

# Tony Towle

# Selected Poems

1974–1979

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\* Included in *The History of the Invitation: New and Selected Poems 1963-2000* (Brooklyn: Hanging Loose Press, 2001).

## Works on Paper

### I

Columns and pilasters, in general  
spread over much of the composition,  
then periodically erased, by sweeping reforms,

and when I climbed to the first of the pinnacles of recognition,  
the highest tower I had so far caused to be made,  
there was all that I could see, and the rest, which I could not

but which I took surely to be not much different,  
years and miles from where I confer  
with a virtual small army of workmen, who hold strong beliefs,

and wait with the tools of their trades  
to affix themselves to my genius.  
And let them wait, like relatives,

knowing the decisions are up to me by what I am wearing,  
and by the fact that the aristocracy will talk to me.  
And I don't mind talking to them,

though they have no idea of what I'm talking about,  
not even taking a cumbersome guess;  
they await the purely visual,

and mutter about the cost,  
and the fabled structures of the ruined past.  
Let them wait too, like relatives and like the workmen

until I complete my arrival, through veils of oriental space:  
my conception of series of thinly partitioned units  
permanently on the verge of geographical separation,

of being lost in the opacity of irretrievably divided containers,  
but which as a whole permit the vastness of a mysterious Asia,  
and when that happens I am in many places at once.

But the workmen are having their lunch,  
which imposes the need to begin;  
materials in their realities lie sorted in piles,

the foundations have dried in their vales of rectangles  
from which there is little choice but to go upward,  
leaving the ground and flowers below.

In my native city people will become content with such outlines,  
vertical and superimposed, extending for miles,  
but best seen at a distance, with the rising or setting sun,

and holding the provincial mind at bay;  
for a native will glance up maybe once, during a typical week of toil,  
in a drifting light of motes like golden sawdust,

and dream of an ocean breeze.

Like the aristocracy I of course can be seen muttering too,  
sometimes regarding the fulfilling virtues of domes

for which I have a great fondness, make of it what you will,  
there in the morning haze of graceful blue towers,  
which yet by evening can remain to be built.

When I was young I sketched it all in together,  
cobwebs, noses, wicker baskets in the marketplace,  
where everyone assembles to be cheated twice a week,

developing my point of view from under an archway,  
which expanded in scale with my swelling intellect,  
so that by the time I had gathered the material with which to build

there were no longer any details,  
the resulting blank walls of that early period,  
with no plausible way to get on top of them,

and with their exhausting emotional effects.  
The air is quite cold; rustic music is heard from afar,  
and the barbarism that swirls like sand around it;

it always takes years, damn it,  
to bring to conclusion anything bigger than a water closet;  
and I always hear something more from afar

picking up the melancholy course of the random river  
washing away the impressive accoutrements of office,  
and I fail again in my contemplated youth,

as when I spoke to no one at the town swimming pool,  
in love with a succession of anonymous girls,  
and as I had foreseen, no one spoke to me;

and I looked at the streets I walked along very carefully,  
discovering sites for future majestic fountains,  
in flashes of future visual effect.

Fountains would be the main point of interest,  
toward the end of a long life,  
in a design I could not be sure was known about,

though my sketches and notebooks were searched on occasion  
and since I referred to it in conversation,  
it might be presumed to exist:

there was a large, rambling central structure  
punctuating the air with domes and towers  
and stretching as far as one could see:

the classic optical encirclement of an area  
by one eye or the other,  
staring from beneath a lidded portico

and all of it deceptively integrated into its surroundings,  
as was my greeting from the door.  
An actual visit would have become progressively more bizarre

and culminate in an actual room in which to spend the night,  
the windows too high to look out from conveniently,  
or too low: I would usually go too far in one direction,

including the use of terminology for the directions,  
with the continuous expansion of the wings,  
and the immobile support of the Mediterranean pillars,

abbreviated cultural colonnades, unseen in the mud but effective,  
and as sure a foundation as I could find.  
And even as I pass through my most complicated developments

society continues with its simple walls  
for the merchants, armies, women, migrations of beggars,  
held simply to one side or the other,

a superstructure rising higher until the very end,  
anticipating the stacked bridges of 20th-century warships,  
even to the extent of a backdrop of sky and bustling harbors,

and with commentaries on the bordering architrave,  
including some on those who comment,  
including some of my own,

to be found among the ruins my work will eventually come to be,  
for I aspire without hesitation to this future for my plans,  
as I aspire simultaneously to the grandeur of the past.

