



Rilke's Elegies

A Collaboration by Bill Evans & Andrew Gent

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Some poems in this collection appeared previously in the following magazines. Additional copyright restrictions may apply as a consequence.

<i>Hanging Loose</i>	“Sixth Elegy” “Eighth Elegy” “Ninth Elegy” “Tenth Elegy”
<i>Hoboken Terminal</i>	“First Elegy” “Second Elegy”

Table of Contents

First Elegy.....	5
Second Elegy.....	7
Third Elegy	10
Fourth Elegy	12
Fifth Elegy	14
Sixth Elegy.....	18
Seventh Elegy	20
Eighth Elegy.....	24
Ninth Elegy.....	26
Tenth Elegy	29

Foreword

The following poems were written over approximately a ten year period between 1978 and 1988. The poems are loosely, very loosely, based on Rilke's *Duino Elegies* and pay tribute to the poets, friends, and artists who influenced us most at that time, as well as the locations (New York City and Portsmouth, New Hampshire) where the poems were written.

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Andrew Gent
January, 2010

First Elegy

And if I cried "last call!"
through the crowded barrooms of heaven
would the angels buy *me* a drink?
I suspect not.
The endless stories and bad jokes
calling them by name.
But I know they have no names,
keeping me up all night
with their loud music.
Who can I ask about this?
Not them, not the angels,
they are too cruel.
One time I got down
on my hands and knees
to commiserate with the smallest thing
I could find: the ants,
but they weren't home.
What's left? Only the trees
like ladders leaned against the clouds.

I take my meals alone
in the kitchens of Duino,
revising the letters you sent
years ago. What did you mean
by "It's under the doormat.
I'll be home every night."
But what door, what night?
Your name erased itself
from the catalog of all laments
which is my hymnbook,
which is my one song.

My lack of interest
is no excuse for forgetting
to mention it was spring
when I first arrived.
Only a window can open a hole
so big 7,000 finches and orioles
could fit through.
And that makes 14,000
tiny propellers
taxiing down the runways

of the branches
in the trees.

The river says something like this
pulling up anchor and moving off.
The rocks say it too,
though with some hesitation.
Gaspara Stampa called it
“an alphabet of small, furry animals”.
Our names written by snails
on a blade of grass.
I heard them write it.

Listen, a tongue
left its imprint
about one inch from my heart
while I was sleeping.
A child did it,
one who died young.

He was only resting a moment
on the long flight from ...
The grave he had abandoned
because it was too small.

Did he take along his blanket?
I have heard it is cold
where he is going. Did he
understand the map they gave him?
It's too late for birthdays,
too late to send him cards.
But we were wrong to write his name
after he had given it up.
I will call him:
Angel, from now on
when I lift my glass
it will be for you
to drink from.
You and I,
We will not forget.

Second Elegy

Every angel is in trouble
with their alias.
Who are you?
One step below,
no, two steps
away from that cacophony
of misplaced kisses
like the heartbeats of squashed hummingbirds.
There I am
loaded down with postcards
of the footprints in the dust
outside their front door,
where the terrible journey
invents itself for the cameras.
Me, Rainer Maria Rilke,
already twenty pages
into my application for the beyond,
technically perfect but
I can't shake this cold.
Why do they always turn their backs on me?

The ennui of stones
brought back to life
condensing like tears
all over my raincoat.
— No sunbathing on these beaches —
What kind of vacation is this?
Who ties the angels' hands
behind their backs
so they can't erase their smiles
as they circle the tower room
where He takes his morning coffee?
Awkward landings on a pin
removed from His lapel
and held out through the bars
of the stained glass window.
I made a mistake
asking to be a waiter
in the cafeteria of desire.
(How can they do such things?)

Sexers, if you only knew
where that thing has been,
with its thin squeaks and whistles...
Those aren't trees!
They aren't blown kisses either.
In the guide book of goodbye
her name is written across every blank page.
Just who do you think you are
licking each other's wings
in front of the mirror?
One could keep quiet
but it's harder
to make a little noise
with the tongue
punctuating her breast,
a simple letter
from the woebegone
to the born loser.

