

November morn full of fog and the
anxious cries of starlings.

April March pouts out the streaked
kitchen window. Her eyes are black
and blue and biting, her lips cold
as a cobra's.

Her life, a carafe of soured Thunderbird,
a grotesque Fellini parody. Petty criminal
neighbors, ghoulish in-laws, a faceless
husban David. Necrophilia has never been
more inviting.

The smell of blood is in the morning air.
Her eyes gleam with meanace and disgust.
Her lips, all scabs and lies, wrinkle into
a demonic sneer. She imagines etching
an inscription onto David's tombstone:

'A life can be haunted
by what it never was.'

David Kowalczyk

Sedona Chamber Music

Corazon sin preguntas.

Illusion's
veils
vanish.

David Kowalczyk

Serendipity

Constantly fingering a rosary,
murmuring Hail Marys in Spanish,
this word has silver skin, and
can make itself invisible

Free and fickle as the dawn,
this word's eyes are mangoes
about to fall from the tree.
A star made of snow, it
becomes silk when spoken.

David Kowalczyk

Shame

So small this fog.
So soft its whisper.
So crippling its touch.

David Kowalczyk

Shooting Stars

First of August.
Hot enough to melt tin.
Waist deep in a field
of rye, I load my shotgun
and wait.

Clouds bury the sun.
Noon becomes midnight.
Stars sparkle and dance
like fireflies full of peyote.

The clouds darken.
The sky shrinks.
I raise the shotgun and fire.
A star falls.

I reload, and fire again.
And again. Elen times.
Twelve dead stars
scar the field.
I smile.

The sky blackens and shrivels
until only the howling of obsidian remains.
The world is ending.
The temperature rises.

David Kowalczyk

Silence

Moss on a cypress.
Clouds in a dream.
Setting suns.
Yesterday's thunder.

Silence, the messenger
of love.
Silence, the most eloquent
of liars.

David Kowalczyk

Simply September

A world made
more of music
than of flesh.

Sunflowers
ablaze in
the autumn wind.

Memories
set free
by the mind.

David Kowalczyk

Sinecure

twisted branches of the oak
the raucous rattlings of starlings
a rain of silver coins

David Kowalczyk

Sinking

Oh, this insufficient world,
choked by purpose and sensibility,
by the meticulous dreams
of mathematicians!

I lift my eyes to yours.
My mind sails among the stars.

Your words light my destiny.
Your touch rekindles my dreams.
Your kiss is the reason for my breath.

Yet we remain two,
fated never to become one.
A fate as clear and cold
as trigonometry.

Two wayward children
of the abyss, two worlds
sinking with rot and apprehension,
two ruined moons.

David Kowalczyk

Snowstorm

shining
swirling
slowly
holding
one
million
mystical
mirrors

David Kowalczyk

So Much More Than Dreams

Cold and callous December morn,
the magpies were mute.
Cynthia resigned herself to
stoically collecting tolls on
The New York State Thruway.

The radio blared 'Rudolph The Red-Nosed
Reindeer, ' keeping her awareness of
the logic inherent in magical thinking.

She closed her eyes to improve God's
hearing and prayed: 'Take me to
an Acapulco beach drenched with
sun, ceviche, and tequila.'

Elvis Presley began nibbling
on her toes. God's ways are
mysterious to humanity,
not to God.

David Kowalczyk

Social Class As Secular Religion

I look into your eyes,
painted with privilege,
and see the history of
the Spanish Inquisition.

I look away,
and pretend that
I am blind.

Which is how
most of us manage
to survive.

David Kowalczyk

Sorrow

Remember
your tears
are only water.

David Kowalczyk

Spinning Cobwebs Into Gold

Forever fused.

Imagination and Ophelia.

Memory and Hamlet.

Forever inseparable.

Light and Othello.

Shadow and Desdemona.

Forever coupled.

Birth and Juliet.

Death and Romeo.

David Kowalczyk

Stainless Soul

Please,
remember this:
Life blooms
in the higher self.

Sin? Karma?
Forgiven and forgotten.
We become like gods.

David Kowalczyk

Stars

Faces so colossal
their very smiles
are audible
ten thousand
light years
away.

They sound like
mourning doves, like
shining rivers of
tenderness.

David Kowalczyk

Stealing The Sky

Neon robin plucking a banjo
while wearing a porkpie hat.
Suicidal dove gasping for air
and wondering why.
Starling enveloped in ice
in the middle of July.
Smug sparrow named Simon
with bespectacled dreams of patricide.
Vulture fat as two swine
screaming with the agony
of promises unfulfilled.