## II

I could have almost begun to prefer one spot above others  
in that still unfinished business,  
a private and at present inaccessible alcove

set beneath a contemporary pediment of uncertain dimensions;  
it always takes years,  
and someone, even myself, can come along and do it over

and do it better. I keep my eye out for such people  
and perhaps will spend time with their grandparents,  
as underground genetic galleries push through the unknowable sea.

There will be a second window there before I am through,  
for a woman no doubt, some scheming harlot  
to misunderstand my pebbled genius

directed still to visions seen first as a child,  
and behind them I could almost see what I wanted,  
companions with personal opacities but still my companions;

but whatever I thought that I saw  
was quickly obscured from view  
and I would start again with an empty space.

My present companions edge restlessly toward the carriage,  
hired at the height of my popularity,  
anxious to be off to the evening pleasures of the town,

to lower the curtains and cut themselves off from view,  
permitting a new focus for my attention,  
and probably some new companions;

though within minutes I usually insult them,  
and they cough into their handkerchiefs,  
small indentations in the webbed darkness,

so much polite bullshit in the rich sunless haze.  
I have been reminded to manipulate the interior light as well,  
stumbling back to my room in my native city,

having passed under the wrong magnificent archway to find it,  
for it could get lost, in sumptuous passage through the dusk,  
in partnership with the retiring sun,

until finally one can see nothing at all.  
There is an occasional thief on the cobbled streets  
but none escapes his personal indentation of sky,

in which I have left a few intentional openings,  
my comment on the presumed perfection of nature,  
and one of the refinements of its future,

which in any event flies off at my approach.  
I would have something to eat but there is no time for it;  
illustrations are a problem because I can't really draw,

my last elaborated sketch, of some open windows,  
lies like invisible shreds on the mottled flagstone floor,  
while I rework the aimless scheme in which it played a part,

including an entryway surrounded by, for all practical purposes,  
nothing but mountains like golden sawdust made in the process;  
and over the entryway I placed a decorated grille,

at the height of about fifteen feet  
(higher than that there was no reason to go)  
and it made an immediate impression even in those lifeless times,

and the space was thereby intensified,  
and I used up one of the grilles.  
The entire arrangement could get lost in the event of an arrival,

and even I tended to forget about it as the visit wore on,  
bringing out another bottle at the height of my popularity,  
but intending to mention it to break the tragicomic composition

made wholly one or the other  
by forgetting what I would say —  
passing through an unseen gesture into the baroque,

my ordinary statements pulled even further out of context.  
It takes a hundred years to see what is missing,  
and by then the ruins unearthed by discovery

have been added to and plastered over  
without recording or remembering what it had been  
that caused them to become ruins in the first place.

### III

Brunelleschi, for one,  
had no real imagination to speak of,  
only a purple river, the wine crushed within him,

flooded his thinking until he dropped,  
and to break his fall he fixed a series of mental indentations,  
calculated idiosyncrasy to support his classical means;

and the next day he went through the encyclopedias,  
and found no one who bore his name;  
and in his growing schemes this began to play a part,

and committing the schemes to paper,  
his thoughts became aroused still further,  
until close to the point of exhaustion

what transpired on the paper with its blank horizon  
took place at a perfect distance,  
and thus became visible to others as well.