Her name is I forget.
My name is – but that doesn't matter...
What matters is
a final kiss falling backwards
out of your mouth.
I have been sitting in a tower
for six months
asking "Do I exist,
and if so why these moans?"
I know caresses are like lizards
sunning themselves on the rocks
of Duino. And I also know
these lizards by name,
and that first walk together
in the garden. Have I somehow
forgotten to learn their language?

And if you think I was surprised
imagine the angels' faces
when they knocked at my door
to ask "Does Franz Wright live here?"
"No," I said "but he writes me letters.
His address is 'the blood in my hand'."
I wept, strangely moved.
They have the most clumsily cut hair
that hangs in their eyes.
Who is it they think they are looking for?

Third Elegy

Well, it's one thing to *write* about angels
but when they finally consent
to a minute or two of one's life *then*
there is no cup large enough
to contain that island.
They have no tongues.
Even if they had tongues
they would say nothing.
What could a lover
do compared to the dictionary
they invent rubbing their thighs together?
It is this music
the born loser hears
on his way home from work:
an ounce of pain,
an ounce of their terrible complaints.
What does he do at night?
Masturbates, obviously.
Angels are heartless.
They think of themselves
as tiny rooms from which no light escapes.
They study photographs of all the lovers in the world.
They stand at attention.

That doesn't mean you.
Oh no
not a photograph of you.
He kissed you, you thought
this: but nothing happened.
Oh yes, his heart
tracked you home on the subway
once, escorted by his horrible penis.
Call him, he will answer.
He would give anything
to get rid of these angels
like crows
nailed to his shoulders,
only white... It's the wind, you think.
Curse this wind...

I want to make one thing perfectly clear,
I'll sit here for eight months
if that's how long it takes:
getting up so tenderly
I would bruise the clock if I moved.
All these dawns sweeping the floor
for hair to weep in.
I'm Rainer Maria Rilke, forgive me.
I've got nothing to pay for
an angel's autobiography.
But, I'm dreaming.
Is this another way in?
As sleep ties your hands
to the side of the bed, forget me.
I promise to forget you.
Just to pass one night
with a blank page in my dreambook.

You see, we love.
Don't expect us to be wreaths
grown on the hill of the heart,
we are much more than that.
But we learn despite everything,
hands tied behind our backs
inside ourselves.
The angels' word for grief:
Don't ask me.
For one night let me rest.
I will listen to you tomorrow.

I will listen to you tomorrow.
Place your lips against my lips,
it will help me to sleep.
Yes, I will understand.
Say it again, say it
one more time.

Fourth Elegy

So for once the world is believable.
Birds nailed to the wind
like books smuggled
from a library in Africa.
One tells the story
of a king somewhere
who, being blind from birth
can only tell the seasons
by the sound of pages turning
in the queen's diary.
She writes lions
into the glass he lifts
so he can see them,
like the trees
sleeping under his fingers...

Don't lovers already know this?
Reading the body's braille,
one long line from the toes to the top of the head
it's not like reading a book,
the penis tied to the puppeteer's hands.
Someone has put a tiny mask on him,
a miniature coat and tie.
When the lights go out
and someone tells me "give up"
I reach for the hammer
and the axe. Father,
I'll build my own gallows,
please. A wooden cross,
a small portable grave
to drink from. Your fears
are only your fears. Don't hand me
the burning sheets I was born on.
Don't you think I really tried?
This terrible love for your face, Father,
I would give it all
(I would actually do this for you)
take the job of painting targets
on these birds, each one
shivering under the brush
as if they were real.

A king in Africa gave up everything
to imagine the language his wife wrote in.
The language of lions. The old, blind king
growling through the palace
long after his wife died...
If only there were a blindness of the tongue,
a cure for these white robes
which never fit properly,
a knife to cut the puppet's strings,
a knife engraved with my name.

