

**in the house of my uncle steve whom I seldom
see with my eyes (Poem #1)**

I

in grey-toned angular suits that evince the architecture of his life hanging
loosely on sinewy-thin olive-colored limbs *your uncle is a lawyer*
but I seldom see him with my eyes *there's so many rooms in this house*
like a mountain all angles acute and oblique but nowhere in between
our parents admire his Porsche 964 us the infecundity of these rooms
*the property is a solar farm, funny coils deep deep in the ground*ⁱ

in his house the stairs had no risers as kids we would reach right
through and pull each other up industrial veins of steel and glass and
an office on the second floor where legal boxes stacked like parapets
surrounding leather and chrome armchair the glossy gun-metal computer
and a spiral staircase that ascended tower-like into yet another
floor. *Your uncle is a Buddhist. That is his yoga studio off-limits*

II

he peeled off syrupy slick black dress shoe and woolen sock
splayed yellowish lithe toes on cool limestone in the double-height
cathedral kitchen and reached to hand me a pear-shaped glass of
sparkling water *oddly dry* I disliked and smiled with small animal teeth,
sharpened canines slit eyes, black and sparkling and bent over breathing
like the world was effortless and vaporous and charged
into a deep stretch on all fours and then inverted serpentine and fluid
he nearly sank into the floor and breathed and the tendons of his
impossibly thin neck actuated like freshly strung catgut

III

lovingly if coldly designed by loving if cold architect aunt eloise
who gifted me sketchbooks and asked questions I could neither parse nor
answer

and uncle steve would talk quickly and *staccato* into the sharp plastic cellular
none of our parents had antenna reaching heavenward *they're richer than*
Croesus, your uncle, a passivist I understood he won battles with words
sterile and opulent but efficient and blissful of aesthetic

how do I live? he ascended out of his stretch and sipped mineral water
he answered always soft and a bit hoarse *desire little and make something,*
*life is a shock of contradictions*ⁱⁱ

Above the Fog on Cadillac Mountainⁱⁱⁱ (Interlude A)

Ancient peoples worshiped the sun
For once, God cannot see us
My soles molest the summit
Dispassionate mists batter the
Landscape at the threshold of
Commercial photo opportunity^{iv}
And primordial chaos

Cool droplets dapple my skin as I
Bluntly cut the gusts
The obdurate spirit of a provisional
God,
Blindly looking down on billions more
Beneath the fog
The first person to see the sun^v
And even I cannot

What does that say about our
Divine providence?

Communications to the Patient: ^{vi} (Poem #2)

Set Sybil^{vii}; Mind of America^{viii} both
whisper in kind the Greek epigraph: *I*
want to die. ^{ix}

Some of the stated opinions are, say
the cultural psychologists^x—*68 May*,
unfriendly.

Stop reading Bukowski, love, it's giving
you this real sallow look—*So, so Herr*
enemy. ^{xi}

The poet could change the mind and the chill-
Stealing warmth from the sanitarium:
make clay pots. ^{xii}

I am but a voyeur on the steps of the courthouse
where we have moved down a pace from the
precinct and taken part of Bank street
It is nothing for me to be here
but there was no unifying cause in Nanterre ^{xiii}
l'université

I am dead, I want to die.

Famine Affluence and Morality ^{xiv}
If I live monastically no job
Will keep me

The introduction of the new ^{xv}, *So, So*,
And there will be no money to give to
Unicef ^{xvi}

You can make visits on the Pentacost ^{xvii}
but no one persists and no one person
will do it.

The news, like powder room art ^{xviii}, before the
corpses are interred *Who did what to whom?* Yes,
In Sanskrit. ^{xix}

Not one crucifixion, not for any
other mother^{xx}

A slit mouthed severity in the purple black
Sculptural face of the Chair of the
Philosophy department who said with red rimmed eyes
Where nobody
knows what humanity means, nobody knows what
His life is about. I, interred above the dead and below the living,
put great appraisal on frivolity.

Untitled Haiku (Interlude B)

With the fog of time

Even the dullest notebooks

Become works of art.

