

Spirits of the Seasons
Lake Nebagamon Poems

Books by Louis Daniel Brodsky

Poetry

- Five Facets of Myself (1967)* (1995)
- The Easy Philosopher (1967)* (1995)
- “A Hard Coming of It” and Other Poems (1967)* (1995)
- The Foul Rag-and-Bone Shop (1967)* (1969, exp.)* (1995, exp.)
- Points in Time (1971)* (1995) (1996)
- Taking the Back Road Home (1972)* (1997) (2000)
- Trip to Tipton and Other Compulsions (1973)* (1997)
- “The Talking Machine” and Other Poems (1974)* (1997)
- Tiffany Shade (1974)* (1997)
- Trilogy: A Birth Cycle (1974) (1998)
- Cold Companionable Streams (1975)* (1999)
- Monday’s Child (1975) (1998)
- Preparing for Incarnations (1975)* (1976, exp.) (1999) (1999, exp.)
- The Kingdom of Gewgaw (1976) (2000)
- Point of Americas II (1976) (1998)
- La Preciosa (1977) (2001)
- Stranded in the Land of Transients (1978) (2000)
- The Uncelebrated Ceremony of Pants-Factory Fatso (1978) (2001)
- Birds in Passage (1980) (2001)
- Résumé of a Scrapegoat (1980) (2001)
- Mississippi Vistas: Volume One of *A Mississippi Trilogy* (1983) (1990)
- You Can’t Go Back, Exactly (1988, two eds.) (1989) (2003, exp.)
- The Thorough Earth (1989)
- Four and Twenty Blackbirds Soaring (1989)
- Falling from Heaven: Holocaust Poems of a Jew and a Gentile (*with William Heyen*) (1991)
- Forever, for Now: Poems for a Later Love (1991)
- Paper-Whites for Lady Jane: Poems of a Midlife Love Affair (1992)* (1995)
- Mistress Mississippi: Volume Three of *A Mississippi Trilogy* (1992)
- A Gleam in the Eye: Volume One of *The Seasons of Youth* (1992) (2009)
- Gestapo Crows: Holocaust Poems (1992)
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- Variations on a Love Theme: Poems for Janie (1995)*
- A Mississippi Trilogy: A Poetic Saga of the Modern South (1995)* (2013)
- The Complete Poems of Louis Daniel Brodsky: Volume One, 1963–1967 (*edited by Sberi L. Vandermolen*) (1996)
- Three Early Books of Poems by Louis Daniel Brodsky, 1967–1969: *The Easy Philosopher*, “*A Hard Coming of It*” and *Other Poems*, and *The Foul Rag-and-Bone Shop* (*edited by Sberi L. Vandermolen*) (1997)
- The Eleventh Lost Tribe: Poems of the Holocaust (1998)

Poetry (continued)

- Toward the Torah, Soaring: Poems of the Renaissance of Faith (1998)
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- The Swastika Clock: Holocaust Poems (2000)* (2011)
- Rabbi Auschwitz: Poems of the Shoah (2000)* (2009)
- Shadow War: A Poetic Chronicle of September 11 and Beyond, Volume One (2001) (2004)
- The Complete Poems of Louis Daniel Brodsky: Volume Two, 1967–1976 (edited by Sberi L. Vandermolen) (2002)
- Shadow War: A Poetic Chronicle of September 11 and Beyond, Volume Two (2002) (2004)
- Shadow War: A Poetic Chronicle of September 11 and Beyond, Volume Three (2002) (2004)
- Shadow War: A Poetic Chronicle of September 11 and Beyond, Volume Four (2002) (2004)
- Shadow War: A Poetic Chronicle of September 11 and Beyond, Volume Five (2002) (2004)
- Regime Change: Poems of America's Showdown with Iraq, Volume One (2002)*
- Heavenward (2003)*
- Regime Change: Poems of America's Showdown with Iraq, Volume Two (2003)*
- Regime Change: Poems of America's Showdown with Iraq, Volume Three (2003)*
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- The Complete Poems of Louis Daniel Brodsky: Volume Three, 1976–1980 (edited by Sberi L. Vandermolen) (2004)
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- Dine-Rite: Breakfast Poems (2008)
- Rien Sans Amour*: Love Poems for Jane (2009)*
- By Leaps and Bounds: Volume Two of *The Seasons of Youth* (2009)
- At Water's Edge: *Poems of Lake Nebagamon*, Volume One (2010)
- Seizing the Sun and Moon: Volume Three of *The Seasons of Youth* (2010)
- At Dock's End: *Poems of Lake Nebagamon*, Volume Two (2011)
- In the Liberation Camps: Poems of the Endlösung (2011)*
- Just Ours: *Love Passages with Linda*, Volume One (2011)
- Hopgrassers and Flutterbies: Volume Four of *The Seasons of Youth* (2011)
- Saul and Charlotte: Poems Commemorating a Father and Mother (2011)
- Each Other: *Love Passages with Linda*, Volume Three (2011)*
- At Shore's Border: *Poems of Lake Nebagamon*, Volume Three (2012)
- Our Time: *Love Passages with Linda*, Volume Two (2012)

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- We Two: *Love Passages with Linda*, Volume Four (2012)*
You, Me: *Love Passages with Linda*, Volume Five (2012)*
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Spirits of the Seasons: Lake Nebagamon Poems (2012)* (2015)
Eying Widening Horizons: Volume Five of *The Seasons of Youth* (2012)
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The Complete Poems of Louis Daniel Brodsky: Volume Five, 1986–1990 (edited by Sberi L. Vandermolen) (2013)* (2015)
The Words of My Mouth and The Meditations of My Heart: A Poetic Pilgrimage from Illness to Healing-Living (2014)

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- Selections from the William Faulkner Collection of Louis Daniel Brodsky: A Descriptive Catalogue (1979)
Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection: Volume I, The Biobibliography (1982)
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Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection: Volume III, *The De Gaulle Story* (1984)
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Stallion Road: A Screenplay by William Faulkner (1989)

Biography

- William Faulkner, Life Glimpses (1990)

Fiction

- Between Grief and Nothing (novel) (1964)*
Between the Heron and the Wren (novel) (1965)*
“Dink Phlager’s Alligator” and Other Stories (1966)*
The Drift of Things (novel) (1966)*
Vineyard’s Toys (novel) (1967)*
The Bindle Stiffs (novel) (1968)*
Yellow Bricks (short fictions) (1999)
Catchin’ the Drift o’ the Draft (short fictions) (1999)
This Here’s a Merica (short fictions) (1999)
Leaky Tubs (short fictions) (2001)
Rated Xmas (short fictions) (2003)
Nuts to You! (short fictions) (2004)
Pigskinizations (short fictions) (2005)
With One Foot in the Butterfly Farm (short fictions) (2009)

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Getting to Unknow the Neighbors (*short fictions*) (2010)

. . . And the Horse You Rode In On (*short fictions*) (2011)* (2015)

Guarangoddamnteeya!: Slices 'n Dices o' My Lifes 'n Time (*short-fiction novel*) (2013)* (2015)

Memair

The Adventures of the Night Riders, Better Known as the Terrible Trio (*with Richard Milsten*) (1961)*

* *Unpublished*

Spirits of the Seasons
Lake Neosho poems

Louis Daniel Brodsky



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The chapters in this volume reflect the structure of poetry suites Louis Daniel Brodsky wrote during visits to Lake Nebagamon, Wisconsin. The dates of composition for these suites are as follows:

Near Enough to Hear Fall's Spirits (9/19–26/2011, 9/14/12)

Mid-March Breakup (3/12–20/2012)

I see, smell, taste, hear, feel, that everlasting Something to which we are allied, at once our maker, our abode, our destiny, our very Selves.

— Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*

The sun was trembling now on the edge of the ridge. It was alive, almost fluid and pulsating, and as I watched it sink I thought that I could feel the earth turning from it, actually feel its rotation. Over all was the silence of the wilderness, that sense of oneness which comes only when there are no distracting sights or sounds, when we listen with inward ears and see with inward eyes, when we feel and are aware with our entire beings rather than our senses. I thought as I sat there of the ancient admonition, "Be still and know that I am God," and knew that without stillness there can be no knowing, without divorcement from outside influences man cannot know what spirit means.

— Sigurd Olson, *The Singing Wilderness*

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Spirits of the Seasons
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Near Enough to Hear Fall's Spirits

* This symbol is used to indicate that a stanza has been divided because of pagination.

I. Immutable

I repeat a litany of deep inhalations, extended exhalations,
To reinvigorate my depleted heart,
Sweep away aging's cobwebs, the days' dust,
Erase the tedious mosaic of my dreams' enervated state,
To make way for whatever fresh secrets, mysteries, epiphanies
Might disclose themselves, after today's peregrination
To a place from which my spirit disappeared, a year ago to the week.

I yet recall that necessary self-exile as if it were yesterbreath —
That urgent determination to seek new intuitions, insights, ideas,
Reject stasis, investigate the essence of change,
Let my emboldened soul lead me to the edges of ineffable universes.
But three hundred and sixty-seven illuminations later,
Weary of exploring other cosmoses, surfeited on metamorphoses,
I'm heading back to my cabin, on immutable Lake Nebagamon.

II. Deeper

All but three hundred people,
Of the thousand who swelled this village,
Have migrated southerly.
Only a few geese, mallards, mergansers,
And two winter-brown common loons
Have yet to set their courses.
Spiders, dragonflies, water striders,
Even the pestiferous mosquitoes,
Have abandoned their summer stations.
Deer, bears, foxes, minks, beavers
Have faded into the silence of shadows.