Fifth Elegy

(dedicated to Willem de Kooning)

“I give up!” shouted Willem de Kooning,
“Wallpaper the damn thing!”
Standing in the stairwell
on the third floor
of the Museum of Modern Art.
“Why don't we turn it face to the wall
as if they were buried here?”

I wish I knew their names,
that alone would be a museum.
Ladies and gentlemen, Art doesn't pay
their bills, doesn't buy their graves either.
They don't sleep any easier
repeating this pain
for you, day after day,
as if the painting takes their place.
As if they stood in for you as the bombs fell.
I don't care when you were born
someone survived
mired in paint and words.
O to be stupid for almost a minute,
forget we ever heard of *Les Saltimbanques*
and the Riviera and come home
a little more awkward...
We're sick and tired of Death.
We want the angels that come with birth,
that arrive at weddings
always late, and sit in the last row.
We want the children to raise their hands
and stand and be quiet.
That mothers should always weep.
That children should always respect weeping mothers.

Having lived these thirty-six years
in despair, I swear death looks too easy.
Assaying rock for pure gold
in exchange for the pennies
slipped under the tongue
for that old man, Captain Charity.
We could do it ourselves,

it's not that far.
All we need is an anchor
and a place for it to rest.
Unlike the other world
here, inanimate objects float –
the grave and the bones
rising to the surface.
This would have been my favorite beach!
But I pull on my mask and flippers
and get ready for bed, swimming laps
back and forth between you, Captain,
and this empty house.
To be a famous sculptor's secretary
for a change, move to Paris
and sleep with beautiful women
like drowning. "*Le mer est plus grande
qu'une verre de l'eau.*"
Take, for example, this place
Duino, a pile of rocks
on another pile of rocks.
A scenic postcard in anyone's book but mine.
Yes, death is boring, but then Art
attends the funeral. Frank sent flowers,
Pablo was otherwise engaged.
It was a small stone but somehow
I fit them all in, the names
of the dead painted by painters
who aren't dead. Names
Art refused to consider
stealing instead the faces
to hang on the walls
of expensive apartments.

Getting up this morning
I stumbled to the north window
and threw out all my books
including: all my addresses.
There are no more alibis.
Goodbye poetry.
Goodbye creative writers, I'll see you in hell
before I write another one of these.
Goodbye heartthrobs. Goodbye taxis
pulling up to the side of the bed.
Goodbye lighthouse keepers and rowboat polishers.

Goodbye backseat skirmishers
out on the lake at midnight.
Goodbye crippled news vendors. Goodbye radio.
We've all gone too far this time.

Dear Frank,
As I mentioned before
I'm through writing poetry.
I appreciate your concern
but the angels are no longer my problem.
Maybe we'll meet in Paris.
Maybe we'll meet in New York. Frank,
a man seals himself off like a room
for years until one day someone knocks at the door
but the man can't find it.
So he sets out to build one.
I can't tell what this door will look like
except that it will look like me.
Hinges rusted, shoulders a little hunched
from listening too often at the keyhole.
The saddest thing.
She wasn't the most beautiful woman in the world
but that was her beauty. As she stood
at the bar, she was touched.
But it wasn't me who touched her.
All my kisses had been spent
on a few words
she'll never read.
But you understand,
clear as a glass
that will burn all night:
"I have been ashes."
Sign myself, X,
which leaves no trace.

(End of letter)

“Call me a taxi!” Willem de Kooning shouted
“I’m leaving this cheap resort.”
Too many waiters and not enough food.
His final gesture, leaving his paintbrushes
like flowers next to the grave
of an empty canvas. "I have nothing left
to say." And having said just that
he left.