David Kowalczyk

Still Thy Leprous Tongues

And all the angels,
the winged wonders
wandering in the wind,
wonder:

'Where will you sleep?
What will still your hunger? '

I tell them:
'Hush. My bed is made
of dreams and prayers,
and my bread is made of faith.'

'Something about you makes us
feel like Easter, ' the angels reply,
their hands no longer fists.

David Kowalczyk

Strength

Most powerful the lion
not
when it roars,
but
when it listens.

David Kowalczyk

Subtext

My mother-in-law
lives in Albuquerque
and the tragic thing is
she belongs there.

David Kowalczyk

Summer Vacation On Neptune

The children of air
become, with time,
liquid.

Condensation
is far too simple
an explanation
for this complex
phenomenon.

Its true name
is initiation.

David Kowalczyk

Sun Woman

Was the name of a Wiccan I met
while living at the Grand Canyon.
She claimed to be seventy years old,
but looked at least one hundred.
She smoked Camel non-filters,
about two packs a day,
and she hiked Bright Angel trail
down to Phantom Ranch and back
once a week, without fail.
Her mother was Polish.
Her father was Seminole.
(America truly is a place
which defies the ordinary.)

What I recall most clearly
about Sun Woman are the words
she spoke at the El Tovar Lodge
to a young woman who had just
learned that her grandfather had passed away.

'Valerie, give your grandfather
laughter, not tears, ' she said with
a smile which neither the words 'gentle'
nor 'timeless' do justice to.

'Leaving our clay shells ends nothing.
It is merely the beginning of a great adventure,
a form of rebirth. Your grandfather is dreaming now.
Dreams more beautiful and kind and honest
than anything we could ever know on earth.
He now knows a joy, a wholeness, an ecstasy,
a completion which those whom he left behind
must wait for.'

David Kowalczyk

Sunset In Panajachel

Approaching night, the plaza
dances with flickering lights,
with the death of day.

On a bench of crumbling stone,
I savor ever morsel of my roast goat
and rice. I relish my liter of Cabro beer
as though it were Dom Perignon.

I scribble notes in my journal,
ancient and stained. I vow to read ten pages
every day from *The Magic Mountain*, *Naked Lunch*,
and *Gravity's Rainbow*. And to write.

Every day. To write.

Returning to the Inn of the Five Graces,
I have a sudden and sad realization.

I imagine things

I really don't believe.

Would that I could

believe in things

I can't even imagine.

David Kowalczyk

Superman And His Brothers Visit Ossuary, New York

A sour dream lifts me from bed
at 4 a.m. I rummage through the attic
looking for something I know not what
in the cluttered drawers of a dusty walnut
dresser I find a gray-and-white photograph.
On the back, a faded scrawl: 1946/
Despite the ripped and torn edges that
have blossomed into a fiendish ecru,
it could have been taken today.

Four men are standing beside a virgin
Buick. Sunlight sparkles from the chrome,
reflected in their faces and in their chests,
swollen as a drunken rooster's.
They are matadors after the kill, disguised
by suits of Puritan gray and feathered fedoras.
They are strange and strong, daring and defiant,
powerful with pride.

The air is electric, filled with tiny golden stars.
This magical chariot has erased their history.
They are no longer poor farmers.
They are no longer mortal.
Olympus never knew such gods.

David Kowalczyk

Suppurate

Best left unspoken,
this word contains the crimes
of uncountable lifetimes.

A fluttering of noise,
it always sprinkles salt
on whatever it is about to eat..

It is the pain of decay,
the lies whispered by
fallen leaves.

David Kowalczyk

Tao Of Eddie Haskell

Eddie Haskell's fingers
strip naked
the blood orange.

June Cleaver's head
bobs and sways.
Her extended tongue
lustfully awaits what
Yaweh has forbidden.

Eddie places the flesh and blood
of the orange upon her tongue.
Hey eyes become like lasers.

She knows.

Yaweh and Lucifer:
identical twins.

David Kowalczyk

That Last Warm Day In October

My mind slowly drowns in memories
made holy by time.
Daylight fades. A gentle breeze
scatters a rainbow of leaves.

Thirty years ago, my eyes
were blinded by my vision.
I was adrift in a dream,
homeless in heaven, wandering
constellation to constellation,
footsteps leaving no traces.