Yet here am I,
In my inconspicuous presence,
Saying hello to their unheard good-byes,
Assuming their territories —
I a species that thrives on contrariety,
Seeking peace, harmony, tranquillity,
In my dialogue with quiet,
My camaraderie with solitude,
My outdoor search, inside my soul,
For something deeper
Than wisdom, vision, transcendence.

III. Glorious Spirit

O glorious spirit of the highest skies, brightest waters, purest air,
This pristine terraqueous land of stillness — northern Wisconsin —
Let me express, in my humblest human dialect,
Whatever universal truth my inadequate tongue is capable of saying,
That you might know how indefectibly sincere is my gratitude,
For your allowing my heart to sojourn with you, my guide,
Settle by the sand-washed shores of Lake Nebagamon,
Roam its pine-proud woods, probe its moss-and-fungus-rich forests,
Smell the lush, thick fragrances of spongy, life-giving decay,
Taste the moon's succulent fruit, savor the stars' tart juices . . .
For your inviting my breathlessness to breathe your crisp autumnal rush.

O glorious spirit of time and place, of life and death, rebirth and eternity,
Hear my words of thanks and, if you will, acknowledge me,
Be it in the whispering of turning ash, maple, poplar, oak, birch leaves
Or in the immemorial tremolos of loons, lifting into this sublime afternoon,
Or in the grace of a mated pair of bald eagles and its fledgling,
Soaring, spiraling, diving, above me, in this sky's wide blue eye,
Or in the majesty of the sun, just now setting in the western reaches,
As I head back to my cabin, at the beginning of this seven-day pilgrimage
To the source of you, O glorious spirit of infinite origins and endings,
That I might be reborn — a seed sleeping beneath your vision —
Into a thousand falls, winters, springs, summers . . . falls.

IV. Flamekeeper

Awakening into my first full cycle of twenty-four hours,
Back here, in this shore-clinging cabin,
Under the all-embracing, omniscient fire of this ubiquitous lake
I've both admired and adored, for sixty years,
Is, itself, a lifetime's benediction, in the blink of a sigh.

Imagine rousing out of an evening's sweet, dreamless drowse,
As if from hibernation in the caves of the ancient ones,
Into a world made of inexorably multiplying waves,
Each one shouldering a dazzling facet of the sun, on its crest,
Delivering its warmth to your footsteps, flesh, breath.

Gazing into the nearly-thousand-acre flame of lake,
Knowing I'm its spirit's keeper, its guardian, its namesake,
Nature's surrogate, privileged with keeping it inviolate,
I walk into the blaze but am not immolated,
Rather bathed, purified, illuminated, my soul stoking its life-light.

V. Somewhere Past Noon

It's only when I'm up here, in these latitudes of northern disappearance,
That my spirit loses all traces of its identity's anonymity,
Dons the habit and habits of the water, air, trees, animals, and stars,
Takes on the sovereign natural trappings the seasons display
When soaring through the glories governed by solitude and silence.

Indeed, under the influence of last evening's calming balm,
Somewhere deeper than the regions of mere mortal midnight,
I allowed myself to be scooped up, from my bench at dock's end,
In the Big Dipper's cup, and poured into the Milky Way's river,
Then drawn, on its blurry current, across the universe's ocean, to dawn.

Now, Tuesday is a roistering of swooping and shifting pine boughs.
I'm nowhere to be found, if not in the waves' shore-poundings
Or in the molecules of glistening raindrops
Hymning gospels and psalms, on my kitchen's windowpanes,
Or in the wind, navigating every unmapped vision of my imagination.

Somewhere past noon, on awakening from my awakening,
I recognize the nakedness in which I've been clothed, for seven decades,
Know to whom I belong, whom I've always been meant to be: us.
As unquestionably connected, of one mind, as are earth and sky,
So are nature and I, born at the same time — Creation.

VI. Remote

Who am I, hiding in this tiny, remote cabin,
On this even remoter lake, by this remotest of villages,
In this North Woods clime few have even noticed?
Who goes there? Who asks? And why should you care?
After all, this is *my* lifetime, to do with as I choose.

I choose reclusiveness, privacy, untrammelled quiet,
Choose to jettison wrist watch, cell phone, newspaper, TV,
Choose to revel in being myself, by myself,
Choose to remain naked, asleep and awake, indoors,
So that freedom might choose me, know me intimately.

Ultimately, I choose me, unadulterated me,
The part of my heart, spirit, that eschews society's din,
Chooses listening to water splashing shores,
To loons, crows, red-winged blackbirds serenading the air,
Chooses to come and go with the seasons of my remote soul.

VII. Gateway

Now, it's later than five. This rainy day has spent itself dry,
And I'm treading on the soggy, soft, duff-covered sand
Lining a path through the woods cocooning themselves in solitude.

Mosses are the brightest lime and kelly greens I've ever seen.
Silver-gray-blue splotches of lichen cling to tree trunks.
Toadstools and puffballs dot the ground around my shoes.

The seething aromas of these woods breathe me in, deeply.
My eyes and nose detect summer's quietus, in fall's birth.
I'm following the trail that autumn opens as I go,

Bringing with me a layman's awe of nature's nurturing resolve
To prepare its beings for imminent winter,
Be they trees, shrubs, flowers, insects, birds, squirrels . . . me.

After two hours of hiking, my legs are willow limbs.
Delicious weariness sates my muscles and tendons,
Sends serenity through my bloodstream, to my mind's limits.

Standing on Lorber Point, gazing into the descending sun,
I see, between it and me, the enormity of a hazy-gray rainstorm
Spreading, miles and miles away, across the glazed horizon.

Suddenly, twilight's blazing rays are tangled up, in a torrent,
And the gold-hued swath they cast across the lake, toward me,
Gives way to shimmering, continually alternating layers of color —

Garish yellows, screaming pinks, insane violets, raging oranges,
Their intensity so preposterous, so outrageous, so impossible,
That this dusk must be the gateway to a new or ancient universe.

VIII. Each Drop

Today, a pervasively gray,
Ceaselessly rain-misted drear of a Wednesday,
Is a northern-Wisconsin stay-indoors day,
An infinitely clear day
For reading, meditating, catnapping,
Daydreaming about traipsing through the woods,
Five hundred paces down the road, from my cabin . . .
A perfect day for looking out the kitchen windows
And watching each raindrop
Find the spot it's been assigned, by ancient design,
To begin its life as a lake-drop.

IX. Cabins by the Lake

Just by being here, being indoors, being,
Ensnared, this afternoon, in my comforting cabin,
Reading, listening to music, nibbling cashews, blueberries,
Watching a flock of seven Canada geese feeding,
I'm complicit with the rain saturating even the lake.
And now, memory wanders down yesterday's wooded paths,
Naming the trees and shrubs I see through time's lens:

Tamaracks, Norway and black spruces, dogwoods,
Scotch, red, jack, eastern white, and Austrian pines,
Cottonwoods, paper and yellow birches, viburnums,
Cedars, staghorn sumacs, sandbar and weeping willows,
Burr, white, and red oaks, mountain and black ashes,
American elms, chokecherries, beech, sugar and red maples,
Crabapples, scarlet hawthorns, aspens, lilacs, balsam firs.

Finishing my mind-hike, sensing an overwhelming urge
To enter, again, those woods holding this village in its palm,
I hurriedly dress in my flannel shirt, jeans, shoes
And set off for that arboreal retreat,
To speak to the trees and shrubs,
Be sheltered from the rain, beneath their canopy of crowns —
My other cabin by the lake.

X. Tao

This hauntingly still, forty-degree-chill September evening,
At just the moment when Wednesday reaches its temporal extremity,
Metamorphoses into the very first stroke of Thursday morning,
I locate my invigoratingly cold mortal flesh
Sitting on a wet bench at the far end of my cabin's dock.
I raise my eyes skyward, into the ivory-punctuated black heavens,
Meditate on the Tao of life, the universe and everything beyond,
Trying to fathom the nature and dimensionlessness of their source,
Asking the stars to translate the darkness into a wisdom I might understand.

And as I peer into the infinite plenitude of pulsating constellations,
What discloses itself to my spirit, most intimately,
Is the timeless reality of its galactic vastness, its unendingness,
And the possibility that, eons away, another dock,
Connecting another cabin to another lake in another Wisconsin,
Is calling me, through the diaphanous density of the Milky Way,
Inviting me to come sit, raise my eyes skyward,
And reflect on myself, speculate on just how long
It might take my soul to reach the other side.

XI. Hunger

What a way to spend the best part of this Thursday a.m.,
Watching, from the warm, dry vantage of my privacy,
In this simple cabin's living room and kitchen,
Two compatible flocks —
Six mallard ducks and seven Canada geese —
Eagerly surface-feeding on the lake's vegetation,
As they measure their course, toward my dock,
From the boys'-camp shore, where boats are stored.
I'm the only witness, in this village, to their existence.

From this hill, through the robust cattails,
I see them skim the water, set adrift concentric ripples,
As they nip, tip into the shallows, kicking their feet,
Retrieving plants, occasionally mollusks, immature fish.
And I've begun wondering if these creatures know
That instead of treading this shoreline,
They're edging nearer, day by hour by minute by second,
As the nights grow increasingly cold, to winter's precipice,
Which waits to snatch them, in its voracious beak.

