

STETTEDRAMICK

I must be about done speaking of myself. I ought to be through thinking of myself by now. I'll stop speaking of myself at any moment ► My goodness, one is never done speaking of the self, never done searching for self, not while one has breath and perspective, even if one is thinking only of the near self, the almost whole self, that sexy hybrid self, the hyphenated I, the multiplicit me. You won't be able to stop speaking of yourself, not for long, not while awake or asleep, not with your many iterations of identity. You'll go on barking at yourself, chatting to yourself, harping on yourself, dying within yourself, imagining yourself as full of yourself or as more or less than yourself while beside yourself with yourself ◀ I stopped speaking of myself. I stopped on a dime, as the saying goes, I stopped cold turkey, as another saying goes, I stopped *instantaneously*, or somewhat like a sunset, my need to speak of myself twilighting into purple abandon before going black as the silent reaping. I was understandably proud of myself ▲ I'll like myself tomorrow more than I liked myself today and I'll make peace with myself and I'll climb outside of myself as if I were an old pair of pajamas ► My lands, aren't we the drowsy dreamer, you self-reflecting dear, you twaddle of fluff, you'll find fault with yourself tomorrow and the next day just as you did today, just as you have since losing your innocence, just as every thinking self does, you who can't but be the self of selves, selfish as a natural god ◀ I awoke, as I often wake, loving my loves and daydreaming days into lengthened time, staring out my windows at clouddrift and treesway and thinking of the places I'll never go and the people with whom I'll never tarry, and I liked myself for having the big imagination and for recognizing it as if it were love's shadow ▲ I'll fashion myself into a model soul. My humble self will tame my ambitious self. I'll weave my intentionality into the will of the world. ► Humility, to be proper humility, must come after ambition is realized, not before, and the soul had no model in its creation, angelic or beastly, and it has no model in all of creation now, and the will of the world isn't stretched upon your loom, and you'll be raveled into lint ◀ Along the shore I strolled, sea-calmed, content in the awareness of my insignificance, happy in my belly with my life's efforts, the beauty of the heavens amplifying the beauty of the waters, and with my hands shoved into my pockets I felt myself incline toward the ocean's history, infatuated with its classic youth, its serpents' restlessness ▲ What the mind silts, the heart stirs, and I'll feel more than I'll think on this terrestrial globe or within my snowglobe of dreams ► What you've felt, you'll feel again, indigestion or déjà vu, the reintegration of what drifts or aloofs, one eddy or pose not unlike another, and whatever you think was thought before and has been thought often since, the privilege of normalcy, the

repetitions of healthy living and all of your obsessive nonsense, the delusions of individuality and that romantic flash, the one that made you think recognition lived still, the one that for an instant made you feel of worth ◀ What I felt was the attraction of attention, glance and ricochet in a room invigorated, exchange without touch, some self recognized in other and some other resonant beyond self, firmament waves at permanent crest, the intricate percussion of my youth and harps and tubas from a child-heart ▲ I'll come to understand position in time, my place in the scheme of things, every place in every plan, every object's position, every person's adjustment to every mortal surrounding and my relationship to it all, coordinate and parallax, every possible angle of every shifting and unlikely truth ► You'll drift along in your confusion and you'll perish in a stew of gratitude and disappointment, not knowing half as most or any as all, not feeling singular enough to savor your disappearance or ever quite understand unique form ◀ Kindness watched over me, and in my waking reveries I stood in starlight beside the edifices of my young construct, the night air assuring me of merit and the dimensionality of the space confirming my status as one who inhabits, as one responsive and as one who makes from scraps, as one of portion and mobility, favored not as favorite but as conditional, bound to temporal momentousness ▲ I'll want to cross the immense patio to gaze out at the swelling sea of make-believe, those fantastic waters, my privacy still aroused from her passing, the salt-breeze of the sentimental sort, the grainy film of yesterday's romances and tomorrow's tragedies, the flags atop their poles not yet stiff, the whitecaps off beyond the horizon's gleam not yet threatening, my lungs capable ► She'll forget you in the depths beyond your death, whatever your skills of imagination, whatever melody the shore conducts, and you'll be some toothless shark or grounded gull, ghosted and impure, having failed to cohere as a maker or a love, attentive to neither horizon nor surf, your secret landbed sloppy with distraction, your breaths shortened by an excess of scratched soliloquy ◀ I stood under new clouds, not in starlight but in sealight, an aquamarine phosphorescence fond upon me, my vane in knowledge of storm-delight, my tongue not needing to wag, mind perked and memory swayed, the travel-goodness of promenade and balustrade and feminine waft, my hands on the painted rail and the wave-break sounds curling into pleasure, and I put her on a bicycle so she could pedal past without any twilight glances my way, her sinews outstraining mine and her intelligence outbeautying her hair and her heart beyond my penetration, her gaze toward softer climes and the patio swept of activity, my fingernails fussing with paint-peel, not so absently, flecks from metal,

my breathing still of arid solitude, my membership in mankind conspired ▲ To stop speaking of oneself *categorically*, that is worth desiring, and I'll aspire to monkish calm, less beatific ease than practical sturdiness, not needing anyone but enjoying all, silent in the seventh way, connected to the natural world and the inner world via level action, a good man free of language vanity ► A good man, my farthest stars, what crock, the concept of an egoist, *good* and *man* put together like *fine* and *wine*, as if you could be a moral connoisseur, as if your ethical antenna could scorch your tongue into silence, as if your judging edge could sever your hand from scrawl and scribble, your fever for reflection in perpetual smolder, your lust for words scalding, you stump of a lightning-struck consciousness, you seventh-generation narcissist, you impractical zealot ◀ To speak of silence may have been hyperbolic, granted, but regard for quiet strength feels genuine. I abandoned the night beach for my bungalow across the grand empty esplanade and I rang my urban mother from the old wall-phone and made her laugh. I spoke of the phosphorescence and the sounds of the sea and told her I was happy and would surprise her someday soon with a visit and might just bring my friend who adored bicycles and snowglobes. It isn't hard to be cheerful and concise and promising. And—if one has the merest smidgen of imagination—it isn't difficult to conjure romantic locales with some stranger of wordless energy. Language belongs to everyone ▼ I like the persistence of triangulation throughout some self-quadrivium, this non-quadratic tinging that resembles wind-bells, and I like the anecdotal sea imagery but don't see it going places, not beyond atmosphere or ornamentation, and the fancy self-talk and the wrangling will eddy while I strive to let the stet sing, to keep the melody vibrant in its stream ▲ I'll survive the endless quarrel between order and adventure, neither risking nor bunkering my life, unresentful of obligation and unafraid of change ► Nonsense, one can't protect oneself from accidental adventure or oppressive order, not across a lifetime, not when one belongs to some cultural milieu, and everyone belongs to some cultural milieu ◀ I took an evening stroll along the shore—hands in pockets and bicycle bereft—but at one point found myself walking in the grassy hills and it was afternoon, and this timeslide favored not my melancholy but horizon-song, the major sweep of choral day, and not only was I happy—the happiness of a man in solitude who is loved at home—but I felt my bloodstream future, the morrowing gladnesses and sorrows reaching my heart and fingertips and chimes and arrow, breezes off the sea and dreams off the cuff and I flourished up the slopes toward vista and breathlessness ▲ I'll peer past my insignificance to the scruff of her neck, her mouth the