A relation of mine passed Brunelleschi sitting on the curb,  
as even in my own time I have passed people sitting on the curb;  
it seemed he had no more money and had been ejected from his quarters,

and his gaze was fixed perfectly between the curb and the horizon,  
and he muttered of the many possibilities of entrance and exit  
so that a creditor would have but one chance in twenty of finding him,

and at the same time there could be made a powerful statement of genius  
and of the genius of his fragmented nation, Italy.  
But later, in the cathedral, he was disturbed by a vision:

an unfriendly man named Bramante appeared,  
and vowed with a sneer that no matter what Brunelleschi did  
that he, Bramante, could then see it and set about improving on it

and that the only way to avoid this was to give up his schemes entirely.  
Opening his eyes, Brunelleschi thought for a moment;  
if he devoted at least some of his imaginative activity to good works,

providing a refuge for other homeless Italians,  
and an exciting visual refuge even for those who had homes,  
the nation itself an orphan in a foreign sea of evil circumstance,

then this Bramante might be prevented from being born,  
or might be led by Providence into another field of endeavor.  
And thus the famous Foundling Hospital was conceived,\*

furnishing a startling row of identical archways, or escapes,  
permitting the maturing infants a maximum number of alternatives,  
and it was here of course that Bramante grew from infancy,

lost in the spatial narrations of an inspired environment,  
he himself adding a story to it, and a larger facing facsimile,  
until a plague emptied all those buildings forever.

Germans are not the only critics of our art:  
Good Christ! Look at the dust hiding the Palazzo Farnese,  
or contemplate the attempt of a tasteful stroll

through the unruly shrubbery that spoils the Villa Giulia;  
or admire the scene from the catwalk of the Santa Maria delle Grazie,  
the closest you can get to heaven

before the discrete critical push  
that sends you shrieking discreetly in the other direction,  
your velvet costume not even paid for in this fraudulent age.

My own is borrowed from my wife's current lover,  
and to hell with him, her,  
and the façade of the Palazzo dei Tribunali,

for the sprawling good nature of my closing youth  
turns quickly to the bitter sobriety of a long final period,  
with yet a third window, far from the others,

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\* 1419

from which to look steadily out on the last of the sun,  
shapeless groups of people coming back to mind,  
casting shadows in a manner that will come to be called Gothic:

that style suitable for the pedantry of the Parisian scholiasts  
and their English cousins, whom they seem to impress —  
having the same unhealthy backdrop for their wintry meditations,

encircled by covering shadows, pondering the meaning of it all.  
They took the shadows and made them into grotesque façades  
but you don't have to tell me about it,

I can stand at the edge of that style,  
drink down a liter of vino rosso  
and step back down from the sill, out of the sun,

ready with the foundation for a magnificent seaside villa,  
and to kiss the right damned rings to get the damned money,  
and ready for adventure besides.

Since then with the opportunities  
I have added a dome to make it imposing,  
though the outline on paper is simple enough,

like that of the rectangular building in which I was born,  
sketched in again clumsily enough as my mother lay dying,  
having originally altered it in a series of nightmares, framed

and then lost completely in shadows in that part of the city,  
which I nevertheless can see from the elevation of my window  
if the weather is clear,  
and the weather is clear.

#### IV

I think that I mentioned being knighted by an emperor,  
who never quite came together in my thinking,  
nor I in his, no doubt,

lost in our respective involvements, personal and foreign,  
which spatially will hang you between two spires,  
as some vehicle carries you into the night,

your wine-soaked doublet not properly dried,  
the illusory limits of your vision  
directed to an unfinished tomb, for a cardinal, an Austrian,

and I bathed it in northern shadows after all,  
the unused frame that swirls like sand around it,  
while the cardinal chases young boys and ponders the meaning of it all.