Abruptly, I feel hunger gnawing my groaning stomach,
Reminding me I've not eaten since the previous evening
And that, now, it's time to fortify my energy,
With raisins, grapes, blueberries, strawberries,
A few whole-grain crispbreads spread with peanut butter,
Then finish my leftover lettuce-onion-and-carrot salad.
Now satisfied, I notice the feeders are gone.
A lone, vociferous crow is strutting on my dock,
Pecking dead insects out of spider webs.

XII. Wild Geese

At least a mile away from me, within the star-obscured vault,
Inside this dark, dense Thursday-night sky,
Wild Canada geese, flying higher than my eyesight climbs,
Head toward Honeymoon Point,
Tracing a southerly trajectory,
Their muffled communal forty-or-so flock honking, honking,
Growing slowly louder, gradually louder than louder,
Until that staccato sound is directly overhead,
One clattering confederation of incessant decibels on the wing,
Free as the heavily breathing breeze,
Soaring above Lake Nebagamon, on whose northern shore I stand,
Gazing into their invisible integral presence, as it passes.

Suddenly, the clamor amplifies, as the geese converge
With another unseen raucous flock, beyond me,
Merge with their migratory kin, their caravan doubling,
Scribbling its din on the evening sky,
So that within minutes, all that's left for my ears' eyes to read
Are the pages of their fast-fading chronicle,
Which, no matter how closely I peruse its text,
Won't disclose if those chattering spirits will make safe passage.
Stranded in the pervasive silence embracing this lake,
I sense that whenever I stray out, into the night,
Something miraculous, ecstatic might come my way,
Stranding me once again, filling me with unsayable grace.

XIII. And I'll Say

Each day I awaken here,
In the village of Lake Nebagamon,
Is a new birthplace,
In a new state of grace,
A renewed opportunity
To review my awakening existence
Shining in a new light,
In a new time,
In a new life.

It's a new moment,
In which to choose who I might become,
When all of me is written and done
But none of me has yet begun
To fathom the breadth of my destiny,
When my days have winnowed down to one,
That last one,
And the abiding spirit
Of the great ancient living force,
Which creates and takes away
Everything inside and outside nature,
Beckons, gestures to me,
Asking if I still need it to awaken me,
Stay, to illuminate my soul . . .
And I'll say, "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

XIV. Two-Loon Afternoon

Earlier this afternoon,
I watched, from this exquisite distance,
Two lone common loons
Occupy the entire lake, with fall all to themselves,
As though freedom were their offspring.
I was beguiled, seeing them feed leisurely
Not twenty yards from the shore beneath my feet,
Rarely even dip beneath the surface,
Everything within reach of their neck-stretched bills.

That they've lingered this long,
So deep into September's wind-frigid tinges,
Might have to do with the lake's pervasive sway,
Its intimate knowledge of their myriad forebears;
Perhaps it's the indifference of sheer arrogance
Inherent in this pair's primitive species
That's keeping them here, belatedly;
Possibly, they're just waiting for nature
To release them, send them south of now.

Just this moment, I'm watching these renegades
Glide toward distant Honeymoon Point,
Thrusting up, flapping their wings, to dry their plumage,
Running across the water as if taxiing for takeoff,
Cavorting, splashing down, diving.
This is their high-spirited time, their interlude,
To revel in their mated-for-life autumnal autonomy,
Seize the people-empty afternoon,
And celebrate their far-northern seclusion.

XV. Listening to the Leaves

When I first arrived, green was the only voice I heard,
The only sound, for boundless spaces up and down, around.
Even the wind and the water dared not deny it its harmonies.

But now, at the finish of my third day,
My ears tell me that the trees', shrubs', and vines' viridescence
Has begun the inexorable succumbing to silence,

The muting of most all but the coniferous foliage.
Seasonal about-face, portending accents and odors of decay,
The desiccation, dissociation, dislocation of colors and shades —

I hear it in the withering, shriveling, brittling of ferns turning brown,
Red and sugar maples, as well as poison sumacs,
Assuming the slowing crimson and scarlet beats of human hearts.

Even though eastern cottonwoods and birches are yellowing subtly
And oaks are too dull to take collective notice,
I'm guessing they must know their shedding is but days away.

It's so stark, this vast transformation that occurs
Once the earth determines to give up its singing greenness,
With no expectations of condolence, no weeping, sorrowing, grieving.

The process seems so utterly lacking in compassion, so merciless —
The indifference accorded inanimate lives, that is.
After all, they do exist, have bodies, spirits, and souls, don't they?

And if so, why should their dying be any different from ours?
It shouldn't be, should it?
You and I attend others' funerals as if they were the end of existence.

But for the leaves, do we mourn, pray for those they abandon?
We go about our evanescent routines remorselessly,
Deaf to the reality that without leaves, we couldn't breathe.

XVI. Two A.M.

For a place that's often tumult, chaos, wind-din
Throughout each of the seasons,
Dawn to noon to dusk to midnight,
This lake space, named Nebagamon,
Is inordinately serene, peaceable, becalmed,
This forty-degree night of dark light,
Close in winter's focus.

And here am I (or is it my spirit?),
Meditating, on my dock, at two a.m.,
Tingling with September exhilaration,
Over water so still,
I can hear fish swishing through the stars,
Three fathoms below the cosmos,
Enticing November's ice into this lake's shape.

XVII. As Easy As

Embracing September's autumn
Is as easy as grabbing a flannel jacket
And a steaming cup of coffee,
On my way out the kitchen door,
Descending a dozen and a half stairs,
From the deck to the tan-sand shore,
Then navigating past the bunched cluster
Of eight-to-ten-foot-high cattails
Waiting at the dock's entrance —
The lake's welcoming committee,
Extending, to me, its fecund shafts.

Seizing autumn's September
Is as easy as engaging my best traits:
Curiosity, exuberance, imagination.
Possibly a flock of mallards
Will invite me to glide with it,
Fly to day's other shore,
Or perhaps the gentle waves
Will mistake my toes for minnows,
Beguile me into the shallows;
Maybe protean nature will allow me
To exchange my blood for the lake's.

XVIII. Village History

Back, again, in Lake Nebagamon's Lawn Beach Inn,
After a twelve-month absence,
Facing the familiar expanse of shore nestling this restaurant,
I breathe in slowly, deeply, grateful just for being here
Yet astounded about how the year has disappeared,
Aghast at how insistently it passed into the past,
Since last I celebrated the incipience of fall, here,
Raised a toast to this quixotic season of heat and freeze,
All the while, tonight, wondering what my future knows.

Meals spent alone can engender the most intimate dialogues.
This one fills me with a palpitant sense of belonging,
No matter that this diner's crowd of regulars,
Creating their own revelried give-and-take, can't name me.
Indeed, the very pervasiveness of this clamor
Enables me to confide in the silence inside my silence.
This Friday evening, I can hear the village's history,
All of its gone and resident spirits whispering to me
That even when I leave, they'll never let me leave.

XIX. Lake-Fate

This scintillatingly quiet Friday midnight,
Gazing into the obscured heavens,
Whose clouds have begun breaking apart —
The spirit's soothsayers
Blowing handfuls of stars
Through its hazy layers —
I realize that this upper-Wisconsin lake
Is the most overtly harmonious fate
My heart could have breathed,
No matter how cold I might be,
The most serenely inspiring destiny
My soul could have felt.
Just now, I hold my hands up,
To catch the fluttering stellar dust.

XX. Olive Branch

This frigid, wind-whipped early Saturday a.m.,
 I'm intruded upon, my pristine privacy violated,
 By a stranger (a wiry little guy sporting goggles,
 A tattered green-and-white-checked lumber jacket, boots,
 Scandinavian blond hair and beard),
 Who, knocking on my kitchen door,
 Surprises the fright right out of me,
 As I sit at the table, naked, capturing ideas, on paper,
 Preparing to feed the day to my imagination.

I open the door, speak, through the screen,
 To likely the sole visitor I'll have all week,
 Though visiting me certainly isn't his mission.
 He's a tree cutter, who's been summoned,
 By the cabin's landlord,
 To remove the foot-in-diameter, forty-foot-high white pine
 Growing beside the kitchen deck,
 Whose graceful, spaciously swaying boughs
 I've admired for the five years I've been coming here.

Believing it to be a victim of disease
 And having less than no say-so as to its destiny,
 All I can do is acquiesce to his message of doom
 And its subsequent shrill, dust-filled fury,
 Which mutilates, dismembers the beautiful, breathing tree;
 Indeed, the raucous chainsaw and shrieking maw
 Of the chipper attached to the cherry-picker truck
 Eventually force me to dress,
 Flee my retreat, seek refuge in the woods.

Three dislocated hours later, when I return,
 Quietude has usurped the tumult.
 The cabin is mine again; so is silence,
 But the tree isn't,
 Save for fifteen feet of its lichen-covered trunk,
 Bearing five six-foot limb-stubs,
 On one of which shivers a two-foot bough,
 Clutching a twig-cluster of green-needle sprigs —
 An olive branch it's desperately offering to death.

XXI. Spirit Mist

At my searching, seeking, questing age of seventy,
This clear-sky Saturday night in northern Wisconsin
Is an epitome of epiphanies
Pressing, inexorably, toward September's edge,
Witnessing my spirit hover beyond the end of my dock.
My bones are naked to the still fridity,
As I cast my vision into the vast panoply of coruscating stars,
The fibrous, entwining honeysuckle vine of the Milky Way,
Connecting one extent of the welkin to its twin,
While a distant dog barks at the unseen moon
And a train whistles between Hawthorne and Solon Springs . . .