Early Morning, Grey-Cold Tide Pools of Mnt. Desert Island, ME. (Poem #3)

The ragged bits of the seaside where my
interpersonal passions or lulls are
equidistant from the lucid wake of
my presence and low tide of nostalgia,
crashing crashing upon the dead and
rotting fields of verdant-black dead sea grass^{xxi}:
noodles of pillowy disguise for the
gnarly sharp barnacled under-texture.

Look or rather listen, they make a pop-
ping sound when squeezed, do you suppose the
crabs ever pop them for fun like? Me? Make
reservations for two? The Name? I can't
yet say but she will be and be and the
idea of her will be and each to
each will swirl around one another
destined never to unite. Their name,
yet whatever it is, will be more pain
inspiring than the coral making
pink stinging gapes of my fascinating
flesh. How fascinating I should beat my
head upon the rocks and think of them no
more until I come again inside her

A thousand different times. Mr. Gray
said women are made to endure more than
men^{xxii}, thus the strokes of my own cruelty
only fulfill a divine purpose like
the ocean lapping hungrily horny
greedily upon the rocks leaving them
when the tide calls it back and back used up
salty and stained and used and slick
and eroding them slowly and slowly
but what else is an ocean to do? The
meeting of solid, brutalist lines with
the horrible curve and still of always
level always pure and clean water con-
forming to the edges conforming as

A pool can only do, a pool defined
the same by what isn't there as what is.

Untitled (Poem #4)

so much uncertainty
precludes

the downy silent
fawn

dappled and dewy
eating

crab apples at
dawn^{xxiii}

The value of aesthetic refinement is: (Interlude C)

enough to shake an ashplant^{xxiv} at
enough to crush my reality:
a didactic house of
mirrors: Eschew sincerity at
all costs.

Is a thing?

unconditional

Is a thing only how it is perceived by the aesthetic conventions of some lawless vista of beautiful nothing where I am out in an infinite feedback loop, my hands moving only for myself and if I am not seen am I here?

And there must be a reason why I am driven to pursue

Of my breast of my—

all the pursuits of aesthetic
and

acetic diction. To be in

Kenshō^{xxv}—as I am that I am—need to impute a value beyond the pleasantly angular shape conjured in a cleanly empty space as one sits in painful lotus

Must we be a closed system?^{xxvi}

Katie Ann or Vacation Pictures

Fuji Superia X-TRA-400^{xxvii}

Peculiarity of chroma, grain-
dense and underexposed, bedimmed your
co-conspirator: slender hands obscure
braces^{xxviii}. Brace against the sun, the Chatham
Mass lamp, the duck-hunter's shrewd acumen^{xxix}

fourteen in 1991

Study in design, stop, a study in
the language of design: Summer's design.
Why were the Modernist architects ex-
patriated from their European
countries, execrated by fascists in-
to statelessness while Modernist poets
and men of letters ascended into

fascism? *Yeats's Radio Hour*^{xxx}

Tightly coiled phone cord drawn out to its
limits, taut out of frame across lawn and
bloom and bloom; chromatic aberration,
in optics, spherochromatism^{xxxi} is
the failure of a lens to focus on

sixteen in 1993

Beige hand-set fixed in hollow clavicle,
sharp fragments of sun melt off chrome lawn chair,
in the colors of Benneton^{xxxii}, make it
new from antiquity:
a renaissance of
the way up is the way down
a renaissance of
the way forward is the way back
the renaissance
no one will stop our return to a new
Great Age^{xxxiii}

The pillars at 880 Lake Shore Drive^{xxxiv}
 are
 fluted Greek columns but
so much depends upon a-
 dialectical verbiage.^{xxxv}
 Steel, glass, your sketches: so derivative.^{xxxvi}

eighteen in 1995

You whom I worship as night's firmament
 nineteen in 1996
 nineteen in 1998
 nineteen in 2000
 nineteen on the dotted line
 in my arms too, they will always be
 nineteen
 standing five-foot-five in one
 apocalyptic waste land^{xxxvii}
I love you more because you turn from me^{xxxviii}

your always-Summer, transient shadow

your contemporary life, moribund
 potential, contemporarily slick
 with the conflation of forms
 democratization of pain
 inundated with muddled
 minimalism and feeling—
 poor integrity of foundation^{xxxix}

build from the top down, adjust for the correction of
 opposing tensile stresses and lateral diffusions of load
 your neo-post-modern language is a crumbling
 foundation in a brutalist subdivision

