The artist is the creator of beautiful things.  
To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.

No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical 
sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable 
mannerism of style.

No artist is ever morbid. The artist can express 
everything.

All art is at once surface and symbol.

All art is quite useless.

(From the preface to 
The Picture of Dorian Gray 
by Oscar Wilde)
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Pity This Petty Pretty

I

Pity this petty pretty
dancing, dancing
Pity this petty pretty
dancing, dancing
dancing, she is a hawk
dancing, she is a hawk
with her arms outspread
she is a hawk

with gliding grace she moves

her body in liquid
whispers speaks

upon the stage

large panting noses wag
like pennants
to and fro
sniffing
as she circles
side to side
past their red
and glowing eyes

glowing eyes
redrimmed fearstricken
rabbit eyes
hypnotized

by the motion of her wings
as she plucks
her feathers off

Two
Pity this petty pretty hawk
dancing

disinterestedly

through the focuses
of spotlights and minds
preoccupied
with keeping her entrapped
in their cage
of stares and beams

Pity this petty pretty hawk
her body is fluid
her face is rock

rock

rock

limestone rock
ancient plaster
mannequin rock
frozen

fields of snow
are full of rabbits
to devour

Pity this petty pretty
dancing
she is a desperate hawk
searching for something
to prey on.

It could have been the movement
of a leaf fluttering down
in its grand farewell to life . . .
or else a motion from the car
a wave of the right hand
crossing
the left holding the steering wheel
guiding her along the secret
agon of her heart.

Four
for years the grass
meadows tremble in tears
of pain and joy, remember . . .
the last chapter written in
ultimates of the progressing
maturity.
The cottoncloud
existence has fled with the
advent of the storm, and has
been lost for years . . .

leaves fall down like bridges,
breaking the unity of branches
that made the tree full,
unlinking the soft armor of life
and dropping it down in rusty
disintegration with deadly
resignation.

and the tree stands naked
frightfully aware of the
lost leafy flesh on his cold
fingers, painfully aware of not
possessing the power to span
distances alone, too much aware
of winter unable to be
crossed
without the touching
of hands . . .
in the winter that lasts too long
the ruins of a bridge that leads
to summer become
a monument to warmth,
worshipped daily in the
consecrated halls of memory,
and treasured above the everyday
which speaks of cold.
Mundane, in comparison,
is nothing but vacuum . . .

Five
tears flood a heart which
finds the oasis of warmth
a mirage
  (like a carrot dangled in front
   of his eyes . . . like a sword
dangled above his mind by a thread)
a mirage dancing away beyond his clutch . . .
  and memory with its pain,
tears out the heart like an
eagle and, with its warmth,
restores it like a salve . . .
(a torture devised by the gods
for Prometheus when he brought
the light of fire to men)
To touch the warmth
brings pain . . .

It is still winter . . .
the oasis is being inhabited
by someone else
without looking back at all
at the lonely traveller
deserted
  in snowfields
among the rabbits whimpering . . .
and vivid in yellow dreams
  a fluttering whisper of a wave
  almost afraid it seems . . .
    hello . . .
or a desperate escaping tear . . .
  goodbye . . .
a leaf falling
  on to
  the ground
whispers of a hawk's wings
disguise dovelike dissolved.
pity this petty pretty hawk
weeping

CHRIS DURNEY
I Want to Be Buried

I remember bragging about the old cemetery down the road as if it were mine. But even if I owned the property the stones were not mine to possess nor was the salt marsh beyond the wall. To me it was a beach club membership—a status symbol though I’ve only been there three or four times in my life. As far as I know my ancestors were quite undistinctive, hard working foreigners. Not the type of people I wanted to dream about so I had my cemetery dating back to 1658. Most of the time I was an absent landlord caring little about who was buried as long as the antiquity of the tombstones could gain attention in a conversation.

It seemed to gather all important attention points when I mentioned that it was my favorite place for thinking and walking; I did neither there. In fact, I seldom considered my fiefdom. One afternoon a friend of mine filmed part of a movie there and I indifferently consented to go to the cemetery and help him. I was happy he was taking advantage of the older stones yet I felt annoyed that the brown sandstone had not cooperated. Two hundred years of New England weather had worn many of the inscriptions. I never saw the complete movie.