I would gladly build something for the duke,  
if he would get out of bed and come to court,  
and extricate my talent from these milling knaves and churls;

but when he eventually enlarges his palace  
it is from the plans of a foreigner, his very name unintelligible,  
who insists the marble be polished to an unbearable degree,

until both he and it are pulverized by the angry mob  
that had been called upon to do the polishing,  
which provides a major key to works of the imagination;

but as for your marbled wit,  
you must polish it yourself,  
for at the moment I am arguing with my wife,

the children squabbling, a mistress run off to the south,  
after I spent two fortunes on the wench,  
and the neighbors have nothing to do but listen

to the words reverberating like the disasters of war,  
upheavals that toss about one's life and work  
and fill the air with rattling fragments,

the transitional phase of fugitive hurtling pieces  
that will create the random harmonies of a peacefully fallen rubble,  
and give unity to previously unaltered space.

It is something my followers can investigate, poking about,  
to see how it looks in the April dusk,  
and half a year later in the September dusk,

and it will identify them as my followers. My enemies  
will continue on in their impervious silence, as the sun disappears  
in a faint peach glow, like the zenith of my vision.

The nadir, or low point, can get very low indeed,  
the time for the sorting of materials,  
laying everything out on the available site

in order to begin again: a simple, curved line,  
and then some others, like the multiple silences of Brunelleschi,  
frowning in his grave.

His curves of course dumped themselves back on the ground  
some little distance away,  
while mine reach for points beyond themselves,

beyond immediate view.  
I cross from one to the other  
on platforms that could be stronger,

as could my presence of mind not to look down, or back,  
as at that girl standing by herself in the empty church,  
watched from the crux of my adolescence,

the soft fabric draped low on the curve of her breast,  
my breath unwilling to leave my mouth,  
and had her dress fallen lower at that moment I would have fainted.

On the paths to the metropolis there are many such events,  
as if leading to someone's interior;  
but the way becomes smudged or completely erased

and so the directions get changed but still are remembered  
and supplied with details confused but ingenious,  
hastening through the memory to the journey's tacit death.

No one has lived through more of the past than I have,  
or contended with the accessories of life  
with less of the accessory of apparent effort:

the best of my efforts is reserved for the future,  
and will be reviewed through the eyes of your children  
in future flashes of possible effects,

and I do not even know of what they will be composed —  
sitting back in the present, among friends,  
colleagues, and professional associates,

hidden from the public by magnificent curvilinear forms,  
decorations and ornamental embellishments,  
and the play of several fountains

to give the ear an alternative  
to the longer speeches of the afternoon, not excepting my own,  
spoken with gravity through an unfashionable growth of beard

as an impatience grows to quit the place,  
various floated volumes suddenly held by lines and dots  
swimming in different unique designs,

and in a discernibly cohering pattern. I do go home,  
soon afterward, passing through some red and purple flowers,  
and the orange flowers would seem to interfere,

but I yield, finally, to their arrangement,  
permitted by a bountiful nature,  
with whose order I do not fundamentally disagree.

## “Quotes” for Jimmy Schuyler

“I have a basic sense of insecurity”

“ ” “ ” “ ” “ ” “ ”

which revels in the warps of a mammoth personality,  
arched in branches over the wallowing streets,  
and curious vague pools fill in the eyes, covering pools,  
keeping one afloat in the saffron pool of lunch.

"You call *that* having lunch?"

I guess not.

And “past is past,”

and paid for;

or at least accounted for.

Speaking of money, let's stop for a minute and add it all up;  
with all that money around maybe we won't feel so lonely,  
so barely discernible on the "Brooklyn Bridge," with clouds  
like normal hats glued to our heads.

What *is* this place, anyway?

A kind of museum, but open late,

like the Great Atlantic Rainway (where Kenneth *was* kind)

spread out on the green reversible platform,

or embellished landscape corridors of hapless mottled drama,

although just sitting here alone in the snow

doesn't necessarily make me a Nazi.

It doesn't mean you're necessarily embellishing the landscape,  
either (the zinnias go over *there*).

Say, just what kind of nut *are* you?

I'm not sure. What do you have in the way

of a good used TV set? When do you take the glove

from the hand of the cold, covering city? (Why

should your white city dog my thoughts?) And when

do you put it back on?

and sit down again on the sofa

from which one arose to enter the city in the first place, no

one in it, but knowing they would all return when you left,

barely perceptible, for a twilight nest of rocks and thrones.