Clay pressed cold against my back,
the arrogant scent of sycamores
mellowed by that of wild mint,
the hypnotic song of muddy waters
lapping against granite and driftwood,
our lips straining towards each other's,
and brushing so lightly, as if gossamer.

Terra firma was your home, flesh
and blood your natural elements.
Gravity kept your eyes open

David Kowalczyk

The Ancient Poets

Eyes bursting with anticipation
of metamorphosis, with the
temptation of apotheosis.

Curious, obsessed, so desperately
needful, burning with the worm
of denial.

They wrote in constant fevers,
uncountable reams upon reams
of verse describing maple trees
in the northern latitudes
turning scarlet in late November
rather than in mid-September,
as though this would magically
delay, if not eradicate, all death.

The result of this?
Look for yourself.

Built of fog and clouds,
hubris is scattered quite quickly
once it touches the earth.

David Kowalczyk

The Antithesis Of Time

Immaculate silence.
The music of those
who walk on air.

In this invisible dream,
lizard Buddhas sun themselves
across seamless stones.

There go the three wise men,
driving little yellow cars.

David Kowalczyk

The Architect Of Wonder

Said the spider
to the striving man:

I
am
still.

See
how
high
I
climb.

David Kowalczyk

The Audible Bridge Between Winter And Spring

Outside my window,
a weird chorus
stirs my slumber.

What crosses this
dark winter's night
with eldritch, feral melodies?

The shuttered hearts
of daffodils,
rehearsing April's concert.

David Kowalczyk

The Betrayal Of Soul By Reason

There is a fire in the mirror,
floating like a vapor on
the soft summer air.

Splendid is the vertigo of nuns,
the nakedness of motion,
and the realization the moon
is a drowning white tortoise.

I am terrified of clowns,
of the retarded, of blue-haired women,
of all those whose perfection
has been stolen.

Shatter this wound.
Erase it from memory.
Cancel the universe.

David Kowalczyk

The Blood Of Weeds And Flowers

In the blue ruins
where time never existed,
dead cats, their eyes full of spiders,
rot in the stairwell.

There are no autumn flowers
save those which are dying, yet
this remains the most eloquent
of seasons.

It is not the colder nights
and clouded days which
bring these blossoms to fade.

It is their desperate aching for
a life more holy and free.

David Kowalczyk

The Buddhist Triangle

Line AB: Buddha's Face

The eyes of wisdom
are blind to everything
save wonder.

Line BC: Buddha's Heart

The rose's thorns
teach kindness,
not its petals.

Line CA: Buddha's Soul

People will always
scowl whenever you
walk on water.

David Kowalczyk

The Dream Thief

My god
is a spider,
spinning webs
so fine.

Webs of fear
within my heart,
webs which
trap and blind.

David Kowalczyk

The Ever-Diminishing Half-Life Of Immortality

Being a famous author
certainly isn't
what it used to be.

In 1969, the term 'supernova'
best described Richard Brautigan.
In 1984, he was reduced to a twinkle
in the smog-choked sky.
In 2019, when the last remaining copy of
Trout Fishing in America is sold
for a quarter at a Friends of the Library sale
in Yakima, Washington
he will officially be designated
as a black hole.

David Kowalczyk

The Greying Of Veronica

She stares into her
bedroom mirror at
her wounded beauty
and begins to weep
in five different languages.

David Kowalczyk

The Jean-Paul Sartre Sky

Sartre could have only been senseless.
He never could have known a sunset,
a rainbow, or the scent of lilacs in May.

I have often speculated about what Sartre
was likely to become in his next incarnation.
After lengthy contemplation, I concluded that
he would write articles for mass-market tabloids.

'Caterpillar-like extraterrestrials land
in the San Fernando Valley and spawn
multitudes of offspring with Hollywood starlets.'

'New York City gargoyles spring to life
and seize command of the Staten Island Ferry.'

The inevitable sequels to 'Nausea'
and 'Existentialism and Human Emotion.'

David Kowalczyk

The Land Creates

My mother has lived on this farm
all her life.

She wanders the house,
moaning to the walls.

Her hands jerk about,
branches in a blizzard.

She asks about a woman
I haven't spoken to in years.

'Will Wendy visit in the spring? '
Five times the question echoes.
Five times I answer, 'No. No. No! '

I pull on heavy boots
and clamber off into
the chill, soggy field
choked with rotting leaves,
fraught with withered goldenrod.