Sixth Elegy

The rocks
have meant a lot to me.
Taxis with their meters running, twelve hours.
Each tide pool: a hundred snails
lumber like trucks
past the houses of the fish.
This park has a drinking fountain
and a bandstand, a pile of red uniforms
abandoned behind the folding chairs.
Where do the starfish take *their* vacations?
Some swimmy landside resort, no doubt.
Lounging on the verandah
playing checkers with gold doubloons.

Yawl,
Gaff,
Ketch.
How the lighthouse
stands for the border: geography and sight.
Shipwrecked on land
with one candle and a can of beans.
A tidalial scratched in the sand
my only clock.
Rock by rock the animals
built this replica of home
slither to crawl, crawl to trot, trot to walk.
I've lived on this cliff
since the beginning of the world
and look what that's got me!
Peering into tide pools
calipers poised, expectant.
Look! This one's moving backwards!
(Walk to trot...)

As if all my life has led backwards
to this moment. I am here
at the place where two harbors meet:
one, water – one, rock.
And two men on the edge of the continent
taunting the seagulls with stories
of a country where fish grow on trees.

“Don't believe a word he tells you, honey.”

These poets
always think it's something *special*
that they can stand
one foot in freshwater, one in salt.
These effigies for the invisible,
windows without walls or doors.
Tiny wind machines
waving their white handkerchiefs
a the flying fish.
They should have seatbelts on these rocks:
forever swooning
into the lighthouse keeper's arms.

The starfish are nervous and hold hands.
Little round, white stones
that oysters use for pillows.
The seaplants begin their dance...
The boats tip lee to shore
trimming their black sails.

I light the candle
inside a rock
and carry it home.

Seventh Elegy

No more celestial folk music, please.
You just can't dance to this stuff.
Statues combing their hair on every station
or the President's fireside chats
greatest hits, volume 2.
I dust off my sharkskin suit,
hmmmmmm...
The Marcel Proust Hotel, live entertainment.
The Arthur Rimbaud Memorial Drive-in:
Goethe on Ice. Rated triple X.

Eligible young female desires
alert intelligent companion.

Send recent photo.

O I'm dismal with love,
serenading airline stewardesses
at the end of the runway
which is two feet from my door.

Still, I lie down
and let the landing gear
graze my belt buckle,
trance-like.

Where will this ticket take me?
Tonight, the lemmings
line up at the side of the cliff
solemn in their Sunday best.
And the bats unstrap their parachutes
to make love. What a racket!

So I answered that ad.
Ten volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica
in verse – Aardvark to Vichyssoise,
Angel to Vice Versa – which is
Angel to Angel – and that suits me fine!
For my purpose, you see
was not merely to snare that girl
but a whole world spun, as it were, from a notion
an ocean within one's self
complete with lifeguard stations
and deckchairs for hire.
So you take a walk
and sit for hours at the end of the diving board.

Life isn't quite what you expected *but*
there's still the possibility sex could mean something
remote and unfamiliar
as the experience may be.

It's true I've been quiet in the past.
That's nothing compared to how quiet I'm going to be
from now on. Quiet as ink
drawing the wagons into a circle,
snow falling upwards,
a room full of hair.
I mean, look at me!
Dressed to the nines, standing here
browsing the *Zeitgeist Zeitung*
with my scissors and red pencil.
This isn't bad literature!
Dear Lou your snapshot fascinates me.
Do you usually wear your unicycle to bed?
Gadzooks! Get on with it!

(pause)

I would like to take this opportunity
to say a few words to my reader.
Are you sitting comfortably?
Then I shall begin: Once upon a time
when I still believed in fairytales
I was the batboy for the local baseball team
chasing rainbows behind third base,
after practice I dreamed of being manager,
rich and famous, believed in the ultimate *homerun*,
Casey at the Bat and all that.
(Ditto and et cetera to happy ending.)
No wonder I'm so quiet.
A farm league rookie with a shot at the big time.
Prodigal scribbler, no simple
novitiate to the social calendar.
Marry me. But I don't want to get married!
This is an emergency.
Forget what I just said.
Whew! That's better.
Doctor, someone's been sleeping in my bed.
And I don't mean Sartre, that mad Frenchman.
After a while they all begin to look alike,

these moonlit warblers,
wooing under the balconies
of penthouse apartments,
strumming toy guitars.
O self-serve laundrymats of the soul
where even a lyric poet can find happiness
sorting socks. Oooo, here's a good one.