mouth of things worth saying and her veins beyond my vanity, and I'll pass gender into snowflakes and grassblades, and I'll gratitude my memories to their knees and feel the seasons loosen my tongue and venture logic into the woods of my longing ► Your logic is laughable, even nonexistent, in the forests of your reveries or on the anvil plain of this day, and the she you speak of, nape and wrists and lips, must be imaginary or some empirical almagam, the typical sketch of wisp and witness, and there is nothing fresh in your charcoal or crayons, nothing original in your want, and look, now you have me speaking like you, as impressionistic and overwrought as some romantic hero, not as the balanced antagonist, self to self ◀ I felt alive, although I don't know what it feels like to feel dead, or unalive, unless I've forgotten, and the clouds sped by without coda while I paced my bungalow room, the old wall-phone silent, the turbulent sea almost as loud as when I stood at the boardwalk railing, her relationship to nature outside my ken, my relationship to nature different than hers, the moon in her loins and the sun in my eyes, standing alone atop the windswept hill overlooking the ocean's expanse, the afternoon throated toward operatic, my shirt flapping and the whitecaps proliferating, and I felt seasonal exposure as I fell onto the bungalow bed, not knowing whether I could fabricate some flannel-ramble or wool-ascent to her chalet ▲ With just myself for company, I'll throw my rucksack over one shoulder and begin my climb toward justification, as if I could mountain-goat my heart for altitude, the rarified atmosphere of her wit, or I'll phone my suburban mother and tell her I'm perfectly content, sprinkler-happy and lawn-trim, and I'll landscape my disposition with mounds and shrubbery and tell her I'm soon-sending intellectual property sealed with fondnesses, and that my love and I will tandem to her cul-de-sac once the weather warms ► If I weren't so perplexed by your conjunctions, I'd be more disgusted with your hyphens. You won't be claiming any victory through exceptional prowess, not in this lifetime. Be content with your station, settle into your self-tub as a reasonable and likeable guy, strive toward husbandness and fatherly, honor thy living mother, save plenty of well-earned wages for future uncertainties, do fair by your siblings and neighbors, and accept things agreeably and with maturity as they come. These qualities will stand you in good stead ◀ Lying atop the bungalow bed and waiting for the call that wasn't to come (not that night, not any night), I dreamt of snow as snow hadn't been dreamt by me before (not yet), countless flakes in air of alpen-silver, the whitest blanketing of my darkest hopes. I wasn't asleep (this was a waking dream, what began as a waking dream), so I unheard the surf and surrounded myself in the hush of evergreens. I saw neither utopia nor

dystopia. Nobody was around, no she or he, no they, no it—just me in a conjured globe with a pervasive feeling of passive accomplishment. The phone kept on not ringing all through the night ▲ Some morning I'll awake at ease with things ► No. No you won't ◀ I awoke (still dressed) on the bungalow bed (with its knobby bedspread) and felt wholly at ease with all things. Sun cut into the room. I must have drifted off while watching snowfall in her difficult mountains. I listened to the morning waves and wondered why I was half erect. Yet I was confident that I felt at ease with everything, or enough of everything for the not-everything to not matter ▲ I'll master another language, not one of the speaking world but of the subterranean mind, the underpath to transcendence or enlightenment or awareness or escape, words stunned by ideas and images infused with timing ► You haven't mastered your native tongue, not yet, and you won't, as all languages are unmasterable, although there are those who try to mistress them, and understanding comes only in flashes, when it comes at all, seldom and mysterious, timed beyond bewilderment ◀ From the highest of my hills—as the sun set upon the water (turning it to tarnished brass)—I heard the horizon tell me that every tomorrow will take care of its empirical self, that the language of the subconscious is the language of love (images as words and ideas as sensations), and that actions are its syntax, and I knew as I stood amid the waving grass that I was elsewhere dreaming of her snow ▲ Invention versus necessity, that stale dichotomy—the efforted versus the availed, flow or fever as opposed to rigor and stretch—I'll shun option for inclusivity, my constructions stable in flux, my aspirations settled in will ► What are you saying? As if you truly have control over anything at all, as if will can move along the membrane of matter and alter outcome, as if saying something is so isn't a total silent laughter to all the mute gods ◀ Snow fell upon my sea and waves broke upon her peaks and I willed myself into the perspicuous waters of a sudsless bath and stared down at my pale chest as if it contained different hearts, as if my body held multiverses and every soul, as if this bungalow couldn't ever be lonely with all my selves for constant company ▲ I'll set the water to draining and then I'll get out of the tub, dry off, get dressed, and call my mother from the old wall-phone, or so I'll think, perusing this body that carries around my mind, this entirely adequate body with no remarkable characteristics, with nothing to say for itself except that it works. I'll tell myself to get out of the lukewarm water, to get on with the day, to move into compliance, but I'll stay until the water is lukecold. Then—before I move back into air—something astonishing will happen, something astounding and outstanding and outrageous—► Please. Enough of these mother-phoning musings and