Along the weed-swamped banks,
Cadillac Creek's muddy murmur
is shattered by a wild yowl.
A massive gray cat leaps from
an oak tree and bounds off into
a thicket of blackberry brambles.

These corn fields and maple woods
are cursed.
Is it fear, trapped deep
beneath this clay-veined earth,
set free in spring by the plow's cold blade,
or memory?

David Kowalczyk

The Last Cannibal In Brooklyn

Slowly, ever so slowly,
the tiny blue spiders awaken.
They sing and dance
like sweet children.

Early April is a small child,
full of bluster and grace.
The fifth of April, I had a dream.
I pulled a tiny gray skull from
my right rear molar.
Then, my face replaced Lincoln's
on Mount Rushmore.

I was baptized a Catholic,
and you know what that means.
I like my reality solid,
and preferably, edible.
I find rational thought
to be the stuff of heresy.
I am confident my mother
will someday be canonized.

I never actually breath,
only sigh.

David Kowalczyk

The Last Kiss

I brushed my teeth today.
First time in years.
I thought of you
and our last kiss.

I sighed
as it swirled
down the drain
after all those years
in my mouth.

David Kowalczyk

The Monkey Living Inside Of Me

His mind is a fog which hides
the heavens. The sky holds the stars.
Why shouldn't people, as well?

He has eyes like feathers.
His mouth is a boulevard of lies.
His smile is hard and the color of tea.
His teeth are expensive and white
as the moon.

His hands are filled with sleep.
He is sad as a rainbow lost in the sunshine.
An albatross is wrapped around his heart,
singing dark songs.

He was told as a child that
all circus clowns practice cannibalism.
He is the dragon living in God's suitcase.

He waits for his soul to sail
into another lifetime, one spent drinking
margaritas with unicorns on the
storied sands of Puerto Vallarta.

Tomorrow, he will become an iguana.

David Kowalczyk

The Most Wonderful World In The World

Is on Route 237, ten miles
south of oblivion.
Just west of Wall Street,
east of nowhere,
tiny as a termite.

Streets full of faded dreams,
the smell of boiled cabbage,
the sound of howling mongrels,
and children's faces with generous smiles.

Makes Goobervilles sort of
look like LA, almost.
Sister cities: Midnight, Mississippi,
Twist, Arkansas, and Deadhorse, Alaska.

'You'd best not blink
while passing through.'
That's about all anyone
ever says about it.

David Kowalczyk

The Opposite Of Breath

Hope, the Siamese twin
of doubt.
A form of amnesia.

We forget our will
is also God's will.

Our dreams,
God's dreams.

David Kowalczyk

The Politics Of Dreaming

No
human being
can consider
passion
a poison
or life
a sin.

David Kowalczyk

The Sad Sorry Sounds Made By Dying Creatures

This morning, I put a brown paper
shopping bag over my head.
I determined where to poke out holes
for my eyes, then removed the bag and did so.

Then, I put the paper sack back over my head
and marched eight blocks down Elmwood Avenue
to the Municipal Housing Office.

As I entered the office, I removed the bag.
Some of my face came off with it.
'I'm here to apply for Section 8, ' I said meekly.
The four hundred pound creature behind
the desk grunted at me.

'We only take people with intact faces, '
she snarled, the contempt in her voice palpable.
'Come back when you look like a real
human being.' she added mockingly.

'Your face is a pail of lard.' I told her, spitting
on her desk before I shuffled out the door.
Once home, I tried duct tape, liquid cement, superglue.

Anything which would restore my face
to a semblance of social respectability.
Nothing worked. Nothing could.

My face will only become whole
when I lose all shame.

David Kowalczyk

The Sound Of God: Blind Mexican Hustle

Good likely cushions.
A hundred pesos says
she can't play pool.

Her tongue and nose
are her eyes.
Her fingers and ears
are her eyes.

Listen, here
it is.

David Kowalczyk

The Specific Gravity Of Words

Invisible, they waft through
the atmospheres, evanescent
yet ubiquitous. Weightless,
they potentially possess the
gravest relative density
on earth.

For when read, or heard,
every thought and emotion
of everyone who listens or reads
becomes attached to every word.

Words thus thicken and widen
and swell, dragging
the soul away from the
seamless sky and far, deep away
into the dark, worried tombs
of our tired present earth.

Imagine, for a moment:

If birds could talk,
how, on earth, would they
be able to fly?

David Kowalczyk

The Square Root Of Knowledge

Know ye now the fruits
of the Tree of Knowledge
of Good and Evil.