Strange had I never considered the age of the knoll from the present but always remember it from being thirty-eight years after the Pilgrims landed. That had such a nice sound to it I’m sure the Daughters of the American Revolution would have approved. My few visits over the years were not to admire the beautiful piece of real estate but rather to find the oldest stones. I could always be sure that a few would precede 1710. Then I’d get annoyed that the older ones were illegible. How did people expect to be remembered if they didn’t leave behind an inscription which would last for eternity? I didn’t blame time, hurricanes, snow for I knew where the guilt was. It rested upon the poverty of the era and that seemed a poor excuse for not erecting a proper memorial to one’s father or wife.

I guess I’ve matured. I went back to the place this week and felt ashamed I had let the weeds defeat the stones. My bare feet hopped quickly over the rambling vines of thorns. I saw my former neighbors there. Like Don Melonson who was one year younger than me and had drowned in the Hammonassett River. Or Mr. Dowd and Mrs. Dudley customers on my old paper route. Time was the present. And where was Dottie Willard whom I had written a eulogy? There were plastic flowers near these plots. I want to be buried. But how could they not disturb the tangled growth? One would know right away that a new grave had been dug.

BRIAN KIRKPATRICK  

Seven
For a Promised Lady

Oh let this not a selfish sunset prove,
Which shadows now our last shared summer day.
Let me not, for your love, forbid you move;
Nor let you, for my friendship, beg me stay.
A lover you have pledged—alas, not this—
To share the sun's caresses at his place.
So must we part as friends—not with the kiss
I covet so. Let but our hands embrace.
Now release this friend for love, yet be content,
Knowing lovers bask in friendship's last degree;
And should I on some winter day lament
That friends we are and lovers not to be,
Then will the warmth of our farewell hands entwined
Remind friends, too, are lovers of a kind.

MARK GRENIER

Prayer One

"When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to me." (Jn. 12:32)

Draw me up, o Lord
out of the vasty wilds
and deserts of my self.
Lift me, raise me up
to see the manner of my brothers’
suffering and dying
that I may stretch my sight
beyond the morning star
and setting sun,
from the depths
of the east and west
of my own spirit.
Let my eyes and heart,
o Lord, fly like clouds
from everywhere to now
to share with open arms
and grasping hands
the human Golgotha.

Open my tight clutched soul
that it may turn my brothers’
faces to the noon-time sun.

STEPHEN GUMBLEY

Ten
Bike

(for R.A.D.)

Within the wild, winding realm
of speed and spinning wheels
a self-blacked boy sat waiting
his bike whining cockily
beneath him
The light flashed green
he whipped his heels
and wagged his
back to the flying wind

Slopped down low, friction fast
by-passing this hurried youth
fast becoming a crowd
of manhood and machine
ignoring life
that sat bewildered aside
the road, trodding politely
sedately
slowly to be sure

The black back men, sitting stiff
in the discipline of speed
rushed to horizons
of happiness in the adult-
hood, broken into pieces
by the speed of their approach

Their bodies taut, driven wild
aroused in the passion and
ease of sleepy love
of want
of love, to be a man

STEPHEN GUMBLEY

Twelve
Birthday Party

an old man sits on a chair
by a window
in spring.
his old grey sweater,
tight around his stomach,
keeps out the crisp spring breezes
which seem somehow colder this year.
in the other rooms
his children and grandchildren
shout and argue and celebrate his birthday,
as if survival were an achievement.
I am alone with him
listening
to his stories that grow longer every year
(I have heard them all
so many times,
and yet, I listen).
I see the ribbon and wrapping paper
that decorates his lap
(gaudy indications of an octogenarian celebration),
and hear his voice singing out
the happy stories of his youth
so sadly.
looking up I see
the blue veins of his hands
(rivers of life
at lowest ebb),
and the lines drawn in his face
by time, who there will write
the last few words of an
as yet unpublished poem,
and he says
"I have lived a long and happy life,"
and goes on to remember more and more
(his blue eyes seem more
grey than I remember).

ARTHUR MARANDOLA

Thirteen
Pigeon Victory

Who can feel pride at scattering wild pigeons?
They flush up, and land, none the worse, or better, in their simple search.
But developed are these, each with a love for his heritage of grass.
You think he is unfortunate without (massive armies ultimate weapons) modern conveniences,
So we educate.

Can you see those city pigeons up ahead looking back as they run, existing on crumbs, living in cracks, no heritage or pride.

But would these turn and fight alone? So we must save him for (freedom to love choice in election) our freedoms.

His only choice is to write on his mind:

in a casket
muscles useless
nothing to do but die.

MIKE SCHULDE

Fourteen
The Tour

before us stands
the impressive new
Cathedral of Crosses,
proud place of God
for its many parishioners

In a dim lit bush hut
a young mother, with
fixed ancient eye,
weeps over her dying son.

notice the Gothic—
Modern exterior and the
white marble steps
leading to the impressive
Ghibertian styled bronze
doors.