All of this after a delicious dinner, at Lawn Beach Inn,
Of baked whitefish and garlic cheese bread,
And then a two-hundred-pace walk back to my cabin,
Below which I now witness gossamer, diaphanous steam,
Lifting off the heated surface of Lake Nebagamon,
Being alchemized, by the brisk air, into mist,
Shreds of clouds scudding just inches off the water —
Apparitions racing into winter's rapacious embrace,
Taking my uninitiated soul to that sacred place
Where the lingering spirits of the Ojibwe congregate,
To share their wisdom with my fate.

XXII. Clinging to Sunday

Last night, I orchestrated my 8 a.m. awakening by the lake,
 To facilitate the swift dissipation, disposition,
 Of sleep's dream-detritus, praying I'd be born free, this morning.

But I seem, still, to be willfully clinging to oneiric vestiges
 Beguiling me back from reality's precipice,
 Where I'll necessarily have to acknowledge that this Sunday,

This sun-stitched, trapunto-quilted sky,
 Stuffed with low-scudding wisps of fluff
 Inviting my eyes to touch them, squeeze them, with my fingertips . . .

That this peaceful Sunday, into whose quiescence I've arisen,
 Is the final full day of this most recent visit of mine
 To the only place my soul knows it can go

To commune with pine trees, Canada geese, chipmunks,
 Wind lifting birds' wings to its singing lips,
 Mosses, lichens, and mushrooms growing on bark, duff, nothing,

Dialogue with a lake containing all Earth's ancient answers
 To this sandy, glacier-gouged region's fundamental enigmas,
 And follow streaking meteors, to the source of the universe's voice.

Just now, my clinging is being weakened, gently, gradually,
 By the swelling reverberations of a church bell
 Slowly telling this somnolent village that Sunday belongs to time,

Telling me that, come tomorrow, I must leave my cabin,
 Leave this land, where stars and trees reach beyond each other,
 Leave that yet incomplete part of me the seasons call "soul."

XXIII. Wisdoms

Sitting at the kitchen table,
Listening to church bells setting the stillness astir,
I spy a boat gliding fifty yards farther out than dock's end,
Watch it meander westerly, on the lake's lazy current,
Inch in the direction of the closed-for-the-season boys' camp,
Both of its passengers casting toward where, last midnight,
I sat fishing for stars.

Suddenly, my left eye
Senses a presence entering its peripheral vision.
I turn toward the deck, which connects my cabin with the shore,
Just in time to see a foraging gray squirrel
Bound from the pathetic effigy of the white-pine tree
That exists only as five stubs and a lopped-off trunk,
Onto the top of the railing running the length of the deck,

Until it's crouched on all fours,
Bushy question mark of a tail twitching, twitching,
As it stares at me staring at it, through the door's window,
Both of us waiting for the other to make the next gesture.
With a thrust, it turns, retraces the rail, to the tree,
Leaps across all fifteen feet of abbreviated stem,
And searches the stunted limbs, for a pine cone to peel.

Then, in a scurrying, nervous flash,
This harvesting squirrel abandons me to my Sunday meditations,
Leaves me musing on the truth
That it won't be burying any cones in my yard's sandy soil,
Any seeds to give this coniferous specter a new existence.
When I gaze at the lake again, it's flickering with water spirits
Whispering eternity's wisdoms to the tree.

XXIV. Catnap

How long can an hour-and-a-half catnap last,
When you're seeking freedom, at the end of your dock,
Flat on your back, wearing nothing but jeans and a flannel shirt,

And an intermittent Sunday sun, mistaking your shape
For one more of its gloriously glittering water spirits,
Sends down its energy, to engender, in you, omnipotence?

As a lake devotee who's endured four days of rain-effaced rays,
I'd estimate it could last a forever or three . . .
That's how immortal I feel, right this supine lifetime of mine.

XXV. By the Bois Brule

What better way to wile away a late-September Sunday afternoon
Than by taking an eight-mile drive from Lake Nebagamon,
East on County B (the Coolidge Memorial Highway),
To the canoe landing at Winneboujou, on the susurrant Bois Brule River,
Just to sit on its pine-lined, sun-whispered banks
And witness its crystalline molecules flow swiftly north,
With riffling determination, toward voracious Lake Superior?

Better yet, how could anyone get closer to the cosmos
Than by following the languorous progress of a northern leopard frog
Sunning on a log straddling land and water,
And by focusing on its closed bug-eyes, its slowly lifting and falling sides,
Translating its skin designs, from their original scrolls,
Back into the sacred scriptures of nature's mother tongue,
And, in the process, coming to sense how it feels to be immortal?

Too soon, time and I coincide with the future,
Which awaits my evolving intuitions, my prophecies as to who I'll be.
I drive County B, in a winding, widening silence
That beckons me back to the *locus mundi* of my cabin,
Where, if the knowing spirit chooses, I'll continue my inward journey
To the origin of river molecules, frogs, trees, human beings
And solve the question of how air breathes eternity into each of us.

XXVI. Listening, Watching

During last night's stargazing rendezvous,
I saw a voice say,
"I want to watch you listening to me."

Realizing the voice was that of the cosmos,
I whispered, into its eye,
"And I want to listen to you watching me."

XXVII. Reclaiming

This no-telling-how-long-I'll-be-gone Monday of my going —
My departure from the civilized wilds of this village,
To the uncivilized business of the city —

A dense, argenteous fog envelops these becalmed waters,
Such that all I can really visualize
Is what I see with memory's eyes, imagination's sense of place;

Otherwise, were I to step out to dock's end, tentatively,
I could easily believe I'd reached the end . . . the end of something,
The world's edge or the last inch of the universe itself.

Close by shore, two mallards and a hooded merganser
Are tipping into the shallows, for last-minute vegetation,
Taking advantage of the lack of competition, before migrating.

One loon, keeping its distance from the other aquatic feeders,
And of a more ravenous temperament, is gorging,
Possibly fearing that winter begins today.

Now, peering into the immense overwhelm of fog,
I can feel it starting to break up or break down —
Either way, dissipating, scattering, turning into cosmic mist,

Wispy white fibers drawn into the sky's thinning reaches
As if by the beaks of celestial hummingbirds.
Within minutes, the lake has reclaimed its shape, identity,

And I, who've been defined by it, all week, reclaim mine —
Those contours of my soul, washed by this water,
That essence of my being, laved by its waves.

XXVIII. Autumn's Song

By now, autumn's loon-sun is lingering on its blue water-sky.
This fifty-five-degree freedom breeze
Has just invited me to step down to the lake's warm shoreline,
Take my final forty or so familiar paces out to dock's end,
And sing a valedictory to this cabin, this village, this solitude.

But when I begin to give voice to my emotions,
Emptiness tightens my chest
And my lyrics are water spirits glistening at the corners of my sorrow,
Dropping into the lake's loon-sun,
The blue water-sky inviting me to step into autumn's song.

Mid-March Breakup

I. The Nude Truth

Each of the cabin's myriad tall windows
Is a stage on which dripping beads of rain dance —
Native steps the silvery mist choreographs on the glass,
As it envelops the silent, iced-up lake I'm witnessing,
Sitting here, in this kitchen, by myself,
Naked to my thin, wizened flesh's aging bones . . .
Just how I like it, when I've gotten away, on my own,
All alone save for my companion, lover, muse: solitude,
Who knows how to assuage my spirit's craving for her intimacy.

Perhaps the best, most gratifying aspect of her affection
Is her being able to let me just be,
Not needing to ask me to connect when I was here, last,
With my immediate being, in this familiar cabin,
Or even why I've chosen to expose my nude soul, again,
To such cold, wet, raw, unaccommodating remoteness.
She knows this, and *this* also: it has everything to do with truth,
The truth of where I am when I'm not where I'm not
And the truth of who I am when I'm not who I'm not.

II. Rain Spirits

The rain's slower-than-slow-flowing momentum
Barely slush-flusters frozen Lake Nebagamon,
Whose surface seems, in its pearl-hued gradations,
To be the sky's identical twin,
Both born of eternity's nurturing daughter: Earth Mother.

Having nothing assigned to my time and space and mind,
This lazy, gray-glazed Monday afternoon,
I sink deep into my cabin's cavernous sofa and just listen,
As the rain kisses the roof and windows, strums my eardrums,
Its tongue tips whispering mysteries from infinite distances.

Suffused with the wisdom of nature's methodical articulation,
My ancient memory awakens to those visionary voices
Which, many generations before the lake-sky was even born,
The immortal Creator spoke, into Earth Mother's ears,
That She might know Him, as I know Her, when rain speaks.

III. The Last of the Ice-Fishing Shacks

All day, I wait, with the patience of an ice fisherman
Hovering over a hole he's drilled through twenty inches of hope,
Wait for the rain to dissipate, quit, disappear back into the sky,
So that I might tie, tightly, the laces of my jogging shoes
And take to Lake Nebagamon's two rivulet-trickling main streets.

By three-thirty, the clouds seem to have emptied their reservoirs,
Refilled them, with soft, dry, white light,
Which translates into a brisk late-afternoon hike
The length, breadth, and depth of this winter-weary village,
Where, not two weeks ago, eighteen inches of snow exploded.

Now, only traces of that drifting inundation remain,
And they're rapidly draining, at gravity's behest, to water's edge,
Warmth causing the ice to pull away, to a foot or so from shore.
Along my path, I pass the last of the ice-fishing shacks,
Hauled up, at the municipal boat landing, by pickup trucks.