Listen, can't we come up now?  
I'm beginning to feel like a gopher.

Right. Here's your bridge back, I'm sorry  
traffic was interrupted while it was gone.  
I must be falling asleep.  
I must be out on the street, below the sky  
which is never there,  
and finding the city, which one is willing to share.

## Starry Night

The light goes out, like 1965  
so persuasively. One types, for days  
drifted away at the lamp, empty  
and glowing with primitive worlds,  
calling it sleep.

To be Stravinsky;  
to have done it, be done with it  
and be dead  
looking over the sea  
which sea

that one,  
with no further description,  
nothing further to do  
at sea,  
the mind of its own tide.  
I am always walking out on a terrace,  
always looking at the sea,  
and of course there is no one, the typewriter  
only, speaks; to you, to Stravinsky, to anyone —  
animals wandered in among the mountains,  
those clouds, that sea,  
clouds of bilious sleeping pigments  
held in congruent wires of vacant air —  
with so many more days, and their seeds attached,  
their sleep, mine, those clouds,  
while America gets composed of our clouded selves,  
a car coming down the dusty road  
and we drink a coke overlooking the sea.

The light seems more brown than black,  
and by some dark authority the corners of the envelopment  
turn slightly upward like the sound of the wind,  
a sound easy to imitate but no shrub moves,  
like so many days, relit by the light,  
and one is not to care, although there are dreams,  
those that persist until those are gone.

## Renaissance Air

Persuasive and serious  
dispatches,  
getting out of the water,  
in Venice, to read them.  
I go to Milan  
according to the dispatch  
and wait in the vestibule;  
it is getting good  
and I turn the page.  
When Milan falls apart  
we slip into Siena  
and make some witty remarks  
about the Milanese;  
and then stand back  
and watch the cities  
nibble one another,  
like rodents, as the thick  
branches of culture  
break, and fall everywhere,  
into the wells of ambition,  
the vaults of horror,  
everywhere,  
while their economies  
run squealing about  
like multicolored pigs  
in vaults.  
What can you possibly mean?  
Follow me,  
little fool,  
and you will see.  
Follow me to Rome,  
and see the dispatch  
taken greedily from my grasp  
by the pope,  
on a cold blue morning  
with orange ribbons of pig.  
Then follow me back to Siena  
you little vixen,  
and we will have meatloaf  
in the Sienese dusk,  
though how I escape  
your clutches

and get back to Venice  
I will not tell you,  
you little bitch,  
yet I will tell you this  
as the sun sets  
on the blue traffic  
of mountains in the mist,  
that I will probably come back  
with my regrets,  
stumbling upon the mountains  
and probably hurting myself  
to find nothing  
but the burnt meatloaf of intrigue  
in an empty kitchen of years,  
and the smoke risen posthumous  
over Milan.

## A Toast from the Anglo-Saxon

Silence greets one in the normal tide, little  
or no wind over the concrete seats of dunes, little  
or no precipitation, only gentle wavelets of attention  
lapping at the stage's shore . . .

until self-consciousness makes a horse of anticipation  
and gallops off like a rising wind,  
while floods of perspiration  
attack the crumbling bluff  
and the relentless ticking  
lets everyone know how long I digress  
amid the howling phenomena around my chair,  
so I must now propose,  
having interrupted your simple refreshments,  
having crept to the microphone but remaining nameless,  
that I am in a tempest of agony and would ask to be excused.

## **Long Island Pastoral**

*for Tatyana and Maurice Grosman*

Again and again there is something to see,  
in beautiful mornings by the murmuring flowering tree,  
left in motion near the sea.

Twelve years go by,  
again and again,  
transparent whispers in the earthly greenhouse,  
flowers for the wandering bee,  
the world as we think to know it,  
images active in the constant sea.

## A Few Drinks

### *Randolph Scott Cocktail*

Warm two ounces Chivas Regal  
with equal parts root beer, milk, and anisette;  
sip engagingly, wearing bunny slippers.