these solitude scenarios. My small lord, it can't be what you most wish for when you dream of your alterings and your futurings. It can't be what you most want to speak of when you're free to speak of absolutely anything in the whole wide universe ◀ I dreamt of independence (interior and exterior) so that I might understand union (physical and spiritual), my imagination willing to concoct hypothetical and anecdotal assemblages, still-lives of occasioned motion, even if the spiritual were a mere blend of emotional and intellectual energies, even if the physical were just tropes of isolation and yearning and fracturings and reconciliations, and the placement of myself in dimensionality was mimicry, not reality, of episodic nature but not story, closer to my sensibilities than fiction or fact, my arrangements of nature and all him and hers fantast of the truest kind ▲ As I was saying, I'll be about to climb out of the chilling tub when suddenly—▶ All the first person singulars are suspect, too, adrift without moorings, and nobody should be fooled by patterns of connectivity or petaled constructs. The availed heart is the only temporal flower worth loving ◀ I dreamt of interdependence, selves to selves, availed or unavailed (let us take our turns wielding forms of the word), and I imagined realms of desiring without corresponding desires, not of the consummated sort anyway, those of the imagined taste and not the taste itself, as much potential as particularity ▼ I like the mulish insistence upon inherent sterility, the future unhappening before the past is full-chosen, or the future rewound and the past outfutured, and I like the arrogance of reprise, as if the stallion could marvel at the lead-mare's herd-decisions from his trailing vigil, as if any donkey should sing the praises of horsey affection, though it ends always in stubbornness and dead sperm ▲ I'll withstand as I've withstood, whatever suddenness or shock awaits me, the electrified waters of *been* or the manufactured air of *will become*, my confidence in the ever-present ever renewable ▶ I wish I could revel in your optimism and champion your delusions, I do, but I long and strive for sense, for reasonable reactions to the world's output, for good measure and some semblance of considered analysis ◀ The ceiling dissipated and the roof disappeared and in place of the sky a colorless spiral twisted into a featureless visage, eyes implied and mouth inferred, the idea of a face without the actuality of a face, my nakedness noted (uninteresting), the temperature of the water known (irrelevant), the state of my being discerned (intense, but not extraordinary), the mouth speaking these things without moving, telling me my life was about to change (had always been somewhat different than I supposed), the spiral tightening and tightening, my heart palpitating (little bird, little bird) and my mind sparking in swift suspicion that the old phone

on the bungalow wall was trying to ring (someone's thoughts were winging my way), but the bell was broken and could neither do its duty as messenger nor express its inability to do its duty as messenger and thus I was caught between the untellable spiral and the untelling silence, that most common haunting of my waking dreams, the near-constant disappointment I daily prove I'm willing to withstand ▲ I'll veer away from self-parliament toward tomb-anarchy. I'll affirm my necessary collapse by constructing another top story. I'll move toward muteness within self-mutability, and I'll eventually comprehend the wiles and vagaries of duration and absence ► You're such a chest-feathers fluffer, you little tweet, but you'll still die bored and diminished and you'll go silent and be forgotten in holy and unholy expanses of time ◀ I perished, enthralled with change, ready for difference without repetition, and I was in time forgotten, but no matter, forgetting holds no trump over happenedness ▲ I'll take a blanket from the bungalow and lie in the shade of a tree in the boulevard park by the sea. The grass will be dry. It won't have stormed the night before. No one will have called with good news about selling childhood homes. I'll watch bees visit with clover beyond the blanket's edges. I'll think on my mother with fond indifference. She of the swift bicycle will flash by and I'll remember accomplishment can't ever save one from loneliness. Her chalet within the snowglobe was still-lifed, and her shambles-heart, like my heart, like every heart, has always been in disarray. I'll wish I were as dappled in spirit (as fragmented with future) as the shade (as the shine) on my arms. The day will spread out before me as if I were sovereign ► You speak of the future as if the present were broken or suffocating or scrotum-destroying, as if one can only be happy in fantasy or satisfied in dreams. Look around you at the now that is here, this real and adamant and inviolate immediacy, this all-that-we-have now, this irretrievable now, this won't-ever-come-again now ◀ I looked around me as if I belonged in some now that was everything (the past as gone and the future as never coming), some now of day and sun and thought, of sea and waft and love, my place in the world assured simply by my place in the world, and her heart, like my heart, like any heart in every now, was sovereign ▲ My cul-de-sac mother (not my brownstone mother)—imported in her flannel robe from her wall-to-wall carpeted world of solemn prudence for the sole purpose of tempering my mood—will sit fabricated beside me on the blanket and say to me with gentling concern that *lots of people like bicycles, honey, and lots of people like snowglobes, and plenty like both, and undoubtedly most of those are female, dear, and though it's clever to say and fun to imagine, no one really has storm-lips, or hair the color of spokes in motion, or wrists as*

delicate as thought, those don't make any sense, darling, you can understand what I'm saying, can't you? I'll stare beyond the clovery grass at the watery horizon—that meeting of unlike blues—and I'll think of the things I might say in her reveries, kindnesses of promise and consolation, provocations of fierce resolve, and I'll resequenter her somewhere along the boardwalk or in her chalet and export my mother to the forgiving heavens ► If you're going to mother and language us senseless, if you insist on wrapping us in your gauze of daydreams or our diaphanous subconscious, I'll have to become sterner in my rebukes and analytically sharper (or even cruel) in my criticisms, or this will become an unbearable casserole of substitutional oddities and chimeras and objectifications ◀ One bungalow morning, weary of the sea and feeling faux-nostalgic for things I'd never done and selves I'd never been, I drifted out toward my rural mother's clapboard house, that white-framed beauty back off the road among the poplars (or the cottonwoods or oaks or sycamores—the variety of tree isn't salient to this top-heavy telling). Along the way I came upon a flashpoint—a convergence of imagination and inquiry, that keen and vehement crucible—and, as best I could tell, it was godless (natural or artificial or unnatural). This comforted and compelled me, as if the flashpoint had texterity beyond my grasp and its form and content were outside all traditions. I thought (for some accelerated moments) I'd stumbled upon the confluence of order and adventure, the spot where a man could feel finished and still deathless, could wonder if he weren't the most elegant tetrahedron yet to become a next-life diamond ▲ Some (stormy and sequential) evening, I'll linger in the tub past reason, pondering the violence of the world, the violence of the heavens, the violence of the heart ► Don't speak about violence. You don't know violence. You've never been visited (or even hovered over) by violence. Not the violences of poverty or discrimination or grotesque wealth or disease. Not the violences of war or abandonment. Not those of revenge or vindictiveness or even ill-will. You jiggle-brained lamb, you can't even claim to have been the direct victim of random petty crime or the recipient of pointed shouts from jealous rage, you violence-innocent. Step out into the weedy vast and count your lucky stars ◀ I suffered the violence of the world as it pressed against my brow, the violence of omission and paranoid comfort, of cowardice and insipid facility, of the existential whisper and the foxed breaths of depression, of righteous hypocrisy and passive-aggressive undertow, and I dodged these and all tangible violences by hanging out in the dark alleys of idea ▲ I'll watch the refractions of bathwater glimmer on the bungalow ceiling, and I'll think about the intricacies of philosophical violence, of theological and