Le Corbusier's brick worker housing
 Becomes a brutal Stalinist playground^{xl}

D'y aller, mon ligne de chance

red eyed from the flash on the mainstreet
 marketplace at night; granddad let you take
 the porche and you rocked a lamppost on the
 Vinyard. Wallace says he was your age when
 the Avant Garde became something else^{xli},
 salted skin salted hair oversized
 crewneck with varsity letters fugi
 400 a greenish-blue sky, bluish-green

trees with your friend, the one with the mole who
 couldn't stand to look at me or my own
 slender hands^{xlii}

in the house of my uncle steve whom i seldom see with my eyes

ⁱ Refers to solar and geothermal energy, an expensive infrastructure for a residential property at the time (late 1990s).

ⁱⁱ Invited, as by Jacob Marley in the Dickens, to be a voyeur, to reflect. Invited by voices, the voices of the past, voices of artists, poets, mythological figures. The voices, as referred to by Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Henry James, Friedrich Nietzsche, which represent the 'Mind of Europe.'

Above the Fog on Cadillac Mountain

ⁱⁱⁱ Found in Acadia National Park

^{iv} Find comfortable accommodations at the gift shop atop the highest peak in Acadia.

^v Popular tourist attraction is tickets to watch the sunrise which, because of its geographic location and altitude, Acadia boasts as being 'the first place to see the sunrise in the U.S.'

Communications to the Patient:

^{vi} 'Communications to the unconscious' is Freudian terminology which refers to some of the principles of psycho-analysis but was appropriated by the modernists (Eliot, Pound, Yeats, specifically) as part of their greater analogy in which modern society is a human psyche and poetry/art, therapy. Eliot says of WWI, it is a symptom of a larger nervous breakdown in the whole of society.

^{vii} Sybil and the subsequent 'Greek epigraph: *I want to die*' refer to T.S. Eliot's epigraph for *The Waste Land*: 'Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἄπο θανεῖν θέλω,' an excerpt from *The Satyricon* by Gaius Petronius, the end of which, in translation, has the Sybil of Cumae stating 'I want to die.' As used in *The Waste Land*, the only time 'the mind of Europe' is allowed to speak for itself.

^{viii} 'Mind of America' is further reference to Eliot who, in borrowing the terminology of Freud, discussed with Ezra Pound the 'Mind of Europe,' with the implication of it being 'sick.' This 'Mind of Europe,' for instance, is what J. Alfred Prufrock is touring through in his 'love song.' Eliot: 'The mind of Europe is a mind given to change.' The mind of Europe, as spoken in *The Waste Land*, is one that wants to die. It is too sick. It wants to die so that it might be reborn. This is what the mind of America would tell us now if we would only listen.

^{ix} Hugh Kenner, Dean of Modernist Scholars, on *The Waste Land* '(it is) so public in intention, it is virtually a piece of journalism.'

^x Further reference to the modernists as self-proclaimed 'cultural psychologists.' Unfriendly because some of their radical ideas for a societal restructuring, a return to antiquity, and a class system based off of intelligence and artistic prowess, are not so easy to swallow as they can (and, in some cases did) turn quickly into fascism.

^{xi} 'Lady Lazarus' by Sylvia Plath. In the previous line, the speaker is addressing his lover or a young woman ('love' as the colloquial vocative), trying to keep her from cynicism. The speaker hears her respond in the voice of Sylvia Plath whose address is as to a Nazi. The implication being that by adopting the holistic, classicist views of the modernists into contemporary, American activism, we run the risk of becoming fascists as well.