The residents of this northern Wisconsin village are bewildered
By spring's too-rapid encroachment;
Indeed, this March 12 thaw may have ominous consequences.
Yesterday's 63 degrees could portend a June, July, and August
That will turn the lake into a hotel's heated swimming pool.

IV. Stones, Plants, Birds, Trees, and Fishes

I believe there's a breathing connectivity that exists
Among stones, plants, birds, trees, and fishes,
All animals of the land and sky, all creatures and things
Present and extinct, dying and about to be born and reborn,
An omniscient design that weaves each and every atom alive.

Otherwise, why would moon follow sun, sun moon,
In such peaceful, celestially majestic succession?
Why would the seasons inhale and exhale the same rhythms,
Night after day, day after night, second after second,
Without the slightest deviation from their eternal cycle?

And why would the years invite me to assume their spirits,
Teach me that nature contains the secrets of serenity?
If these revelations of peaceful continuity didn't speak to me,
How could my spirit possibly know that my psyche and soul
Are those of the stones, plants, birds, trees, and fishes?

V. This Kitchen Table

Could any breakfast taste more sweetly-tartly succulent
Than the raspberries and blueberries
I've put in separate bowls, on my cabin's kitchen table,

This comforting, embracing place, space, stage,
Where my body and mind convene, to nourish each other,
Not only by eating but apportioning, to my notebook,

Everything imaginable as well as inconceivable,
The speakable and the ineffable,
Drawn from the wisdom of any metaphor's moment?

This morning, the first three fingers of my right hand,
Having penned who I am, across another page in my life,
Grab two, three, five berries, at a time,

And place them between my lips, for me to savor,
As I chew, swallow their pulpy lusciousness —
The words of a poem whose spirit I feed as it feeds my soul.

VI. Three Men, Three Trucks, and One Dog

Three men, three trucks, and one dog
Hover around holes drilled in the eighteen-inch-thick ice,
Which, until two days ago, were covered by shacks,
Inside which these same three men, holding the same three poles,
Fished for walleyes, northern pikes, perches, smallmouth bass.

But now, the pulsating sun, intent on shriveling the lake's crust,
Has these avid fishermen earnestly on edge.
They know that with one more week of this intense heat,
They'll not be able to drive their pickups out there,
Won't dare, let alone be able, to reach the lake's middle,
For the gap between shore and ice having opened too wide
And receded, in places, not inches but feet, by the day.

Indeed, when I look up from the script covering my notebook page,
Now as etched, streaked, and crosshatched as the ice's surface,
Those three men, three trucks, and one dog are gone.
But when I focus on the paper again,
The whole tableau is frozen not only in time but in timelessness.

VII. Miraculous

Walking outdoors, in jeans and a fleece jacket,
On a gleaming, fifty-eight-degree afternoon in northern Wisconsin,
Which, normally (until recent years, anyway),
Even with spring being just a week or so away,
Would still register throat-choking, below-zero temperatures,
With every inch of earth buried in six-foot drifts of silent whiteness . . .

Walking and breathing in this crisp, clean, bright, warm March air
Feel so refreshing, invigorating, marvelous, fantastic, miraculous,
As though this extraordinary day were a magical hen
Stolen from a giant's beanstalk tree-house,
A fairy-tale creature that might never stop laying its eggs —
One golden sun, for forever after another forever-after, forever.

VIII. Glorious

Four o'clock in the afternoon is a glorious interlude
For me to be trudging over the leaf-and-pine-needle floor of a woods,
Especially when I have to order my booted feet
To navigate sporadic patches of unmelted snow and pools of slush —
Half ice, half water, soon to flow down to the frozen lake —
And can feel them respond, to the commands of a seventy-year-old,
As adroitly as they did when I hiked the Superior National Forest
Back in my teenage summers of the fifties, with the skill of a voyageur,
Adoring the outdoors as if I were born in its glorious womb.

How glorious it is, at my age, to summon enough self-discipline
To have power-walked, before noon, through the village streets,
And, now, for yet another rigorous hour and a half of exercise,
To be traipsing amidst the dense labyrinth of wintering trees,
Listening to the shadowy silence the trunks, limbs, and twigs whisper
Among themselves and the earth and sky, as well as to me,
Letting me know that I'm not only welcome, appreciated, known
But, more essential, that I belong with them, am one of them,
In the tranquillity embracing each of us, in this glorious moment.

IX. By an Icy Lake

This Wednesday morning, into which I awaken, dream-drowsy,
By a lake reflecting the sun's fiery, bright-white shine,
Blinding my eyes, with its ice-amplified sheen,
Is, I realize, the infinite ecstasy of primal mind-fantasy,
Bequeathed me by the Great Creator of the ancient world —

That sacred place from which my spirit migrated, into time,
That holy location I've been searching for, my entire life,
Hoping to find my earthly purpose, through communion,
Writing, on the ageless pages of its open notebook,
Wisdom's visions, which I might contribute to the generations.

For now, in the space fate has allocated to my briefness,
I must concentrate on acquainting myself with the seasons,
Dialoguing with wind, sun, moon, stars, water, and grass,
Foxes, chipmunks, raccoons, bears, deer, rabbits, and worms,
Crows, loons, bald eagles, butterflies, basses, trouts, and pikes,

That I might learn to spurn my turning toward self-importance,
Seek serene indifference to obsessions that possess me,
Discover peace in the least leaf-stirring breeze-murmur,
And sleep believing that even when dreams distract me,
I'll awaken by a lake reflecting the sun's fiery, bright-white shine.

X. Lyrical Freedom

For a ritualed hour of the most exhilarating power-walking
Through the quiet village, this sixty-five-degree morning,
I thrill to the stride of my lyrical freedom,
Inhale this brisk, pristine northern-Wisconsin air so deeply
That with each breath I take,
A vast patch of the cloudless, sheltering welkin
Drifts, intimately, into my lungs, as inspired inspiration,
Until the entire sky is flowing through my arteries and veins,
My eyes, my psyche, my soul,
And my exhalations are replacing the space surrounding me,
With the grateful spirit of my humanity.

XI. Strange Ways

To be sitting outdoors, off my cabin's kitchen, on the deck,
At quarter to three, this seventy-degree March 14,
Isn't only outrageously miraculous but half-crazy as well,
Most especially because I'm wearing only my bikini briefs;
Furthermore, while I'm eagerly engaged in reading,
The pulsating sun kneads my arms, neck, stomach, legs,
Leaving me, this ray-filled day, bathed in sweet beads of sweat.

And as if this experience weren't weird enough,
I vow to make its mark on my memory even more unreal.
Within a matter of seventeen descending steps,
Traversing four concrete blocks, then a swath of dry grass,
And passing the brown desolation of last summer's cattails,
I reach the sand and, not squandering a second's reckoning,
Immerse both bare feet in the water, between ice shelf and shore.

In a moment of sheer astonishment, I question my recklessness,
But once the numbness of my ankles and feet dissipates,
Metamorphoses into a tingling, stinging sensation, in my bones,
And the sand clinging between my toes dries, flakes away,
My eyes gaze across a lake immolated in winter's fiery ice,
And I vow not only always to seek out nature's strange ways
But to incorporate them into my day-to-day expectations.

XII. This Snow

For the past three, inordinately warm afternoons,
On my hikes through the woods bordering the lake's western bay,
I've witnessed this snow, which fell just two weeks ago,
Going fast, gradually,
Not so much evaporating into the sunshine but saturating the land,
Disappearing like a disenfranchised spirit
Abandoning every thread of its white sky-spirit robe.

What I'm hoping to discover, today, is this:
Will Mother Earth — her duff, her soil, her turf, her dirt, her loam —
Comprehend the consequences of the snow's nonexistence,
When these final paltry patches take their last gasps?
Will she miss her steadfast wintry companion,
When spring sings its fecundity into every living, breathing being?
And when the snow returns, next fall, will it remember her?

XIII. North Woods Rebirth

I've dawned into another glorious northern-Wisconsin morning,
In this village I've renamed Lake Ice-Melting-Under-70-Degree-Blaze,
Having awakened cloaked in echoes I've been sensing, lately,
Native emanations whispering in the crowns of my sisters, the pines,
Atavistic caw-cawings from the throats of my brothers, the crows,
Primal radiations from the blazing campfires of my father, the sun,
Ancient illuminations of the forest floor my mother, the moon, warms.
My old soul's spirit, in the guise, eyes, mind of an Ojibwe shaman,
Has been born anew, breathed into existence, by the Great Mystery.

XIV. Sacred Scrolls

These woods, apologizing for the early exit of the snow's last traces,
Offer my eyes the only substitute for whiteness they have,
Knowing, intuitively, that my psyche has a predilection for birches.

Indeed, since I was ten, I've been fond of searching for their bark,
Ever on the alert for dead birch trees
Shedding their protective layer — shrouds outlasting their passing.

And always, I've preferred stripping it from their decaying trunks,
Never from a hardy specimen, believing that doing so
Would be like sadistically ripping the scaly skin off a living fish.

Now, as twilight descends over this seclusion of forest,
Which has welcomed my solitudinous traipse, for the last few hours,
I've gathered a handful of sacred paper-birch scrolls,

My undivided attention's decided intention being to write, on them,
Any meditations, from the slightest to the philosophically weightiest,
That might express my primal gratitude to nature,

My appreciation of her selfless generosity,
Her willingness to let me roam free, within her boundless limits,
Unencumbered by the greed that leads us human beings to own things,

Most especially land, the precious, inviolable land that shelters us,
Which the Creator, the Great Spirit, deeds to us, equally,
Once we've come to realize that we're just visitors,

Temporary, evanescent guests, conservationists, custodians, at best,
Not possessors, unless we covet what's never to be ours,
Since death is the only arbiter and trustee of our earthly estates.