poetic aggression, the desperate morass of limited thought (collective or individual), and I'll drain the stale water while I infuse the tub with steaming water from the tap, trying to tide the new water from my toes to my shoulders, and I'll insist to myself that self-violence is to be avoided at most any cost ► This is now rubbing right up against too-much-to-be-borne ◄ I took the violence of the world upon my shoulders, let it seep into my viscera, and with my weaker hand I grabbed every violent heart and crushed it and tossed it away, one by one, without exception—not even the hearts of the beautiful or brilliant or insane escaped—and I wiped my hand across my brow and felt supremely qualified to judge the violent via violence (with my victory over compassion through my love for the pure). Then, sudden remorse, and after fashioning a foolproof plan of exquisite violence, I killed myself, but failed to stay killed ▲ I'll doze on the blanket until the sun moves its peek-through-bowers to a lone-stare-in-sky. I'll lie awake, overheating, my stronger arm draped over my eyes, and before shifting the blanket again to shade—in that discomfort and rising sweat—I'll hear her cycle by ► I can't make up my mind (you tease, you sophist, you child) whether the histrionics or the allusions or the romanticisms are the most insufferable ◄ I took the violence of the word into my mouth and passed it to her through an imaginary kiss and she passed it into the dirt with casual spit and up grew our blithe fatalism ▼ I like the nod to hedronics, if such exist, and it can't hurt for the spectra of human emotions to expand and inform our plotlessness, and one man's itch is another man's salve (though not all that often), and it is said by some that inherent violence (not love or design or chance) brought the universe into being and will be what will bring it into being again and always again ▲ Once upon a time—while I endure endurance but fail to survive survival—I'll story my world into true action and carnal scope. I'll be born into snow. I'll develop out of bohemian dust. I'll make my way toward dusk along narrow-gauge clauses. Society (if not culture) will shunt me off into whiter space. I'll storm my spur. I'll purpose my brainy pace. O the spangles will stove the dark ► Separate the wood from the screw, would you please? You can't refurbish your origin. You can't bore into the future. The future spirals your twist as form responds to substance, and your mind's speed won't (can't) alter tomorrow or tomorrow. The dark is there for our fury ◄ The sun persisted in rising as my world spun in accord. Winter bore me into spring and its dustdevils tempted my eyes closed, shut my mouth, bent my neck, but summer saw me to lightning and torrent, autumn spleened me into solace, and the fresh chill brought me back to my cindering. My pitch eyes glittered as if witnesses to a private carnival ▲ Then, after the very end, beyond

the final aftermath, while I'm carrying on as a carrier on, I'll whistle bent melodies to the brisk and frisky dawn, greeting my spontaneous mornings from the formative depths of my standard gloom ► I don't care for your relationship to time, or your conception of time, or I should say your *representation* of time, as if you could do violence to it in your thoughts or downy expressions—the violence of sought control and false estimation. Time won't yield to us outside of illusion ◀ Back before everything came to be, back when everything was still what it would eventually become, I strolled with the not yet gods (hands in pockets) along shores of phantasmagorical banality (susceptive to change), and we spoke in harmony with existential nostalgia for what won't have unfolded across any of our eternities ▲ I'll sit up in the bungalow bed (as unalone as I alone could be), surprised to see morning light splashed across the floor (my dreams having snow-drifted and the call still uncome), my heart happy in its confusions ► Why refuse to tell the story? You can't expect anyone to adore deflection ◀ I sat up in the narrow bed and squinted into another spectral and unpredictable morning in my bungalow by the sea, hearing tourists (as staffage) out on the promenade speaking in good-natured tones about things and matters not me, the day's waves crashing against my pier-timbers of pretension, my heart content to be bewildered ▲ From the pocket of my pants I'll pull a worn scrap of paper with earnest words scrawled upon it, something like *Pay attention. Be kind. Do your best.* This superrealism will taint the resplendent impressions of my morning, as if trying to thrust me back into a world of tedium and clarity and obligation ► I'm glad (if not touched) you've kept (will have kept) the only love missive I've thus far thought to send you ◀ From the coin pocket of my pants I plucked neither petals nor paper, but a fragment of quartz in the shape of a goat or fox or bear, or the semblance of an albino mule, my lucky avatar, my true totem. I cradled it in my palm and felt my realm to be one of willing burden, of obstinate hope, of reliable force, and this brought with it the pleasures of self-recognition ▲ She'll be the bird in the hand—the ascending lark, the honest hand ► Your hands are shaking ◀ My hands shook from resembled memory, from what might have been prophetic echo, the recognition of purpose or gift or conduit, my fate in her swift pulse ▲ Atop one of my hills above the sea, I'll walk with my mother in the days of her dying, and I'll tell her of my dreams of better effort, of my wish for openings into secret great-rooms of private becoming, and if they're my days of dying, I'll tell her of all the things I'll still find lovely and particular and irrefutable ► Your mule analogy, by the way, is false self-mockery, and can't be taken seriously. Your striding along a lonely ridgetop with only your mother's