### *Macho Fizz*

Manfully toss rocks to the floor.  
Add beer to rye and consume vigorously.  
Slap buddy on back and beat up homo;  
laugh uproariously  
and repeat until NFL game.

### *Mafioso Sour*

Into broken glass place:  
legitimate businessman;  
ignore.  
Reopen nightclub and belt class scotch.

### *Kaiser Wilhelm Cocktail*

Drink beer.  
Invade France.  
Drink cognac.  
Get lost.

# THE PLOT

MAN ENTERS TOWN

( trips to local taverns

Eats = Drinks

acquaints himself with unsavory fools )

DAYTIME

impairments

imaginings

darkening nights (fitful encounters, dreams)

LATER : Marriage

children

battered rolls

condensed exile

the daily traffic

FINALE (cuts tape)

*foreign invasion*

misery

bondage

servitude

renewed urbanity

## Museum Study

*(Die Toten Tanz mit Figuren c.1488)*

A skeleton, who has lived on as Death, keeps telling each  
of a wide variety of people in prose that he,  
or she, is going to die, no matter what,  
with the end in lines of verse  
as bodies in the background pop in and out of their graves.  
There are the same predictable reactions  
to this unpleasant message, including my own  
this afternoon at the Morgan Library;  
while Death maintains good humor on every page,  
playing an assortment of musical instruments for diversion  
as each of us in a different costume  
departs in the graphic mediaeval manner.

## Epigraph

I haven't been taking censorship, I've just  
been entrusted with some things not to say;  
but any consistency, of which this setting is a part,  
eludes me, and I it,  
from lines to lines  
like birds.

But think of why you are cold and strong,  
then trapped and betrayed by natural events,  
shapes, and feelings among the waves;  
walking the earth as though it were useful,  
sweeping through its combinations working as steps —  
it is the history of the invitation.

## Preface

I can't get lost enough, which would just  
be another step, but that isn't really it, to give  
undue importance to precariousness when there is so much  
opportunity for silent answers when the outside is dull  
and the inside microscopically reduced

And "now"  
my favorite word. It used to be unbearable, knowing  
that it all had to remain unrecognized,  
but I am still the emigrant product  
moving like a comb  
through the many centuries to be surpassed  
in Olympian stridency,  
and *now*, I just don't know

Have a drink  
which often works, as insulation ("clearing the mind  
of trivia" — R. Rauschenberg) the potential blanket  
under which to work  
and not be seen

and now  
it's all exposure. One would have hoped to become  
less sensitive (Robt. P. Warren says it gets even worse) I  
wonder how many Xeroxes  
I've made, rainbows of copies of drafts that reach the ground  
somewhere, leaving the invisible taste for the something brought  
by whatever forms as they disappear;  
Part I started with what I will never remember: Washington  
Heights after Lenox Hill; I still prefer the heights, to  
board the air, leaving the time ajar, ignoring the pieces of advice  
in the wake of the vague cosmic compliments  
enticing me out of control out of my depth, for my air  
to become sea without a pronoun.

Red Studio (after Matisse)

A strand of protoplasm hangs down from one of the trees  
over the absent wall  
I dedicate to the Class of '57  
and get it out of the way.

It is not surprising that one got into one's poem  
and drifted away,  
what was surprising was that they stayed afloat,  
the muse's perfume drifting across the keys,  
the unconscious mind spinning in delirium,  
in an entrance to the room.

But remember that you are writing poetry  
quoting yourself as if daffodils sprang up  
through the crimson eternity  
blazing behind the vignettes of eruptive words  
as soon as I open my mouth.

And you believe me of course,  
a draft alive within my ear,  
because you are in the same room  
which for me is invariable  
as precious autobiographical moments are wasted  
and presuming a gaze to be liquid they absorb my face

more archaic by the minute  
like a map of the world which endows the world  
with sleeplessness so that I continue.