Seventeen
His belly lifts in a
crescent of agony as
smoked air rises from
a foodless fire

heaven-ward as we enter
this mansion of God our
gaze is caught by a
magnificent pastel
fresco by Tonachelli
of Italy

He turns his heavy
head, she strokes
it rhythmically,
complementing
ritual passed on
by ages of experience.

Nineteen
walking forward to the sanctuary we notice the striking plainness of the mahogany altar, the pyramided red carpet steps surrounding it, both departures from the more detailed Baroque styles

His body quakes as he writhes in a sea of sweat. Soon his young vacant eyes grow older than hers

We thank all the many parishioners who made such a worthy cause possible.

Now the air is steeped in a sightless silence. She glances down, with hollow black eyes to a crude grass cross and weeps.
The darkness permeates through my body to my heart. I feel only the pulse of the ocean inside me—and hear its roar. All else is cold and bare, and so very dark. Agony and pain cry from my bloodied feet to my scarred head, and I am tired; so very, very tired. I should arise and ease my family’s fears; dislodge their anxieties, but I cannot lift my body. I cannot rise from the cold and bloodied pavement. I will rest for a while. I will rest and later rise . . .

How many days could have passed? How many hours have I slept? Darkness still surrounds me. I have not left this godforsaken tomb. They all must fear for me so. They all must be so terrified. I will go to them. I must find a light and travel to them. Aughhh; my hands are weak! My feet pain under the pressure of my body, but I cannot stay another moment . . .

I know that the light would lead me to day. Oh, the air smells so fresh! The rain has washed the stench of my blood and death from the breeze. The ground is moist and rich. I wonder if the plants and shrubs are as appreciative of their supply of nourishment as I am. “Small plants, in your prayers for God’s moisture, do you consider the joy and beauty of the rain and earth?” Ah but the time to journey has come. I leave my planned destiny and rise beyond Fate, to travel to those who mourn my absence.

Come! Do not be afraid! You all look so strange! Do not hesitate and step back! It is your son! I shall not harm you! Come! Feel my hands! Feel the warmth of my body! I am here! I am of flesh! I am not dead! I cannot be killed! Come and be joyful . . . not of fear!

Oh, it is so good to have you all here! It is so good to be among you . . . (for the last time). My body is worn and tired, but my soul is at peace. You have given that peace to me. But come . . . some of you have yet to be assured. You look at me with questioning eyes. You fear me and even my presence. Do not fear! Was this not already spoken? Was this not pre-written, even in our own words? Here . . . this is man; flesh: not evil!

Now, let us sit down in each other’s presence and learn. Today, I am wise . . . wiser than yesterday, and of tomorrow,
there is no comparison, for only tomorrow will my mortal boundaries crumble.

You look at me, and you are sad. Why are you sad? Did we not speak of death? You spoke the loudest of all . . . that through the wind, all things were immortal. Does our Immortality lie only in the urns of words? Are we not the tools of life, even in death, or have I been mistaken? Tell me that we are not Life's fools. Assure me that the Wind laughs not at our shallow words.

We spoke before of the sea. That each of us was a wave no different from each other; a wave part of the ocean sent to the shore to sing her speech, only by breaking our hearts upon the rocks of the coast. And we forever remain captive of the sea, and her wards, the sand and rocks. We are prisoners, bound to tell her riddle. We are all waves, each of water, salt, and foam, so weep not for this wave without weeping for others, and weep not for me, for to break the chains of captivity, water needs only to lend itself to the wind, and melt away into the mist. Thither, I go. And can we mourn the mist to which we go, yet revel in the mist from which we come? For remember, as a wave, we see not the beginning of the ocean, nor the ending, but as a mist, we experience the totality of the ocean itself.

And ye who have been silent; ye who go to the mist as I go today, be not sad, or of self-pity. Of life, little matters, that can be heard. It is the song of the silent drummer within our souls, that beats life into our hearts. The mist is the essence of us all.

And you question the tears in my eyes and the pain in my smile. Indeed, the wounds I bear cause me a loss of complete awareness, but my pain lies not in my flesh.

You ask me to teach. You seek the wisdom of my mind. But isn't the rod of the teacher equal to the bar of a cell? In the concept of teaching, I stand unequal of all of you on a pedestal of authority. I open my mouth to you, but remain silent. If words are to be said, the ocean will say them, and they will be carried upon the wind to your hearts.