^{xii} Eliot wrote much of *The Waste Land* from a sanitarium in between making clay pots as a form of therapy.

^{xiii} Refers to the University of Paris at which was begun the world-wide protests of May 1968. Though the students were protesting certain choices made by university faculty, the ensuing chaos which included the French working class and unions fighting for fair wages as well as American civil rights, the protests had no grounding philosophy but rather opened the door to wide-spread reform. This is useful information to a white speaker questioning his place in a new period of civil unrest.

^{xiv} Peter Singer's seminal ethics paper from the late 1970s that introduced (with a rule utilitarian foundation) a new ethical philosophy for the 'average' American.

^{xv} Again relating current societal turmoil to the modernists, in this case, a variation on the famous manifesto from Ezra Pound.

^{xvi} Singer's paper posits it is our moral responsibility not only to help others in need to whom we have access, but also to relinquish a portion of our income specifically to organizations such as Unicef who will help people in need far away. The speaker alludes to one of the many flaws in Singer's logic.

^{xvii} Visits as were made my Prufrock as he was diagnosing the 'Mind of Europe.' Our speaker is again questioning his place as a white man, an American, as an individual in the current process of global change.

^{xviii} 'powder room art' refers to the realist painting depiction of the rape of Philomela at the hands of Tereus which is seen hanging in a powder room in Eliot's *The Waste Land*. 'Still she cried and still the world pursues.' In the Eliot, the continuous rape of Philomela is ignored and overlooked as décor. The speaker posits that, no matter how awful current events, if we continue dealing with them in the same recursive ways, they will inevitably be overlooked. Jeffrey Pearl on *The Waste Land* as reducing classical narratives to 'a single plot' which is 'the continuous rape of innocence by the cruel or vulgar.'

^{xix} Juxtaposing the impermanence of the contemporary news cycle with the longevity of religious documents. 'in Sanskrit' refers to the use of Sanskrit in *The Waste Land*, DA.

^{xx} The mother George Floyd calls out to and going back, through all mothers, to Mary. "Murmur of maternal lamentation," (*The Waste Land* line 368).

Early Morning, Grey-Cold Tide Pools of Mnt. Desert Island, ME.

^{xxi} Identified as Bladder Wrack or *Fucus vesiculosus*

^{xxii} Direct reference to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde in which, after having callously and coldly rejected the young actress, Sibyl Vane, Dorian feels pangs of remorse which he attempts to fight off with a feeble justification that women are biologically designed to endure cruelty.

Untitled Poem #4

^{xxiii} Word count, line-breaks, lack of concrete speaker, and general simplicity indicate a pastiche of William Carlos Williams' 'The Red Wheel Barrow,' a poem by the neo-modernist which has been posited in subsequent years to itself be a poetic rebuke of Eliot.

Interlude C

^{xxiv} A walking stick.

^{xxv} A term from Zen tradition meaning 'seeing' or 'initial insight.'

^{xxvi} Questions of aesthetics or the philosophy of art are something which, until recently, were pervasive across disciplines, not only art. 'Closed system' is computer terminology.

Katie Ann or Vacation Pictures

^{xxvii} An antiquated 35mm film product.

^{xxviii} The young girl who is the subject of the photograph on which our speaker reflects is embarrassed, using her hands (her 'coconspirators' conspiring to ruin the photo) to cover her braces for the sake of an impromptu photograph.

^{xxix} It seems as though the photograph or photographs in question that portray this young girl are (as per the title) taken during a vacation or multiple vacations to Cape Cod in the summer.

^{xxx} The girl subject is ostensibly the one studying design; apparently modernist design. The founders of the Bauhaus expatriated during the war, came to America, and came to define the aesthetic principles of architecture, interior design, and industrial design for years to come. The speaker reflects on the literary modernists (ostensibly belonging to the greater umbrella category of modernism) who largely took different paths.

^{xxxi} Chromatic aberration and spherochromatism refer to the same optical anomaly which can affect film photographs. The effect is a ghostly doubling of the image in both red and blue which is ever so slightly misaligned and sometimes very

noticeable. The speaker, in looking at these old pictures, is noticing the artifact and relating it to his own inability to focus on one subject.