Illusionary good.
Imaginary evil.

Dreams poisoned by shame.
Hearts twisted by guilt.

Visions blinded and
voices muted.

David Kowalczyk

The Strawberry Moon

will turn your
big Macs into chateaubriand
cockroaches into poodles
eyes into shooting stars
lips into roses
heart into the giant
Ghiardelli chocolate bar
it has always dreamed
of being

David Kowalczyk

The Symphony Of Clouds

Muted by thought,
extinguished by words,
expressed through motion.

Striking and elegant
as the flight of
eagles.

Revealing untold wisdoms,
while keeping secret
those most sacred.

David Kowalczyk

The Tongue I Am In Search Of

A dialect which will
make skeletons pounce,
an idiom which lays bare
the heart of God,
yet keeps humanity
a mystery,
a langue never muted
by words or extinguished by thought,
a system of sound and rhythm
which explains everything
to everyone, throughout
eternity.

David Kowalczyk

The Wind Carries Memory

In this house, where so many
children were stillborn,
ghosts slobber and roar.

These are my siblings
reflections of the fierce
and wild storms of my heart.

They crash about the kitchen,
sending chairs flying,
overturning the table,
ripping the doors from their hinges.

Their sorrow is beyond forgetting.
They will never love, never dream.
Yet I will hold them always,
or until they are erased
by the wind.

David Kowalczyk

The Wind Is Lost

The sky is hiding.
And I have nowhere to go.
Thistles through my heart.

David Kowalczyk

The Wounded Beast Inside Of Him

The dawn is devoured
by blind dogs.
Opium-smoking dwarves
who rule the world
consult ouija boards
to determine the planet's destiny.

He slumps across a couch
and lusts for something
he dares not imagine.

This is a kidnapping
of the sould: a seizure,
more rape than rapture,
a mask poorly worn,
yet still a mystical experience.

All he knows is
all that he can remember.
A constant quiet quest
since birth to be
constantly swimming, immersed
in liquid, forever and always
wet.

David Kowalczyk

The Zen Of Ward Cleaver

You
had a
good time.

You
enjoyed
the game.

Why
spoil
it

By trying
to understand
it?

David Kowalczyk

This Only Happens In The Movies

The Topanga Canyon sky
is made of gold.
Eucalyptus leaves rustle
in the Santa Ana wind.

'Keep your fears distant
from all hearts, ' the sun counsels.
'Especially your own.'

I shed multiple skins,
and kiss the hand of History.
Her laughter sounds like
gently falling love.

David Kowalczyk

Thorns Upon The Alien Corn

Here, in the city of jazz,
the tigers in my dreams
weep neon tears.

I awaken each morning
to the soft moans and
murmurings of the restless dead.
Fine hard snow falls upon the city.

The world strikes
a single note:
C flat..

This has nothing
to do with sex,
or the Kabbalah,
or the nature
of irrational numbers.

David Kowalczyk

Thoughts Like Melting Snow

Everything
is lost
in the
intimacy
of eternity.

Soul
sheds
no tears.

David Kowalczyk

Time For Heavy Boots

For eight-foot snow drifts,
for jagged icicles the size
of mastodon tusks to
drag down gutters.

For gales to howl
through storm windows
and make even stately mansions
shake and shiver like Medea
giving birth.

Time to watch your life
unfold before your eyes
before opening the portal
leading from light and warmth
to a world of frozen terror
where comfort knows no welcome.

Time for Time
to be devoured by Medusa,
waiting in the mirror.

January, the month when all of
our parents always die.
January, time of Janus, the
dual-faced god simultaneously
embracing past and future.

January, time to create
the future by remembering
the past with a finer, more
focused vision.

Time Of Amaretto Rain

A swan vexed with
scores to settle, November
swallows the earth.
Mystery is born.

November kisses
the sky.
Angels dream.

David Kowalczyk

Time Of Amazing Things

Every Friday during Lent,
in every linoleum-floored diner
in every blue-highwayed town,
The Last Supper is re-enacted.

During the ritual of The Holy
Fish Fry, whoever picks up the check
becomes Jesus.

The flesh of a leviathan haddock
is mystically transformed into
the fragments of a star.

God has kissed the feet
of beggars, and the homeless
suddenly take flight through
the sky like magnolia blossoms.

Life now flows pure as a song,
as smooth and perfect as a dream.
Now, everyone at the table realizes
that the wounds which will not heal
are what makes them whole.