You have feared for my life, in my separation from you. I was not gone. My body was eons away, but my soul, your closest garment. Distance is but a dream. Only emotion is reality.

Twenty-four
You look at me; some are of the sun, browned by the kiss of affluence; some are scratched and eaten by the winds of life; and some are pallid and weakened by the years of strife, or ages of pain. You look intently, grasping at my every word, gorging yourself upon the feast of my syllables, yet the nourishment I offer goes untouched. I am pained by your incomprehension . . . a deep restless pain, but I understand, for I too have wasted the food of life by another, and he too wept. Each honey bee needs gather the nectar and carry it to his mirror-image, but the lessons of the honey making is innate of us all.

I see many of you searching the sky and the earth and the distance, seeking life, and this is good, for it carries with it, a realization of the shore, yet always, in our fear and questioning of the rocks, we forget the vision of life's boundaries. I would tell you only this, to turn your sight from the clouds and rocks and mountains, to the depth and distance of the wind. For even to us all, the wind speaks; to the blind, in their searching, to the deaf, in their calling, and yes, the wind answers even the waves in their quest of the mist.

I have spoken as a mist, and you have listened as a wave. Now, I speak as a rock that has molested the waves of distant shores . . . shores of yesterday. I tell you of a wave that believed in believing, and ebbed without faith. I have seen waves competing in their strength and decibels and have been shallow, even before the barren beach. I have counseled with a wave that shall ever be a wave of unbelief, never knowing the totality of the ocean. And the waves are all of us.

You ask of my reason for leaving now. I am at peace and you ask the source of my tranquility. Ask not your doubting of me, unless you can know my heart. When you can forget the vision of the snow, to hear the silence of its falling; when you lose the shining of the moon in your awareness of its laughing; when the stars' glitter dies away, and still its singing echoes in your ears, you shall know a portion of the peace that I have known. But I leave you with one more observation. If you wait for the gentleness of life's clouds to form within your heart, and envelop the restlessness of your soul, the clouds will be blown on by the winds, and even your vision will be gone, and darkness will curtain the whiteness of the clouds.

You now look about you and the snows of life ward off Spring's promise. You wait idle for the sun to melt the snow's

Twenty-five
cold gate, but is it only the snow that is melted? Can the spring be warm, even after your hearts have melted away to oblivion? Spring comes when the ice of winter within your hearts is melted away, even while the earth is blanketed with snow. Spring comes even to the land of ice, where flowers never know the season of green.

Questions fill your palate, and yet you are afraid to utter the sounds. Why is it that to ask questions seems so childish? Why need it be that valid questions appear shameful to our own ears, while foolish answers give us pride? I know that for answers never to ease my mind, is Life, and a satisfaction of my questions is Death, with nothing more.

Gather closer and share with me this mead and loaf. Drink and take, each of you, from the same chalice, but suffer, each of you, to swallow each morsel into your separate souls. For as a group we are strong and safe, only if each of us is a wave unto ourselves. We unite for life's sake and Life's joy, but all value of the union is lost, when we are only a part of the totality.

I depart from you as a wave, and tell you this of the ocean. Seek less, wisdom and judgment of the ocean, and more of the value of yourself. For the ocean is vast and can only be known by the mist. The wave can know only the wave. Do not be sad in this, for even as the ocean is made up of each needed wave, and through the knowledge of itself, does the wave enter the mist.

When you rise above the need to strike the rocks; when you need not the rhythm of the surf, then you will also rise above the ocean, into a greater ocean, of all knowing.

Seek not the depth of the sand and water, but the depth of the need within yourselves. In your search of self, the measure of the sand will be made known to you, but its value will be small. In the giving of your vows you seek the vows of others, and in giving your total, you require the equal from the receiver. This is oblivion. To rise above oblivion is to rise above the barters.

The weaknesses, I have known. The inequalities, I have lived, but now I am full; am total, and I leave you to go to the mist.

I came from the mist with a purpose, and the purpose is satisfied. Bid me farewell, for the Son of God returns to the mist.

PATRICIA B. RIX

Twenty-six
Samson at Stonehenge

Summer solstice—the rosy fingers of dawn
Spreading across the sky, the sun’s shape drawn
Slowly behind the Heelstone, until reaching its top,
It grins its bright message like a fiery lemon lollipop.