Now, as I finish dinner, place my naked body between the sheets,
Seek sleep overseen by my dreamcatcher's silvery strands,
With my unrolled birch-bark scrolls tucked beneath my pillow,

I see, realize, that all the poems I've ever written, ever will compose,
Were already created, so very long ago,
When serenity and peacefulness were man's undefiled birthright.

And in this moment of innermost disclosure,
I sense that my soul has begun becoming a precious essence,
One with the abiding eyes of the endlessly knowing Great Mystery.

XV. Bowls

I awaken at 4:00 a.m., to stargaze,
And in the magic of a lifetime's moment,
My eyes locate a bowl of black sky
Filled with night's nacreous, flickering flecks
Gazing back at me, from their staggering distances —
Coruscations of sacred illumination,
Assuring me that all is right with the world,
The universe containing each breath that inspires me.

Now, I return to bed, completing my nocturnal orbit.
When sleep finally releases me to twilight,
All that remains of those nacreous flecks
Are the holes their flickering has left,
Through which a mellowing molten yellow-gold glow
Is pouring into morning's bowl of cobalt-blue sky.

XVI. Take and Give

I'd have to guess, by the crystallizing look of things,
That last night must have slipped into the high twenties,
Certainly dipped below freezing's thirty-two-degree tipping point.

I gauge my thermal calculations, these mid-March days,
By the widening and narrowing separation
Between the edge of the lake's icy mantle and its sandy shore.

A few days ago, under the relentless pulsations of the sun's rays,
The gap grew to two feet, at least, down from my cabin,
Enough for me to wade in, savor a jolt of nature's adrenaline.

But this morning, that constricting corridor has a thin glaze over it,
Reminiscent of the wizened skin of a gray elephant
Or the cicatrix a scab leaves when it falls away.

I suppose that for the next month or so,
The lake and land may wage this game of take and give,
Neither wanting to surrender, submit to the other's fate.

XVII. Holy Water

It's a godly mandate of nature
That the lake shape and dictate the lives and fates
Of supplicants who come under its sway,
Congregate around its spacious, consecrated font,
To pray for the blessings of the seasons.
Though the lake seems reluctant to shed its ice,
Its is the supreme voice to be heard,
As each day bows to the power of its glory,
Singing hymns of praise,
Pleading for the grace that exceeds knowing,
Which will manifest itself, once again,
When the lake's holy water flows unimpeded
And each believer who pilgrimages here
Can dip his fingers into it, taste it on his lips,
Immerse his body into its spirit,
And revel in nature's revelation of salvation.

XVIII. Eating Light

At unpredictable intervals during the seasons' evolving cycle,
My sturdy body's desire for nourishment
Diminishes to the intake of basic vitamins and minerals.
Indeed, this fifth day of my spirit's retreat
Deep into the sanctuary of my Spartan heart's solitude
Seems to be the start of one of those abstemious purgations,
For my feeding, from sunrise to this descending twilight,
Has consisted of a handful of cashews, a few raisins, some grapes.

I must say that a modern journeyer can easily thrive, eating light,
When he realizes that he's doing so in the service of his soul,
Keeping his eyes focused, his ears alert, his nose surveillant,
In the manner of the brave, robust Canadian voyageurs
And the legendary, heroic Native American Ojibwes,
So that in looking, he sees; in listening, he hears; in tasting, he savors.

XIX. A Single Word

Occasionally, though it may not be considered socially acceptable,
It's decidedly soulfully appropriate to go a whole day
Without saying so much as a single word to anyone,
Rather conversing solely with the voices of your inner spirit,
Just letting your tongue say no to everything that might get said.

Whenever my soul speaks to me, I let everything go unspoken,
For an entire lifetime in a moment, twenty-four hours or more,
Just as I have, this past week, by myself,
Here in the hibernating village of Lake Nebagamon,
Where I've been thriving on active taciturnity, blessed speechlessness,

In and out of my cabin nestled at ice-quiescent water's edge,
In and out of the nearby windless woods,
In and out of the hushed pages of my cherished reading,
In and out of my notebook, whose poems have been composing me,
Knowing no words need be articulated between us,

Since we share the understanding that silence is the one tongue
That transcends all other forms of communication,
Requires no translation, for implication, inference, innuendo,
Asks nothing of us, other than that we listen to each other's senses
Clinging to the heartbeat of time's infinite vocabulary,

Whispered throughout the universe, from beginning to beginning,
Be we trees, boulders, stars, harts, larvae, human beings,
All in our ordered worlds, complete, equal, sublime,
Peaceful and respectful of our places in space,
Without mouthing a solitary sound, let alone a single word.

XX. The Day's Catch

Ever since the sun rose, at 7:16, this Saturday morning,
Just over Lake Nebagamon's Bumble's Bay,
I've witnessed two hardy ice fishermen,
Bundled up in insulated pants, parkas, hats, scarves, gloves,
Shift locations on the lake, every hour or so,
Bore new foot-and-a-half-deep holes, into the white crust,
With the motorized auger they share.

And there, as if frozen, they've sat,
Yet to catch so much as an almost-keeper,
From the hidden flow below their folding chairs.
At least that's the way I've seen it, sitting here,
In my underwear, barefoot, at my warm cabin's kitchen table,
Meditating, over my ritual pot of decaffeinated coffee,
Considering a multitude of options for what I'll do today.

Slowly, I begin to wonder if doing nothing at all, all day,
Except wondering what to do might be a productive prospect
Or if I could invoke imagination's powers of empathy,
To allow me to ice fish, vicariously, till sunset,
Then walk to Bridge's Indianhead Tavern
And brag about my catch of walleyes and smallmouth basses,
Before heading home, to scale and gut my chicken breasts.

XXI. Tone Poem for Pine Needles

Being in the woods is such a vibrant, distilled solitude,
This seventy-degree, moving-toward-noon Saturday morning,
Especially since not a solitary sound of human origin
Is within listening distance of this beautiful quietude,
Vibrating, mellifluously, with the soothing, exquisite music
The wind's tongue and lips and breathing
Shape from millions of pine-needle reeds
Quivering in the mouthpiece-crowns of the evergreens,
A music of altogether finer, softer, sweeter melodies
Than the sibilant whisperousness
Elicited from the leafless branches and twigs
Of myriad deciduous birches, ashes, poplars, and maples,
Which play their reverberant strings only spring through autumn.
Today, I've been invited, by the woods and sky,
To be an audience of one,
For the performance of a Romantic tone poem
That seems to have been composed for my soul's ears alone —
A debut never again to be played quite this way.

XXII. The Dance

Torrents, blasts, gusts of pristine, crystalline air
Scream off the lake's completely frozen surface,
Square into my bare face, chest, and legs,
As I sit here, on the cabin's deck, in a kitchen chair,
Transfixed in astonished surprise,
As northern Wisconsin's anomalous mid-March heat
Exhilarates my essence's flesh, my spirit's bones;
And I realize that if fire and ice can dance together,
Maybe one day I'll thrive, alive, in death's embrace.

XXIII. Gusting

What, conceivably, could be more infinitely relaxing,
 After a satisfying hour-long walk in the nearby woods,
 Than taking off all my clothes,
 Flinging open all the living-room windows,
 Inviting in the high warm winds
 Whipping through the crowns of the massive white pines
 Embracing my rustic abode, on this remote, frozen-over lake,
 Giving them permission to imbue my space,
 With the smoothest, cleanest, most lyrical gusts,
 Accompany the music of Gerald Finzi,
 Resonating from the CD player, behind the sofa,
 On which, just this lounging now, I lie, in complete repose,
 Listening to this English composer's soothing gifts
 Of a soliloquy, romance, rhapsody, nocturne, elegy, introit,
 Eclogue, fantasia, toccata, and prelude,
 Gently sending me to sensuous sleep —
 Just an afternoon nap's rapture,
 In which I'll enter the mind of the high, warm winds
 Winnowing through the mellifluous music filling this cabin
 With a transcendence I've rarely, if ever, known,
 Other than when I'm composing my own poetic melodies.

Upon my awakening from this beautiful fugal suspension,
 I'll be an entirely new soul,
 Illumined to the core of universal awareness,
 Which nature's invisible Creator makes apprehensible
 Once we've gathered in the time to listen to joy's voices
 Descending into and ascending out of the gusting,
 As the spell comes over the Spirit's spirit in us,
 Insinuating that these are moments to do with as we please,
 Moments never to come again, in just this naked way.

XXIV. The Lake's Sea Change

By this morning, the ice had still only separated from the shore
 No more than a few feet.
 But with temperatures reaching the high side of seventy-something
 And yet holding, as sunset slowly approaches,
 The lake is in total flux; a freshwater sea change is in progress.

In every direction, its dazzling surface is a vast expanse of facets —
 Jagged edges redolent of the inside of a cracked-open geode
 Or rock candy hardening in a stovetop pan —
 Solid enough, far out, to support a truck,
 Though, for two days, I've not seen such foolhardiness.

Ah, but in close, now that I've tightened down my focus,
 I can't help but notice silent turmoil going on.
 The frozen mantle is shriveling, contracting, breaking up, in slabs —
 Vast ice plates unloosed in a once-smooth tableau,
 Some sheets thirty by sixty feet, others smaller, greater,

Almost like continental land masses drifting apart,
 These floes set free, to dissolve, slide at the wind's behest,
Above becoming one with *below*,
 Islands, really, not unlike Manhattan, surrounded by two rivers,
 Only, here, the warming waters are from a single source.