thoughts for company would soon slide from overly sentimental to pitiable if it weren't so contrived. Your secrecy is a symptom, not a kid's fantasy, and there lurks the malignancy of our whole discontent ◀ I wasn't about to die before my geographic mother—not in a crimsoning tub or amid my blurry hills or under waves of self-time. I endured long enough to nod farewell to her sail as it dipped below the horizon ▲ I didn't birth myself, but I'll rebirth myself, not long after siding with death in a trivial argument. Then I'll grab her and flatten her and slip her into an architectural book of skyscrapers and I'll stick the book in a satchel and I'll stuff the satchel in my rucksack and I'll go rambling. I'll leave the sea for the mammoth wastes and the desert for the metropolis and the cities for the hamlets and the small life for the slathered throngs. I'll show her the palaces of kings and I'll show her off to the fine and shy. Or she'll do all of this with me—it hardly matters who is dimensional and who is memorabilia. I would cross a room for her. I'll cross rooms for her ▶ As if you could language alongside her under ominous clouds. As if you actually have freedom of imagination. As if it isn't all just urge and touch and sweat ◀ When I resurrected, I surprised myself, as if from a child's pop-up book. The unspiraling tower scraped the sky and the sky bled sunlight ▲ Across the panorama I'll range, stride by stride, in sickness and in health, her thoughts between my pages, my thoughts sharpening her upper serifs and rooting her lowest and bothering those between, this world a world of transgression and duty, of disparate anglings and desperate torques, of desires in concert and contradictory truths, of everything obvious and not so obviously everything ▶ You aren't going anywhere. Your travels (those of the body and not the mind, those real and not those fabricated out of idleness) are almost all behind you now, and imaginary journeys, like convoluted night-dreams—unless they can be turned into profit or scripture or friendship—should be kept to one's self ◀ Where I went when I went wandering, where I am now as I wander still (my thoughts in her expression and her expressings), is of no matter—what matters is I went alone and didn't go alone, I'm alone and never alone, she is essential (of the essence, or the essence), and my life was whimmed for my (temporal, not eternal—there is no eternal in this sense) benefit ▲ I'll transpose what I thought was true with what I'll never think true again, a switch of scissor blades, and I'll reverse-cut my way to peace of mind through conviction, full retrieval coming by way of intellectual calisthenics, and I won't be lackadaisical and I won't weary of trying and I won't let callow doubts stall my rightful regimen. Everything that will transpire (everything transpiring) will happen in the ordained glare of ineluctability, this could-never-have-been-otherwise, the way

it is because it will be this way, the way it will be having been before, my trust in the trusted ► You ought to trust in your trusting, if it were trustworthy—your vital gerunds—and be loyal to the you of yesterday through transformation, not transposition. I also suggest you accept the linearity of the world (not just embrace its circularity), your focus rightly placed on the ascent and not the labyrinth, and it wouldn't kill you to occasionally take a pragmatic approach to tomorrow's tanglings and the day after's disappointments and the day-after-that's surprising twists and revolutions ◀ As I tidied the bungalow for my departure, putting things in their places and setting everything aright for my imaginative homecoming, I heard the phone ring, or I thought I heard it ring, because as I crossed the room toward the old wall phone I understood it wasn't the phone ringing at all, it wasn't the call I was in a constant state of expecting and not expecting, but instead a bicycle bell outside the back window, as if she had stopped by for an unsolicited visit (a visit of my yearning and inclination) and was leaning her bike (the custom one I provided her—of her choosing—fitting her tone and not her manner) against the back wall of the bungalow (among the weeds nobody thought to trim or uproot) and had sounded the bell to herald her arrival (an arrival of my yearning and resistance). I stood in the shady bungalow alone and swallowed, wondering why she wouldn't ever stay where I put her, still trusting her autonomy ▼ I don't like what could be considered coy and inauthentic about suggestive fictioning—the certainties and uncertainties that overmatch life, that overwhelm my sensibilities, these threadbare heart-quickenings. I don't like posturing, or the dodges inherent in not knowing and not staying silent, and I don't like silence when staying silent isn't an option. Let us convince me (with utter words) not to wipe the landscape clean of unserved pronouns and invented satellites. Why can't we rid our nerve endings of peripherals? Where did I put my above-all-care? How old were we (as expanding boy) when she became integral to our depth-of-field projections of happiness? Love comes in billions of flavors, death in only one, and so I've sought and fleshed the absolute love, and I'll seek and meet the impossible (as flavorless) death, if only I could find my language-wings amid these ego-ruins ♦ The world will shrug off our ugliness. The world holds its beauty, will hold its beauty, held its beauty to the end—it'll be worth saying—worth saying from now till somewhat before and well beyond the end's ending, if saying is still sayable past the world's end, beyond worlds colliding and galaxies gone dark, our uglinesses and beauties and imaginations and implosions (our banality, our rectitude) stirred into the stew as spices undetectable to any but the most sensitive and sophisticated palate, and the world shrugged us off into cosmic history

before it was swallowed by its sun and before its galaxy was scattered across its universe and before the universe was crossed out by time (or by whatever rendered the universe, whatever cohered us till we stopped speaking of ourselves, till we changed past recognition, till we slipped away, one and all—I'll cross the world to await my call, and you won't cross the world and there won't be any call, and I crisscrossed my inner world as if I thought I'd been called, and from across worlds within worlds come unheedable calls, and even at cross purposes we still and will call out to one another) ♦ A flashpoint of various dreams (of formal veneers and awkward lengths), of squarings and triads and abstracted desires, of concrete pleasures and witnessings—I'll revel in devices of joy and in joy and joy and in the lack of joy and in the near-ocean shock of ringing. I: *Hello*. She: *Hello*. Silence—or dual breathing with ambient sounds. She (as me as her): *In my ruddy and seldom-visited chalet—that place of snow and spruce and curving wintry stars, of snowfall and laden trees and voyeur twinklings, of hearth-rug and ceiling-depths—on the far wall of the big room (as in your pale and oft-neglected bungalow), an old broken phone hangs and waits, or at least its bell must be broken, since it never rings (as if no one ever calls, as if no one ever thinks to warn of delivering a package of pure intent), and I'm free-spoken from elsewhere and you're fair-listening from elsewhere and I'll be fair-weathered in imagination and you'll be free-standing in the curious kingdom* ♦ From baths alone (to hilly walks in conjunction) to sleeping as one, we make life happier than not, we've made life more than nothing, better than absence and worth every loss—we make love to outpurpose death while its stewards clutch our figs and pearls, our lobes and dreams, our scruffy hearts. She: *Hello*. I: *Hello*. And I (before silence is allowed to dominate): *(Boy-chested and earnest) I'll ride your bike from the joy-bright esplanade toward the nether-cove, reverent of sunlight and sinew and grotto-lured, the sea as (distant and) close and powerful as motherance, and I'll stem myself with thoughts of crest (not crash or coast), my surf-wish and cleft-urge, hands off the handlebars and brakes strayed, sunslant and shirt-ripple, tight-eyed and voiceless* ♦ The house in the country—the one so beautifully whitewashed and tucked among poplars—will wait for me a thousand seasons if she must, her flank exposed to the road's bend. The wainscotting, the long-lasting (brass and copper) hardware, the embroidered curtains (the hand-wide floorboards, the pressed-tin ceilings)—show me who to be, whom to imaginatively recognize, what to make of myself in time. Around back, against the weathered wood of the wall, I'll lean the bicycle. The empty house won't mind if I whistle some sad unforgotten lullaby, and it won't be bothered if I stretch out on a perfectly made (long dust-wrapped) daybed, and it won't be provoked