David Kowalczyk

Tristan Tzara

Whoever said that
Dada is dead had not read
this morning's paper.

David Kowalczyk

Truculence

blind old general
tugs his shadow behind him
bile and vitriol

David Kowalczyk

Trust

A spin
of color.
Imagination
magnified.

A whirl
of sound.
Belief
transformed.

David Kowalczyk

Vox Angelica

These words, music
to saints and gentle spirits,
beyond the ken of
demons and devils.

Words which are
the cause of my breath.
Words composed of sparkling lights.
Words which force the future
to crumble beneath their sound.

These words:
I love you.

David Kowalczyk

Wait

In the hollow place
where frozen children live,
the colors of truth
are a cold little witch
named me my mine.

She is sinking
in the river of time.

Beneath a moon
full of hemlock and
the gray light of hunger,
the river moves
like a whisper.

David Kowalczyk

War Between The Living And The Dead

The Census Bureau last reported
the population of Ossuary, New York,
as fifteen thousand, five hundred and
twenty-two.

Today's Rochester Democrat & Chronicle
insists thirty thousand people are buried
in the three cemeteries of Ossuary, New York.
This confirmed an old suspicion.

Most of the people
in Ossuary, New York
are dead.

David Kowalczyk

What We Learned In Kindergarten

We learned that
wounds are essential
to being human.

We learned that
memories will never
be erased by time.

We learned that
sometimes our loved ones
live in very dark places.

David Kowalczyk

Why

It is not the cold hands
of winter, nor evenings
spent drinking soju,
which makes me shout
at birds and throw stones
at the moon.

It is not geometry which
keeps my heart from being
touched. It is not
the sea urchins weeping
within my skull.

Like rabid wolverines and
the children of crack whores,
Time itself is rather
surly and perverse.

David Kowalczyk

Why Dreams Get Lost

Most men in Ossuary, New York
dream simple dreams.

Bowling a six hundred series.
Bagging a six point buck.
Bagging a six pack of Genesee Cream Ale.

They dream simple dreams.
They live happy lives.

I grew up in Ossuary, New York,
but no one knows what happened
to my dreams.

I never could
keep them simple.

David Kowalczyk

Willy Loman In The Eye Of An Angel

Reckless dreams and restless lies
stole him from his center.
He was catapulted far and away
into the foul, fetid pit of time.

His next life will be
a star-crossed spiritual master
who manifests as an autistic child.
He will know everything.

He will smile
at the world and
all its eager blood.

He will laugh
while time saunters
into an immaculate sky,
untouched forever.

David Kowalczyk

Wings Of Icarus

Words
unfold
unravel
whisper
new songs.

Their truths
fading
always
with
their echoes.

David Kowalczyk

Winter Fig

My mother was
a being born of
miracles, of monsters,
magic, mayhem
and mystery.

She once described
a winter fig:
'That tree is a
spaceship from Pluto.'

My father, son of
calm reason and
clear chill logic,
twisted his head.

'No.'

There was always
finality whenever he said
his favorite word.

He then clucked his tongue,
a seemingly innocuous habit
which nonetheless conveyed
an unrelenting disapproval
of the entire world.

'That tree looks like rain, ' said he,
sadness dropping his voice.

David Kowalczyk

Wolf Moon Dreams

Countless years of
lard and shadows wrestle
to shed the lies that blind.

Ogres bursting with
unspeakable sins, fiends
pulsing with audacious crimes.

Quasimodo's children are praying
in the shyest of whispers.
Not for forgiveness,
but acceptance.

David Kowalczyk

Wrong Music

The lies you
whisper so sweetly
into my ears
can never touch
my callused heart.

Which serves only
to make them
infinitely more precious.

David Kowalczyk

Yesterday

Brown recluse
spider buried
beneath memory.

David Kowalczyk

Zihuatenejo

Mellow as a mango.
The women, ages nine to ninety,
always dressed in black.
Lavender breezes and waves
nestled on pearled sands.
Flames and flowers emerging
from the laughing surf.
Restless unicorns wandering the beach.
Instant love and never-ending sunsets.
The liquid hush of the jacaranda dawn.

David Kowalczyk

Zweiback

My mother always said,
'If you can't say something nice
about someone or something,
then don't say anything at all.'

Thank goodness she never
followed her own advice.
Her caustic wit is perhaps
her most treasured legacy.

That being said, all I can say
about 'zweiback' is this:
'YUCK! '

David Kowalczyk