If tomorrow and all next week adhere to the extended forecast,
 It's not inconceivable that the lake's great breakup
 Will outdo last year's new record — a complete month premature.
 And if the next decade continues to disregard the old ways,
 These North Woods could mutiny, sail away, to colder times.

XXV. Quite like This Ice

I've never contemplated anything, animate or otherwise —
Philosophically, corporeally, or spiritually —
Quite like this ice,
Which took total control over Lake Nebagamon,
Brought the water to a four-month standstill.

And the village has never had to contemplate
Such an abrupt cataclysm as this,
Not in early May or late April, let alone in mid-March,
When temperatures, this freakish seventeenth,
Have reached a summery seventy degrees.

Tonight, in T-shirt, barbecuing chicken,
I ask the stars, "What gives, with this eerie early thaw?"
Their only reply is a crow-cawed "Just wait and see."
If, when I awaken, tomorrow, a blizzard is raging,
I'll run into the snow, in my T-shirt, and fire up my grill.

XXVI. Breathing Again

I awaken, with time to idle, gently good-bye my dreams,
And witness the Sunday sun climb, on its sky-ladder,
To heights from which it can gift the lake's icy crust
With silvery mist which will make its rounds
Down and up the southern and western shores.
Surely, this is a sign that the lake is breathing again,
Stirring from winter's sleep, into the dawn of a new season,
Lifting into the majesty and awe
Of yet another of its ever-renewing pasts and futures.

XXVII. Foreverness

Sundays commence, in this northern-Wisconsin village,
With church bells filling the distance's silence,
Stitching Lake Superior's slumbering rural townships
Into a ceremonial robe that adorned Ojibwe clansmen,
Who inhabited this region, in their wigwams and tepees.

So many generations after *long ago*,
As I awaken to the welling of these bells,
My senses recognize the holy spirit of those natives,
Descending upon me, as a humbling presence,
A call to worship the Great Creator's sacred foreverness.

XXVIII. Soliloquies for the Woods

I

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts,
 Merciful and mighty . . .
 God in four persons, blessed eternity —
 Earth, Air, Water, and Sun-fire.
 Only the Great Creator made these,
 And only He can take them away.

II

If you lean down close enough to the ice,
 Which is still just three feet from the shoreline,
 In the lake's westernmost bay —
 The last place the sun has begun to heat up —
 You can hear it screeching like a rusty door jamb,
 Its interwoven crystals prying themselves apart,
 One solar-heated molecule after another,
 In a cascading of dominoes, lake-wide.

Just imagine if you could amplify this creaking sound,
 This friction-scraping of the ice mantle,
 Bent on its own destruction, dissolution;
 The din might reach the Pleiades, the Milky Way,
 Spread Earth's gospel of the seasons,
 Be a godsend to the rest of the planets in the universe.

III

Occasionally,
 I find my eyes mistaking leaves
 Fluttering by me, in the heated breeze,
 For migrating butterflies.
 Could it be that my retinas
 Prefer to see the world
 As the world sees me?

IV

The woods' floor is so soft,
 For the transmigration of the snow's soul,
 That my soles feel as though they're clouds
 Slowly floating on an ocean of air,
 Going, volitionally, nowhere.

V

The bright-green, audibly breathing moss,
 Growing on the forest floor
 And embracing decaying trees
 Sleeping in their beds of needles, leaves, duff,
 Is praying it won't be suffocated
 Under what's left of the snow's shadows.
 I know; its pulsating viridescence tells me so.

VI

This solitudinous Sunday noontide,
 I'm in love with the timelessness of these woods,
 Where loneliness is a momentary notion,
 Lasting only until the seeking winds
 Sift amidst the highest white and red pines
 And lift my spirit, with their hushed intimacies,
 On which we drift through these leafless purlieus,
 Savoring the companionship of our quiescence.

VII

God, it's so good to see sand, again,
 On the meandering-patterned floor of the thawing lake,
 Two, three, five, ten feet out from shore!
 The sand has to be pleased to see me again, too.

The liberated water's ripples
 Place the gentlest kisses on my eyelids.
 I lean over, to take a sip,
 And my lips kiss the crystalline ripples,
 With the insight of my vision.

VIII

I'm the only one, in these warm woods,
 This near-vernal Sunday afternoon,
 If, that is, I exclude the birds and winds,
 Trees' leaves and pine needles,
 Slowly decomposing trunks and limbs,
 And myriad indigenous spirits
 Hidden deep beneath this cushiony loam,
 Who know I'm here,

*

By the jubilation I'm communicating,
In my looking, listening, touching, sniffing, tasting,
Seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, savoring,
More certain, than ever, that eternity and I are one
And that my being one with this wonderment, beauty,
Is all I need to keep going,
Unconcerned where I'll end up, come nightfall,
Since these warm woods have known my soul
From before time was born
And will know it forever, after time is no more.

XXIX. Sunday Lunch

There are just us two, down here, at the municipal beach,
This deserted Sunday afternoon —
A resourceful crow, high in the branches of a leafless hickory,
And me, sitting on one of the four empty white benches
Overlooking the frozen lake and the landed swimming raft.

We both feel, in the crux of our guts, a need to eat.
For the past half-hour, I've been watching this black bird
Fly out to and back from a trapline of augered ice-fishing holes,
In hopes of pecking at discarded intestines, heads and spines
With enough meat yet on them to be worth the effort.

I have a turkey, lettuce, and tomato sandwich in a plastic bag,
Just purchased, at the corner of Lake Avenue and B,
From the village's only grocery/convenience store, Ole's.
After an hour-and-a-half walk in the taciturn woods,
It's good to have someone with whom to share lunch.

XXX. The Beginning of Creation

I sit in the kitchen, gazing out, across Lake Nebagamon,
Its ice dazzling prismatically, under the sun's rays,
And suddenly, I recognize its surface as that of a vast landscape
Defined not by fences, crop rows, hedges, as-the-crow-flies roads,
Rather by highly visible fissures, fault lines of least resistance,
Marking tomorrow's rending, ripping, tearing apart,
As, piece by piece, one by one,
In slabs large and modest, irregular, ungainly, cumbersome, graceless,
Shifting, drifting aimlessly, with the breeze,
The whole frozen lake's rapidly contracting tectonic plates
(All forming a withered, wrinkled, wizened, shriveled, weathered face)
Dissolve, return to their primordial liquid state,
Just in time to sing spring's tenderest song of songs,
The one that begins with the creation of all things gold and green.

XXXI. My Close Friends

This lake-haven visit, I've spent so much of my creative energy
Focusing on the vicissitudes of the disintegrating ice cover
And on the premature heating up of the burgeoning forest
That I've all but forgotten to attend to my close friends the far stars,
Recognize those discrete, silent, benign eyes
Gazing down, through the mirrored reflections of their spirits' lives,
Onto my tenuous, evanescent destiny, my fate's rises and declinations.

On past retreats, these steadfast, serene, oracular coruscations
Have taken precedence over all of imagination's other preoccupations;
Indeed, their very presence in my mind's space and in my life's time
Has taught me to rise above my petty grievances, mortal fears,
And realize they have no place in the ceaseless seasons of being and dying.
Tonight, the stars invite me to dialogue with them again,
Listen to their eternal voices illuminating the language of the universe.

XXXII. Spring Runoff

For the last three days of March's exhilarating heat wave,
All the village's rivulets, creeks, and streams
Have been frothing, gurgling, gushing, hissing, racing, whispering, rushing —
Earth's arteries and veins throbbing, pulsating, flowing freely,
With cold, crisp, clear, unadulterated snow-melt.

Even Ravine Park's meandering brook, just down the street,
West, a couple hundred steps from my lake-nestled cabin,
Has been fancying itself an Itasca-born Mississippi
(Though only five feet across, at its widest), ever since Saturday,
When its icy clots dissolved under the sun's emancipating rays.

For farming and grazing acres, county, town, and shoreline miles around,
Spring has arrived, infused life, with excitement, ecstasy,
Made doubters and skeptics into believers in nature's authoritative force.
Even the lake, by accommodating the runoff, has assumed a new body —
An ocean — it'll keep until July's thirst seeks satiety.

XXXIII. Creatures

An enormous warmth is upon the land,
 Something that, before the recent past, hasn't happened until April
 Or occasionally May if an aberrant snow intrudes.
 It seems that summer has superseded spring, usurped its preeminence,
 Inexplicably gotten ahead of nature's own time-tested schedule,
 Made this first season a victim of some curious complications
 Only God could have designed into the universal clockwork.

In the eight days I've lived in this unadorned cabin by this protean lake,
 Following the journey my solitary footsteps have been taking,
 Power-walking this village's deserted streets,
 Hiking the desolate woods, on its western edges,
 I've been keenly aware of the faunal inhabitants now absent,
 Which, in the other three seasons, fill me with bemused elation,
 Allow me to commune with undomesticated, untamed, uncaged nature.

Completely missing from my list of by-now-familiar favorites
 Are the bears, foxes, porcupines, chipmunks, beavers, and raccoons
 And, closer to my cabin, ubiquitous ducks and loons.
 So far, this trip, I've only seen two Canada geese; a few herring gulls;
 A pair of red-backed baby brown squirrels
 Practicing their acrobatic and gymnastic skills, in the pine trees;
 A loping rabbit; and a pileated woodpecker hammering away.