Same female desires
rock & roll drummer.
Ex-priest in the same boat.
Apply in person.

I vote for the ticket taker
at the local sex show
with my little green ballot.
I take my seat among popcorn vendors
and housewives all over America
applaud this act of bravery.
Blessed are the meek
for they shall inherit the earth.
I vote for the t.v. casualty,
shell shocked 11 and 12 year olds.
Blessed are the rich
for they are already blessed
with nothing. Holding hands
and humming to themselves
as this country falls apart.
I'm going to sit here
singing along with the crummy orchestra.
I'm going to go out and take a walk
just to clear my head. Ipso facto:
I'm always stuck in revolving doors.
Brilliant deduction.
Well, it's about time.

After a premature childhood
(all stones being equal)
I quickly advanced towards manhood
through vacant lots
that gnaw at me still.
Just being alive
is bad coffee and too many cigarettes,
how wine ages
in fine oak casks,
belief being the matchbox

where I pack my clothes.
I had a wonderful evening.
The best evening of my life.
It was three in the afternoon
and I still had fifty cents to my name.
It felt like ten years
sped through the Stanford Linear Accelerator.
Happy New Year!
Pour some champagne in my testtube.
Speed up a little more – we'll never grow old!
Light has to chase us
to catch even a glimpse
as the door closes.

And if a girl
sits by her window,
though no one sees her,
does that mean she *isn't* in love?
Don't get me wrong:
she's no hypothesis.
This is a true story.

You should know.

Eighth Elegy

With my whole self I sit in this chair,
both of me. A little woozy perhaps
but pleased with the company.
I feel compelled to make some kind of statement.
No, the animals are not happy.
And why should they be!
There's no electricity in the forest
and the water keeps running away.
Anyway, here I am, sitting in two chairs,
all one of me.
I haven't died recently,
more than once or twice.
Small deaths, really,
waking up, sitting down, passing out
(headed towards a really big death).
Five or six of me doing life
for pushing the Buddha into the swimming pool
and handing him an anvil.
Nope, the animals are certainly not happy.
All of us, in the same chair, agree.
This chair's getting crowded.
I wish one of me would go home
and give us some peace.
Anthropologists digging up other anthropologists' bones.
Dinosaurs still roam the earth, the past
having yet to be invented.

Palmreaders posing as historians.

Each morning I look in the mirror
and wonder: should I kiss him?
The three of us slap each other awake,
aiming coffee and cigarettes at our mouth.
Who is this imposter?
Calling me names in German.
Kierkegaard never had it this bad:
making the great leap from his bed to the kitchen table,
wolfing down yogurt and sauerkraut,
preparing to waltz himself deathward.
As for me, I haven't been invited.
A five year mortgage on a self, damaged in transit.

But I'm still on my feet and ready to punch it out
with a book. I stand in the corner and check my pulse.
Everything seems normal. My legs are there,
stuck to my waist. I can sit
at my desk all day and write letters
so the hands must be working.
All systems go! Except for the sperm
who chase each other on crutches
down gloomy hospital corridors.
O years of serious drug abuse!
Someday we'll all be invited.
A quick game of musical chairs
to see who goes home alone.
The rest of us dance all night
slurping champagne down by the ferry landing.
I seem to be the only one here.
What a relief! All the prizes are given out,
all the chairs smashed and stacked neatly
in the corner, and the line at the bar
stretches half way around the block.
I still don't know a soul.