O worshippers of solar gods, O worse than pagan Druid
Or Philistine, lugging Welsh bluestone to taste black blood
As human sacrificial altar. In concentric circular blasphemy
You restack Babel’s fallen stone. Your heathen alchemy
Will not erase the writing on the wall. God’s wrath
Rings in the heaven against you — worse than lovers of Baal.
You led your naked sunburnt victims down the path
From the east, past the trilithons—and left cerebral blood, now stale

On the slaughter stone. They led me, hands bound, in sun-blind
Anguish, and strapped me to the two blue pillars before the Death-rock.
They prayed their damned prayers; I stood stoically defiant to find
God’s power swelling in my limbs — I tore at the stone blocks,

Bringing the fear of God down upon their demonic heads.
Buried in blue stone they met the damnation they deserved.
Saved only by miracle, I thank God (as one must),
Wiped off my hands, my sun-yellow pants, and got back on the bus.

ROY PETER CLARK

Twenty-seven
Actus

Sown the seed
entombed in earth
dormant
depth and
lifeless

Then the rains
Then the sun
steaming sod
—movement
—life begun

Bursting forth
Twisting up
ascension
Union toward the sun

Branches wide
Uplifted drawn
dropped the blossoms
and now the fruit.

Fallen the fruit
—scattered the seed
—sown the seed
—dormant
—deep
And again the rains
and again the sun
life begun.

MICHAEL CICCONETwenty-nine
Bums

Somewhere between China Town and the Fulton Fish Market lies the inscrutable Bowery.

No cocks crow the sun's arrival here,
No alarm clocks to open one's eyes.

A Bowery Bum is awakened by the cheap-wine Pain in his head and the whine of an armoured garbage truck.

When the truck refuses his body (it is not tied properly),
The Bum pulls back the satin-spittle sheets

And like Sweeney or Pithecanthropus, is erect. With a wrecked sense of taste the Bum

Picks the crust of bread he rejected yesterday
From the litter basket and consumes it —

Olfactory essence of Daily News and Common Fly.
The Bum begs enough silver to keep him in

Rotgut (1968 Vintage — a poor year), smokes
A saliva'd butt, breathes deeply the industrial air,

And spends a less than pleasant day with
His skyscraping in-laws.

ROY PETER CLARK

Thirty
Stulti

I
Rotting fishnets deserted on
a Galean shore
—hung and
Filled with nothing but the
Silent movement of the
—hot
—dry wind
Abandoned
"unmended"
old

II
Sun-blistered dingy
Salt-rot sail
—broken
—overturned
On some distant Judean beach
No more to bear the harvest of
The sea or
Carry its farmers
But now merely to remain
a solitary
coffin for the
crab and
clam.

III
Confused aged Zebedee browned
And toughened by the
—sea and
—salt
Now bewildered
saddened
And left alone

Wherefore are your fishers?
Wherefore are their fish?

Thirty-one
IV
What has drawn them from
—the boats
—the nets
—the very virgin life of the sea
—your life
And brought them inward
Into the city where men wallow
In the slime
Of their own civilized evil?

V
What spontaneous majestic moment
Of commitment turned their
Complacently ignorant hearts
From the innocent life of the
Sea
—inland
—to the city
—to the black unknown?

VI
What strange leap from
shore
to
street
Has thrust them into
—the stenchous alleys of the leperous
—the dens of the cankerous sick
—the hovels of the poor
Away from the strong
clean air of the sea
—open and
—free
Into the tight embrace of man
With his insatiable demands of
—need
—pain and
—suffering?

Thirty-two
It is the ancient question that
Has wailed and echoed through
Centuries of
—bemoaned and
—blinded mankind
Uttered forth and
Finally answered by a
—simple word
—The Word
—enfleshed
Transforming and painting
Man as clowns of the world
—tripping and
—awkwardly fumbling to bring
To life happiness
—laughed at
—yet pitied
By reason
—absurd
By faith
—profound
"I will make you fishers of men"
—fools
—brothers
—lovers!

MICHAEL CICCONET
La Mort de Vie

Je marchais toujours avec elle,
Dans la forêt factice d'étincelles;
Le feu de notre amour lié,
Aux grandes amours des siècles passés

Toutes les choses que nous faisions,
M'ont produit un repertoire de passions;
Car nous nous étions éternellement dédié,
Dans cette vie de bonheur affecté.

Mais elle . . . elle m'a laissé, tout seul, inconsolé,
Dans une véritable amertume désolée;
Elle est morte depuis deux ans,
Et rien ne reste que des souvenirs piquants.

Hélas, Eros, pourquoi es-tu dur,
Avec tous les gens d'amour si pur;
Comme je hais la vie sans elle,
Séparé de notre forêt d'étincelles . . .

Dédicé à Patricia

ALLEN JAMES FOSSBENDER

Thirty-five