Worse, I've not yet heard a single redwing blackbird conk-a-reeeeeing
 Or a hermit thrush, robin, junco, chickadee, white-throated sparrow
 Harmonizing some beautiful legendary tune it brings with it,
 To fill the woods with the majesty of infinite generations of music-makers
 That have perched on these same branches, below which I now stand.
 The only voices I can hear are those of boisterous black crows,
 Roistering away, in the needled cloisters above; they never seem to leave.

Nor have I yet to detect the first soft greens of leafing-out
 On the waxy crimson buds of maples, fuzzy yellows of pussy willows,
 Or the chalky gray-white hues of aspens, poplars, and birches.
 These will come soon enough, in my own imminent absence from this land,
 As will the animals and birds, one fine, magical afternoon,
 Simply materializing out of and into the clear blue air,
 Missing the creature who sojourned in their woods, looking for them.

XXXIV. Snake

The lake is a snake molting its icy integument.
I, with the mystical vision of an Ojibwe shaman,
Have been witnessing, patiently,
The sun and wind midwife this process,
By assisting the water as it inches its way,
Fissure by fissure,
Out of its constrictive wintry skin,
Giving rebirth to itself,
Beneath the intense heat beating down on its body.
And I, with the uninitiated vision of a city dweller,
Wonder if this is a painful experience
Or the purest, most pleasurable transformation —
The lake reconceived,
In its new, loose-fitting freedom.

XXXV. Blueberry Breakfast

I have to believe that eating blueberries, for breakfast
(Whether imported, from Chile, and bought at Ole's,
Here, in Lake Nebagamon, Wisconsin,
Or picked by me, last summer,
At Blue Vista Farms, in the hills overlooking Bayfield,
And frozen till this very savoring moment),
While watching the lake-ice
Shatter into infinite vitreous fragments
Has to be existence's most gratifying satisfaction.
Isn't feeding the mind's and heart's daily appetite
The most glorious way
To nourish the spirit's and soul's immortal body?

XXXVI. Patience

As I'm about to close the cabin's side door, behind me,
For the first of today's two walks through the woods,
I spy three crows, on the ice, halfway across the lake,
Huddled around an abandoned fishing hole.
Save for a few herring gulls and a pair of Canada geese,
They've been the largest fowls I've seen,
But now, they're dwarfed by two enormous objects,
Which, when fixed in my binoculars' high-power lenses,
Prove to be two American bald eagles,
One with a white head and tail feathers, yellow beak,
The other, apparently its fledgling, wearing solely drab brown.

Seeing them pecking, gnawing on the remnants of entrails —
Whatever might be left after the weeklong devouring by crows,
Which have ravaged every hole beyond my kitchen windows —
I can only wonder why these majestic birds
Have taken so long to find this icy lake's dry oasis.
Suddenly, the immature eagle lifts, flies, on deep strokes, soars,
Leaving behind its older, larger guardian,
As though it might have some wiser ideas about survival.
When I return from the forest, the parent is still there.
Perhaps it better understands privation, starvation,
How to husband energy, practice patience as an abiding strategy.

XXXVII. Its Mysterious Spirit

The two most beautiful attributes nature possesses
Are its fundamental understanding and selfless appreciation
Of human beings who seek nothing from it
But to share a touch, a taste, a smell, a sight, a sound
Of its profoundly serene solitude.

Only when I'm in nature's ever-rejuvenescent presence
Does my devoted soul know
That it's in the throes of a transcendent essence,
About to penetrate to the source of a mysterious spirit
And, eventually, enter life's far darkness, enlightened.

XXXVIII. Acres and Miles

The more acres and miles my legs accumulate,
Taking me to places I've never been
Nor ever will be twice
(Though my mind will carry me there three thousand times),
The more they crave the journey,

Feel as though their calves and thighs
Have grown at least three sizes, in stamina,
During this week's strenuous exercise routine
In the woods sun-stippled intricacies,
And still, they crave more of my energized stride.

What I'll do when I return to St. Louis,
To my sedentary occupation,
Is a reality I don't have the strength to engage.
Meanwhile, I'll keep accumulating acres and miles
And revel in their never taking me home.

XXXIX. Lake-Glass

Now, the largest part of this seventy-degree Monday is done.
The sun has only forty-five minutes until it sets,
But I've yet one thing to accomplish
Before the stars beckon my terrestrial reckoning, celestially,
And I let go of these exquisite hours, for the rest of today's eternity.

It seems that I've been overtaken by an undeniable obsession,
A craving to snatch, from the lake, a big piece of its glassy ice.
Standing barefoot, on the sand at shore's edge,
I place both hands in the water and grasp a vast plate,
Then carefully slide it toward me, trying to retain my balance.

Hoisting the half-inch-thick, four-foot-square translucent pane
Causes my flexed arms to shake painfully,
And suddenly, my fingers seize, from its frigidity.
I pause, then heave the crystalline sheet back into its element,
Ecstatic to have held the lake close enough, to my lips, to kiss it.

XL. Ceremonial Land

I awaken at 7:10, the minute, second, this Tuesday breaks,
Very much in time to witness the rising of the sun.
There's an eight-minute delay, a terrestrial suspension,
Before the orange sphere ascends the trees, above Bumble's Bay
(Just a five-minute canoe-paddling from my cabin),
Where its flaming, pulsating halo overtakes my mortal gaze,
Sets the thick, misty fog, racing easterly, ablaze.

Its brightness is a bold show of heavenly dominance,
An omnipotent, deeply harmonizing source of energy,
Which all beings, inanimate and alive, in the earthly below
And amidst the cosmos surrounding the solar display,
Know is the One,
Knowing that this One is the Sun of suns,
The holy, sacred, sovereign, and omnipotent One,
The light that divides night from day, sky from void,
Delivers breath and sight and all senses perpetual
To every element existing in the vast continuum of essence —
The Great Creator of all creation ever and ever.

Through the opaque, then translucent, veil of lifting mist,
I can envision the glowing, golden ramparts of eternity,
And in a flash, I sense that this is no scriptural abstraction
But a revelation of this exquisite lake before me,
Awakening to this new day as if it were its very first one,
The day I must, within three hours, leave behind
If I'm to reach my next destination on destiny's schedule.

Oh, if only I could capture this primordial fog,
Take it with me, in my imagination's gazing ball,
And free it whenever memories forget their way
Or man-made concerns of the journey ever up ahead
Beg for surcease, pray for release, from their anxieties,
Cry out for return to this ceremonial land,
Where the sun, moon, snow, and mist blend with the seasons,
Into a dimensionless enterprise of divine risings and settings,
And everything in between beckons to be apprehended,
Breath to breath, eye to eye, by each of us, our souls,
Be we stone, cloud, tree, breeze, animal, man . . . spirit.

XLI. *Is-ness*

The *is-ness* of mist is its own best justification for existence.
Just to awaken in its midst
Is an epiphany of blessed primeval wetness,
One of man's glorious reminders of nature's endless sublimity,
A rapture that elevates the spirit's capacity for wonder,
A vision of the ethereal made terrestrially manifest,
The genesis of our awe for eternity's magnificence.
The mid-March mist lifting from this Wisconsin lake
Is just such an *is-ness* that should never be missed.
To witness it is my own best justification for existence.
Nothing else is as mist is, even when it isn't anymore.

XLII. Spring's First Songbirds

I set off from the cabin — the home I've made deep in my soul —
One final time, this Tuesday, at nine o'clock,
Walking, with weightless steps, in the woods' direction,
My only companion the wind wafting off Lake Nebagamon,
Its refreshing breaths commingling with my own serene suspirations.
And immediately, I realize that the breeze and I are one being,
Born of this invigorating northern-Wisconsin morning.

As I enter this forest of benign pines and catkin-drooping birches,
The sweet cheep-cheep-cheeping of songbirds greets me.
Though one day premature, spring's bringing me to its senses,
With the native whisperings of voices from the distant past,
Spirits who, perhaps, knowing I'm leaving soon,
Ask me to take with me memories of their beings.
My "I will" weeps.

Biographical Note

Louis Daniel Brodsky was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1941, where he attended St. Louis Country Day School. After earning a B.A., magna cum laude, at Yale University in 1963, he received an M.A. in English from Washington University in 1967 and an M.A. in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University the following year.

From 1968 to 1987, while continuing to write poetry, he assisted in managing a 350-person men's-clothing factory in Farmington, Missouri, and started one of the Midwest's first factory-outlet apparel chains. From 1980 to 1991, he taught English and creative writing, part-time, at Mineral Area College, in nearby Flat River. From 1987 onward, he lived in St. Louis, near his daughter and son, and devoted himself to composing poems and short fictions.

Brodsky authored eighty-six volumes of poetry (five of which have been published in French by Éditions Gallimard) and twenty-seven volumes of prose, including nine books of scholarship on William Faulkner and eleven books of short fictions. His poems and essays have appeared in *Harper's*, *Faulkner Journal*, *Southern Review*, *Texas Quarterly*, *National Forum*, *American Scholar*, *Studies in Bibliography*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Forum*, *Cimarron Review*, and *Literary Review*, as well as in *Ariel*, *Acumen*, *Orbis*, *New Welsh Review*, *Dalhousie Review*, and other journals. His work has also been printed in five editions of the *Anthology of Magazine Verse and Yearbook of American Poetry*.

Brodsky's *You Can't Go Back, Exactly* won the Center for Great Lakes Culture's (Michigan State University) 2004 best book of poetry award.

His Website is <http://www.louisdanielbrodsky.com>.

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