The silver light at the top has remained that color  
so when you look up there will be something there,  
the last idiot elegy, or a beer  
going down like a curtain  
on a voyage of truth  
like a quiet saw of Indonesian sky  
making its way to the present  
until it finally separates from the past  
which you suddenly notice is in the same room  
though beauty interrupts constantly  
with the pure scarlet of the studio  
whose paint is a preservative  
though for it not you.

But the moon rises  
and you see the city  
from the window  
where you look out  
like the flight of a baseball  
and repaint the walls  
of this miserable century

and the wonderful August clouds.

By simple reduction

Matisse could quote his whole picture

but imprecisely;

I cut out slices

but I don't lose the detail

unless I want to

here on the surface where the birds stop

over inches of water

where I put them before.

And I have excused the intervening years,

the time they took from my life,

as I took up space in their time

page after page

blended together

in order to say goodbye

having scattered my senses among the planets

though really New York in constellations of luminosity

watched from a distant side of the space

that I mentioned above

browsing, after Matisse

in the most beautiful light anywhere  
to shine on the dreams of personality  
which I know I confuse to a greater degree  
so that I can exit without limit.

## Social Poem

It's six o'clock, do you know  
where you are? I am with my sanity  
among the bells  
telling me it is six o'clock,  
which is more than I need to know.

I seem to want to talk about something,  
but it is missing,  
which makes it a personal remark  
which I stop to listen to  
as if the bells had stopped ringing  
but I were persisting  
as if the walls were further away  
than just on the other side,  
as the interior floods  
with the gloom of the typewriter  
and I memorialize a pond  
stirred by fish through ugly shadows  
I have to make use of. Actually  
I am upset  
with my tone of voice,  
as if I had climbed the walls  
but did not get far enough away,  
though in the first place  
I don't know where that would be  
and in the second  
I know everything else,  
which leads to too much news. Maybe  
the walls aren't even there anymore,  
since nothing seems to be there anymore,  
as if the present were an elaborated ambush,  
the finale instead of the usual ambience  
until a later hour.  
And I haven't even gotten to sociability yet,  
grasping at its details  
and freeing them like peasants  
to a thimbleful of history.  
Why a thimble? My jacket  
needs a button,  
but that isn't what I mean by traveling,  
I mean that one should be somebody else  
and actually go,

although I am somebody else  
and have stayed; still living and walking  
near Spring Street,  
though when I observed it first  
there wasn't its bar  
accommodating the many people who came from the distance  
and got used to me, filtered from the past —  
which doubles as much of the day.  
And I still cross Houston Street  
in the path of the many drivers from New Jersey  
who I am sure are all nice people  
when they get back; but in the meantime  
they are after me,  
since I don't mind being paranoid;  
it is no worse than riding off into a joke  
that of course I would not understand,  
lost in generalizations;  
and filtered through metaphysical situation  
onto geographical surface,  
where I am thinking about Jackson Pollock  
for some reason,  
the rumors and rectangles  
from the Cedar bar to the Metropolitan, the legend  
half of me would like the other half to be,  
though if I could say which half were which  
I wouldn't get any further;  
but the real joke is I don't have a horse,  
so that crossing Houston Street is truly pedestrian,  
which might be good for the paranoia  
but not for the legend  
I'll be nearer to the next time I stop  
at the next place I'll be.

## Lost Words

Chimes. Parallelisms. Low pressures  
performing, if nothing else,  
are there; they have you  
and the atmosphere itself  
limps over its roots  
to find who is nearby and fictional.  
And I should be well  
among the verbs,  
which cap our reactions  
like distant mountains in a cliché of distance,  
and I see them often. But where are the rest  
of the words I am supposed to use  
to lose the rest,  
to fill in the holes the rest of them make  
through the gently moving bamboo.  
How clear the picture of me thinking is,  
prowling the silence for vulnerable sounds,  
moving toward the big 4-0  
through another wasted day,  
lost in the circumstance of a navigator  
peeling away his view, an image oneself  
in 39 years of verbalized scenes.  
I mention the month now, May,  
but not enough else to spoil the mystery.