into stabbing silence if I were to confess my affections for life's narrowest problems, life's insuperable tragedies, life's wider reversals ♦ To stare at the sky (as if it could cleanse one's yearn, as if it could tidy one's plummet) is to forsake the reflection pool. I stood in the glare of their judgment and forgiveness, her scrutiny and her reconciliation, the sea close enough for comfort, too close to ignore, tide and stars out, heart withdrawn into its cavity of privilege, and I mustered the courage to tell her everything and to tell her everything, and it wasn't enough and it was enough, it couldn't ever be enough and it has always been plenty more than enough (as enough as enough can get), and once the telling was told I looked down at my grave image (there isn't time in life to amend all of one's failures, to mend one's every fault, to make amends for one's host of failings, though one must try, mustn't one—I'll try with all my living might, and you'll try too hard and you'll recoil from your aggression's sweat and from the absolute weight of renewable failure, and my efforts yielded self-cordial redemption, and throughout the world trying is trying, and in this incessant sheen of existence we catch sight of our inconstant shadows) ♦ Were I to try and fail to tessellate myself—some mosaic half-plan of my resolve falling short of diamond or star (I've stalked blent shapes since boyhood—semen as grout, blood as cleanser, the tiling of the mind)—could I expect sympathy from the near-righteous, from the wall-to-wall carpet crowd, from those who know real dirt, from the maggots and the gods, from the fashion-devils of the anti-academy or from my selfsame angles, and were I to effort the cave without daughtering the sun I suppose heaven's empathy wouldn't rain down upon me ♦ I'll stop the extravagance and you won't stop and I spoke plainly ♦ The breeze, as usual, rose off the water, and it was one of those white-sunshine afternoons that make the happy happier and the sad apostates to their births. I often sat amid the grassy hills above the sea in the days of my mother's dying, and that afternoon I thought I could sense (beyond book-knowledge) the sun's impermanence (and the undreamt-of fact and strange comedy of its mortality's lack of bearing upon my life). Waves of grass out-motioned the ocean's surf while my heart farewelled the dead—I couldn't undo my father's death and I won't be able to undo my mother's and the deaths of my imagined haunt me more than diamonds parading to dust or the ensured dispersal of any star. She must know she more or less dies with me—only the rarest of tellings do much outlasting of their tellers—and toward the shine we stride, pounding our stanza-hopes as if infinities don't exist within clausured moments, as if destinations are reasonable goals. The bungalow can't contain my whole world and my body won't hold its soul, not if its vessel-integrity were viable for the

aggregate lifetimes of trillions of suns, and her body (as spirited thought) harbors its soul within ideas of cubist grace. Morning breezes often bring afternoon winds and afternoon breezes often bring evenings calm, and I watched the sun die behind the curtain of water before I switched the coastal grass to timothy grass and walked in from the fields toward the kitchen lights of clapboard nostalgia ♦ Live wires stretch (invisibly) from bungalow-cocoon to alpine seclusion (our corner of the fray), from hearth-glow to seaside isolation (our edge of the weave), and the upcoming wireless flinch-and-dodge will match the wired silence of today (extending out to every tomorrow's incumbent memories of yesterday). I'll listen through tree roots and ivy vines and laundry lines and rapunzel-strands (lightning bolts and railroad tracks and samson-curls and seaweed), straining to hear the truth disguised as change spared, since I'm most comfortable in my permanent-november mind ♦ I once thought the lesser attic possessed no correlative to the upper-attic modulations of her voice, not in the daylight and not when the surf was storm-tendered, not when she was speaking the waves into form or the weather into content and not in shallow night (gathered gloom kitchen-lit away). I now think the bungalow must hide a secret passageway to the mothery, her mouthlessness voiced as wingbeats around the candle-tears of my sentiments. I'll become lapidary-proofed, and you play recklessly with brutal progressions, and I spoke plainly (the old wall-phone picking up static from distant cloud-fronts) when I said *I stopped speaking of myself* (dimes and coldness, purple death) and when I pressed on to say *Time vice-versas and I stood in the alone-kitchen in the light halved by projection (those flutter-frames of made memory) and the crucial table was wiped clean and my hands on the flat wood were worth millennia of words and the night didn't offer enough of a breeze to fret a paper moth or bother an instance-flame (being didn't worry not-being and not-being didn't trouble my heart) and I drifted around the edges of the candlelight (trying not to think of myself) somewhat shy of forever (till dawn)* ♦ I'll be humbled by my pride (if I'm not humiliated by my humility), and you're a decent person but nothing special, and I rode love (of the friendliest breed) all the way to the pardon-coast ♦ Out on the vast pavement of the esplanade, someone has chalked a childlike cause-and-effect world of insouciant and invidious contrasts, kingdoms and queendoms of fancy and loss, of colorful and purposeless realms and whims (betrayals and bodies of water), roads winding yon and thither, woods of suspense and (rivers of shine and) glades of woe—all fated to disappear with the next rain or storm surge. I stood studying them in the soft sunlight of an off-season day spent alone, as if I were their genesis and they weren't ever to be finished, as if the chalk had been made from the bone-dust of the enemies