No, the animals are entirely out of luck.
The Forest Ranger of the Beyond, that Buddhist madman,
has revoked their passports.
Their little berry-currency has been canceled.
They aren't citizens and they don't get to vote.
– Evolution under construction –
In the nocturnal house at the zoo
rodents are taught to read lips.
Dogs and cats being too dumb
to understand the history of slavery.
All of me chained together,
sit in this chair, whole.
One more death and I'm done for.
So I pitch my tent
in the living room
and begin work on my memoirs:
one long erotic squeak
wrenched from the body
at high speeds.

Ninth Elegy

Given: one world.

Given: one life
plopped into the lap of that world sight unseen.
Given: twenty-five years and a typewriter
bought on credit. Finally
I'm ready for bliss.
Or perhaps I should say ecstasy? Spiritually speaking
Thoreau had it wrong,
all nature wants to be human.
Flowers writhe in their beds
as you take off your clothes
and I take off mine.
Not out of curiosity,
not just for the exercise,
but simply because (and this is important)
one of us is in love.
Sometimes it's me, I think
I'm frantic! Or you.
I get confused. Either way
the world needs us.
Each iris sways on her tender stem
imagining what it's like
to be kissed like this: ().
And that's the body.
Given a chance
the soul follows posthaste.
Where?
See for yourself.

What I am is mine.
Five foot eleven and unshaved,
poet to the death!
(which approaches too quickly)
terrified, I might add,
by this last distraction.
Given: one love
ad infinitum.
A description of the present moment.
Three cars,
a boat,

five trees
and a few houses.
Another car
in the lower left
and a roof that slopes
downward
blocking my view of the yard
that must be below.
Surely this landscape deserves praise.
As you deserve praise
for living here
in your room,
going to work everyday,
tending bar for the holy order of slaves
poured out of the salt mines.
It's a job,
not the worst you've ever had,
and you bear it with a grin.
Scientist, philosopher, philanthropist,
mercenary cartographer of the soul's
vacation in the body.
The blue moon follows you through the streets
mumbling "who is this joker?"
You don't let it get to you, though.
You keep right on doing whatever it is you're doing.
Once I was small and quiet
and now I'm a big stupid blabbermouth.
Possibly a genius.
You have the most beautiful body in the world.
I would do anything to sleep with you.
Alas, I can't
committed as I am
to my wife and four hundred children.
They aren't *real* children
but they need me.
Trees and plants mainly,
a few rivers,
rocks, assorted animals and snakes.
This need deserves praise,
the way I need you.
Five foot whatever,

wherever you are now.
The worst has already happened.
Moving quickly away from our own selves toward life.
Here, take my hand.

We'll swoon toward the swans,
those white symmetries
like sails without masts,
circling the harbor.
We'll drop to our knees
and sweet talk a shrimp.
We'll take enormous quantities of illegal drugs
and commune with the universe!
Then we'll hunk down to business,
scouring help wanted ads
for that rare disease:
nympholepsy.
the oldest religion in the world.

Given: the end
which we have all heard stories about.
Given: the possibility of human growth,
including revolution.
Dark rooms filled with weepers
begone!

Given: I stand here before you the best I can,
drunk as a child
trying to read these pages.

Now it's your turn.

Tenth Elegy

When in the course of human events
it becomes necessary for a people,
or persons,
to sing
who listens?
Jubilant angels?
Famous poets?
Friends of my mother?
Or are there professional listeners,
unstrung banjos next to a trumpet,
trombone with its one arm,
citizens of a pawnshop window?
The harmonicas crowd the electric clocks
nudging the glockenspiel.
I'm alive in New York and it's raining!
Five years and one bourbon ago
true poets spoke German.
Now there are no true anythings.
Sonata for broken accordion
– wheezing piano.
Mr. God writes strange music,
smokes five packs cigaretten a day,
while the audience hustles for seats.
Angels, of course, are ushers.
Tiny flashlights with powerful batteries.
Clumsy incorporeal souls
squeezing through the aisles.
And poets are busy too!
Hard work being immortal,
scribbling program notes
with five minutes till curtain.
As for my mother's friends,
whose hearing aids are rusty,
they've heard this song before.