^{xxxii} High-quality summer-wear popular with the upper-middle-class in the 1980s and 1990s, full brand named ‘The United Colors of Benetton.’

^{xxxiii} ‘Make it new’ and onward consist of a collage of sentiments expressed by the literary modernists in some form or another in which they (mostly Pound and Eliot) espouse their theory of a movement. ‘Make it new’ attributed to Ezra Pound. ‘From antiquity’ refers to the classicist desire of these iconoclasts to orchestrate a second renaissance in which they largely disregard centuries of progress to reshape the world with classical art. ‘The way up is the way down/ the way forward the way back’ comes from Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. ‘The introduction of the new’ James Joyce: ‘the conscience of a race is forged by its artists,’ and T.S. Eliot: ‘The introduction of the new, the really new work of art could change Europe’s Mind’

^{xxxiv} 880 Lake Shore Drive is a skyscraper by modernist architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, former member of the Bauhaus who, as with most modernists, expressed classicist views and a desire, through art and design, to return to the great age where aesthetic principles were the principles that guided society. Much of the structures of the modern architects, though stripped of ornament and superfluity (anti-bourgeoisie), were direct adaptations of Greek architecture. In this case, the twin apartment buildings on Lake Shore Drive are symmetrical and fronted by large columns which are ever-so-subtly fluted as with classical stone columns.

^{xxxv} Merging of an intertextual reference to ‘The Red Wheel Barrow’ as well as a succinct satirical critique of what the modernist poets produced (inaccessible word-salad).

^{xxxvi} The speaker now reflects on the subject and her study of modern design. He posits that her sketches (ostensibly design studies for academic work), though produced somewhere in the implied timeframe (1990s), are derivative of the modernists (early to mid 20th century).

^{xxxvii} ‘Nineteen in 1996’ through ‘apocalyptic waste land’ constitutes a combined reference to both Nabokov’s *Lolita* and Eliot. The speaker, who has been, through his reminiscence via photograph, chronicling the age of his subject, arrives at a point of self-reflection. Through the repetition of Nineteen adjoining chronologically advancing years, it is implied that the subject remains 19 because, at 19, she died. The speaker invokes Humbert Humbert whose first love died at the age of 12 and whose subsequent objects of sexual interest remained around that age; additionally, the portrait painted of the titular character in Nabokov’s work is one of a girl who, though was made to escape and live a few more years, remains mythologized in Humbert’s mind as forever a little girl.

^{xxxviii} ‘You whom I worship as night’s firmament/ I love you more because you turn from me’ comes from Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*. Baudelaire was a prominent symbolist who inspired Ezra Pound. ‘Turn from me’ in this case could imply the metaphorical and involuntary turning away of death.

^{xxxix} The speaker, recalling her stunted life and derivative drawings, posits that the tragic story of this photo subject was one that saw her as either belonging to the wrong time (not made for contemporary life/art, belongs with the modernists) or ahead of her time.

^{xl} Le Corbusier was a founding member of the Bauhaus. Many of the early techniques of modern architecture (which were, if not overtly communist, anti-bourgeoisie, pro-working class) became appropriated by the eastern European communists and Soviet Union and (in an evolved form that took on more dreary and eventually brutalist styles) became the state style in a way that denigrated the original intentions. The parallel between this post-modern architecture and ‘neo-post-modern language’ suggests that something has gone wrong in the evolution of the literary forms as well.

^{xli} Charlie Rose 1996, David Foster Wallace describes his gripes with the direction taken by post-modernism, specifically the overuse of irony and self-awareness in contemporary television, film, and fiction. The mournful way the speaker transitions to addressing the subject with the Wallace line, as well as the previous stanzas with lines like ‘muddled/ minimalism and feeling’ suggest that the speaker feels that his subject, if alive, would not approve of the state of contemporary art.

^{xlii} The speaker shares slender hands with the subject of the photograph on which he reflects.