I never cultivated, as if the crudely drawn world were a map for treasure buried in the heartest heart of the imagined chest. The sunlight on my clothing felt warmer than I felt I deserved, and I thought my skin should catch fire if my mind could cradle some intricate idea to its natural death. *The transitions from body to fantasy (back to body) probably don't exist (mathematically or musically), and where my mind speeds my gut won't follow (its nature is to hunker), and my heart is temporal but my spirit is hearted (as spherical horizon), and I'll wander (I so wandered) to the brightest curves of all of time (trees and clouds and hands persisted as incomparable), and women's voices (hers and hers and hers and hers) will keep me company (well-kept and will-kept) throughout my resolutions and dissolutions, and fortune may come from within as cooling sweat and death may come from within as well-sprung tears, but breezes off the sea won't seduce my inner turmoil to play or feast or desist.* While I circumnavigated the chalkings, I chastised myself: *You're a well-made mistake, you archer-calf, you fragment of work-force, you tortured worder and word-torturer, and you'll perish in your dry salvages or among your unmarred endpapers, and the forgetting will come as easily as your shuffling of wills or your cycling of hopes. You're well-meaning, but you'll never save souls. You're off-key, but your song is atypical. You're wistful, but your gratitude breathes merit. There isn't a bungalow in any of our worlds capable of inquiry-cleansing. You're not everyone and you've not been no one and you can't make of yourself a pyramid of sound.* Later (that later-than-never fulfillment), I stood at the promenade railing and tried to gaze indifferently out to sea (that spawn-indifference of happiness), and I broke down into component pleasures (not infinite, not time-centered, not rung). I thought the old wall-phone into existence, and the possibility of its absent bell now invigorates my extremities. Silence victory ♦ Days die (like anything else), and I'll circumself in the gloaming ♦ Motherness (unsurprisingly) outlasted fatherance across chronic time, and judgment makes a man stand tall with the sun in his eyes, and I'll accept voicelessness as standard post-life dispensation. I lay upon the blanket on the grass in the park longer than my normal patience allowed, longer than protocol dictates for most leisure activity, without book or any implement or plan, moving in increments with the shade, (undoingly and subconsciously) not understanding the blue swath above or the red swirls within, the wakefulness as disconcerting (in its illusions and delusions) as the sporadic napping, and I lounged along the edges of that seaside arbor as if death weren't counting my heartbeats, as if I couldn't do it again tomorrow or the next day (in some more modest fashion), as if I *weren't* a laborer and this could be my life or as if I *were* a laborer and this was my one day off to do absolutely

nothing for a small eternity. If another (not myself) is there now, perhaps I'm there also—also awhile, also always ♦ What becomes of foolishness or wisdom isn't long-run different—flashpoints or unringings, storm or simple bluster, too-quick embraces or deep-enough baths, mire or pinnacle. And in my urban dismemory roof slates slide off into empty alleyways and someone else's mother scrubs my rotting smile. The promenade bends (I make it bend) like an uncovered shoulder turned away from the upcoming surge. I'll nestle into the comfort of implacable bone-weariness (assured I could do nothing but), and you insist upon your meaningless-meaningful pulse (it stops with the mind, if not the heart), and I crossed in front of the sea with my conscience in shadow (and the water sparkled approval—for my littlest visions, my captured landscape, my plural and singulars, my inner front). Being is such a fantastic place to be ♦ My persons (those oriented toward me) situate and invest themselves (are encouraged to situate and invest themselves) according to inscrutable design—from corporeal disgust to spiritual evasion to pagan discipline—and love (in all its guises) dominates. Love is worth loving, if nothing else. This was a chalk-smudge (saltwater on a rendering, steppings across a dream), and I felt I could live just as long as I lived and that would (in essence) be appropriate. Flecks of paint littered the pavement around my shoes. Early stars peered over my shoulders. I suddenly wanted effervescent lemonade in a gleaming blue glass, but this sort of want has never been mine to satisfy, not even in some esplanade (now streetlit) haze (my twice-feminine concoction of stasis and movement—till I lignify or chitinize as once-earnest flesh). What becomes of us isn't short-run identifiable—accomplishments or regrets, bungalow-beds or candle-kitchens, drain or chimney, stars or seeds ♦ I doubt I could manifest the energy to climb a vining monologue of *I will, you can't, I did* into clouds of trust (or kind deliquescence). Neither my hardening will nor my sputtering resolve save me from obscurant sinkholes, and if I alone (in this fatalist's garb) foster the indifference and the leaving-alone, it's because I've developed myself into a wilderness preserve closed to all but good-legged or stout-legged (volunteer) rangers (and the occasional wandering misfit). The reward for everything difficult is the awareness of greater difficulty, yet my refusal to be reconstructed comes from respect for (and intimacy with) the sunny side of the street. The promenade seldom holds a shaded self, has known only hurricanes of potential, and exists alongside me in this perpetual comparative. But my declaratives (those oriented from me) won't a palace build ♦ All across my imperial marvel fly birds of unalone strangeness, their copper-empiricisms overtuned to conduct my mood worldward, to outsend my mull and roil, to song-wash time—I've never