It's only a voice,
waves slower, less brilliant than light:
sound's mirror.
Empty beach after Labor Day.
Each swell brandishes a bottle
containing its one note.
Let's get out our little linguistic tool kit
and read the instructions: primitive groans
domesticated through centuries of scientific endeavor.
Distinguished panel of expert philologists,
Mr. Phoneme, Dr. Grapheme, Auntie Morpheme.
How many commas dance on the end of a sentence,
like me?

How strange to be here in New York
keeping company with the rain
at a small kitchen table
six floors above Christopher Street.
Sheer cliff with fire escape.
Three room castle
at the base of which flows the crowd
west to east.
Children play there and lovers embrace
quiet as monks, though with more fervor.
Imagination wrestling with the physical.
And what I hear goes through me like a shot of whiskey.
An audience in revolt,
manifestos xeroxed on blank pages
itching to be written.
I light a cigarette and try to think
of Angels: impossible to attain
therefore desirable,
as is Love, the perfect Poem, etc.
Not that we ought to give up! Oh no.
Just bear in mind
that stupidity feels like bliss
for at least a while. Then comes college,
the debts and financial distress of Advanced Doubt.
Quickly leading to compromise and unemployment.
Name and address spelled in capital letters
on the first page of my resume:
RAINER MARIA RILKE, DUINO.

I regret I never learned to play a musical instrument.

The sackbut, for example.

Grandfather to the trombone.

Sachier: to pull, draw.

Bouter: to push, thrust against.

Oh, I would play my sackbut now,
pushing and pulling till your heartstrings burst
from such fine music.

Kepler's *Harmonia Mundi*

falls from the shelf.

Orbits and certain necessities

– elliptical, atonal –

go unobserved, though the book falls
and the cat bolts.

Exit the cat.

Kepler meant things to fit

like books in a library

or notes in a score,

as if the universe were an orchestra:

each star playing in the dark.

Mysterious physics:

a curious lack of harmony

bugs me.

Stockhausen vs. Mozart.

One dead, the other dead,

the rest of us thinking about...

The same music written in different keys,

which would suffice

if we could all die in our beds

from old age or cancer.

We hold no truths to be self-evident:

that all men and women are treated equal

is a joke. Working for America

we dread,

but do. Because there's nothing wrong

with the earth under you,

or you, individual,

one microbe on the nod.

Not unlike God, inventing

the invention of umbrellas

for a rainy day.

But that's not what I set out to say.

Consider Isaac Newton:
Genius Conked On Head By Piece Of Fruit.
Archimedes to the roman who killed him:
“Do not disturb my diagram.”
Eureka, I have found it!
Boats float
when they should sink.
Stepping naked from the bath
little oceans shaped like footprints
buoy up my feet.
I reach for a robe
and settle down with a good magazine.
Door knocks, phone rings.
Cat's back.
In the distance a baby cries.

Home,
that vanishing point
where a line begins and ends,
non-Euclidean, democratic.
Where a freshly pressed tuxedo
waits draped over a chair.
And the 10,000,000 words learned since the age of one,
15 songs,
and _____ billion mistakes
remind me I'm alive at the moment.
Happy? Try ecstatic,
whistling and warbling
to the rhythm of the traffic.
A science of time passing.
Which includes human endeavor,
making wheels,
growing corn,
fishing,
gathering nuts and berries,
(and since silence is often boring)
music and her children...
And after all that work
the hardest part is now:
waving goodbye in my best shirt
and souvenir-statue-of-liberty-good-luck tie.
Part of me could hold this pose forever.
That's why I'm starting over.
Gonna read each poem twice from the beginning

with notes! Commentary! Photographs!
Newspapers! Maps!
Shouldn't take more than two lives.
Pardon me while I set up my slide projector
– Just kidding.
Thanks, it's been swell.
I can sense the end approaching
and I think I'll take my leave
as it arrives.