prayed for peace. The tubwater gave back my aspirations—somewhere upstream, land-concerned strangers assert their riparian rights—and I needn't fear any flooding of my secret haunts ♦ *You may know where your bones are buried but you won't find our way home by playing the wolf at the door. Your disguises aren't fooling anyone—not anyone who matters—and validation isn't a trembling audience or some variation on a storybook brunt. You'll never bow to their applause until you cut the omissions* ♦ I spoke plainly out of my kitchen-paralysis when I said *I won't capture the moth just to set it free* and when I pressed on to say *The moth's shadow will survive the moth and will only leave with the body or the light and the moth's spirit isn't concerned with the flame and if I snuff the flame I'll usher in the casualty of the rural darkness and the sunrise will arrive in time to validate the night's space and I'll accept death to not invalidate the primacy of life's scope and the time is always wrong for getting out while we still can* ✧ I'll disappear into the next mystery, and you'll be absorbed into the dynamic conglomerate, and when I died (as it was ordained I must) I fell into the outskirts of an event not intended for me—a celebration of inheritance or a festival of regard or a pageant of tragedy (I couldn't tell from my distant hills and felt no inclination to close that distance)—and so I found myself in the hinterlands of the afterlife with plenty of time on my hands to indulge in the intense amusements of idle self-assessment and with no place to go but toward the crowd (I was unattractive and unattracted). I sensed that I was young-hollow (not old-hollow as I'd been) and that I had energy to roam the unpopulated hills and explore solitude and be painstakingly contemplative to my heart's delight. *I thought: If only (if only) I'd current-risked to thrill-refresh (or home-adored to ego-wean), if only I'd believed in unrequited and unconditional love and planted them in the springtime of my chest (if only I could wander the post-apocalypse of the soul), and if only my dual-conscience could double into grace—as if it weren't too young and I couldn't have known (if only I could treble into chord-choice)—if only I'd invented someone to be my challenge obliger, to daily brink me. I thought: I once thought that if only I could give up trying to know, I might find peace (you'll never find peace), that peace is in the not-knowing, in the not-quite-caring-to-know (or in the caring-to-not-quite-know), but now I think I think that wanting to know everything is the holiest of urges and that accepting not-knowing is a stall-tactic and that all this thinking will last some portion of eternity (as does all thinking) and that knowing (you'll never know) is our fall toward mortal joy. I thought: If only I hadn't become something I could still be anything—but I'm this specific I-thing in this fabricated place after having lived that bounded life and after having been born out of*

remembered nothingness or forgotten otherness and I won't ever be able to tell the future from (*within*) the present (whether it's prescriptive or whether I'm to persist into its corners or whether it's a necessary sequence through which I'm being ushered) unless the present is illusory in its occlusion of the future (the present isn't presently illusory in its occlusion of the future). I thought these things without thinking of the distant crowd as my crowd (I've never thought of any crowd as *any crowd of mine*), and I thought that if I were to have gone down to them from my altitude with news of some new knowledge, I would have worried all-along-the-way *they might slay me for my knowledge* (though I was dead already and would have given it to them freely). But if I can't die (or can't stay dead), it renders death ineffectual beyond transition (a corridor to the motherly, to the lesser or greater attic, to her imagination's hothouse, to whatever is nexting through me, to incorrigible fatedness). I wholly planned on dying, I died, I wasn't dead (this isn't to say I was rebirthed or that I self-resurrected), or I was dead and I was still afraid of dying (though not of being dead)—change is what we most obviously crave and fear. Spring wasn't in my chest when winter skeined its way into my pastest past, but now the spring in my legs carried me through the hills to an abandoned sea (unattractive and unattracted). *This astonishing life* (after life) *after life* is regular beauty. Words lost in the wording. I found the bungalow not far from where I remembered it (its shy angles, its long recline under the sun, the arrogance of its self-sufficient interiors, its culture in decline, its roof horizon-sketched and ruler-matched with the esplanade and promenade as silent neighbors, its perceptual longing to be a merciful ruin). *Elsewheres* (metropolis, chalet, favored-shelf, flashlines, candlebed) craned my once-downed neck to alert, and I listened for some call not-to-come. Waves don't tell the story and tides aren't lunared to the pulses of our loves. None of this embodiment was very actual (I understood this then as I somewhat understand it now), but I've never been much impressed by the physical (except at its most oblique). *Like everything metaphysical the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language*. This child's notion was sewn into a rudimentary sampler hung on a wall within a depiction of a glass-domed house on the pavement of the esplanade. I knew it was a house because of the furniture and the knickknacks drawn into its rooms, and I knew it was glass because it was snowing within the house but not outside the house (the hearth was burning bright and the house appeared unpeopled—unless someone were bathing in the back room or hiding in the cellar). In the broad daylight of my experience a rendered moon rose above the chalked structure and shone its refracted sunlight upon the swirly-snow within

the house—and the slight incongruity of moonlight upon interior snowfall approached me to happiness. I stood at the *punctum saliens* of my free expectations (my untouchable space) and wondered *if I penetrated the domed house and threw myself into its hearth could I phoenix out of my birth* (I wished I could go back down-the-drain with the darkened waters so that I might yet understand the blood-tidings of relief and disappointment). *Down in the cellar (with longing too stellar), time wouldn't tell her (its only dream)*. A bicycle bell can be heard over the wildest surf and my mother's lungs weren't built to filter coastal air and I never could think of death as terminal. Strolling along the shore (as if the sea weren't metaphorically primordial, as if I weren't snagged and tangled and wrapped within all my I-nesses, as if I weren't almost done speaking of myself), I thought I could share my absence (that I *should* share it, if I could—the melancholy of departed), and that they (those of the crowd or my outer selves) would come one-by-one to the promenade and fleck paint from its railing and watch for phosphorescence and storm-hope and bask in the inviolate pleasures of waiting (for what isn't to come), and one of them might hear the old wall-phone ringing in the bungalow and wonder whether someone were nostalgic or awash in missing or just lonely (or whether there weren't some news from the margins or core to impart), and by sharing I thought I could contribute to the human comedy and the performance of a species (as set-painter or snow-rigger or usher-wink), and that my failings wouldn't look so ordinary and awful in the neighbor-lights of an earnest backyard sideshow on a weary summer's eve (the rising of the surf pounds the unshocked shore)—failings of temperament and display, of shadowing love and the mistargeting of small integrities, of time-personification and temporal worship, of strained youth-into-adult straight-mouthed funlessness of the poor-timing sort, the constricting parameters of a single-sound listener—for I've played with projections of the illusion of the sun going down in the verisimilar now (not blossoms on an early grave, not flag-folding sincerity, not weeping or wailing or wall-staring or bedside lament or those twilit head-in-lap farewells, those instants of sunout—after which nothing is ever the same again—that infinite moment which is every moment), the terrors of a stranger-gone-under, of the divine-gone-miniature, of a friend-in-motion, of love-as-autonomy, a quadrilateral persona with its fifth entity and sixth perception, a soul in loose clothing with a hurricane sliding off ever-elsewhere (the eye of language calm upon those of merit and choice)—and I didn't step on any starfish and I didn't wade out into oblivion and I didn't rescind scope and I didn't draw lightning to my accumulated efforts and I didn't die, I won't die, dead I'll be, there is but death, there is no death ▲