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HOUSES

BY

JONIS AGEE

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in State University of New York
at Binghamton
1976

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no. 171



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Accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in State University of New York at Binghamton.

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Nothing is accident, and man, no less than nature,
does nothing without plan or the discipline to make plan
fact. And it is true that we now live in fear of our own
house, and can easily trace the reason for it, it is also true
that we can trace reasons why those who do not or did
not so live found out how to do other than we.

—Charles Olson
“The Human Universe”

Ecology: ‘ECO’ (OIKOS) meaning ‘house’ (cf. ‘Ecumeni-
cal’): Housekeeping on Earth . . .

—Gary Snyder

Only emotion endures.

—Ezra Pound

The EYE/I is a light wch suddenly sweeps from one end of room to other, catching all details — some from only one angle — but still the PRESENCE is recorded there. Like the movie camera/like life we know from corner of eye: the edges of skirts, the foot disappearing thru the door — a hand a glimpse of a mouth or a fix of the eyes ever so brief. The fabric of our world fraying out at the edges — shredding into single threads/lost in continuum of time: we seek ever to extend the parameter of the cloth — to light more dark edges. But almost AGAINST that urge of our EGO/I/EYE is counterweight of cloth being *weather eroded* by own existence — by forces of life beyond even our vision — by the *NAMED* and by the *UNNAMED*; we stumble, perhaps, on the *divine*, in the dark, looking for new footholds — or sometimes find No Thing Divine but *only* those footholds, mysteriously/conveniently placed for our use — Poetry: one eye on the visible while other gropes for the *invisible*. Constant willingness to enter dark room in strange house — with prayer that a light switch will indeed meet yr fingers at shoulder height:

INTRODUCTION

The following work is the result of several coincidental events, all of which led to the ultimate event—this poem. The first draft consisted of ten pages of poetry written within a two week period during which I was living on a farm in rural Pennsylvania. At this time, I was suffering isolation and a new confrontation with the land which took me back into my own rural past. The dying into winter and then winter itself has always been my time of the year—paradoxically the time when new voices speak to me. Moreover, I was beginning to study Olson, Pound and Williams; and it was their grappling with the *local* which set me off in a new direction entirely. For a long time I had been struck with how static alot of poetry seemed—I sensed a need to somehow infuse my writing with a kind of “drama”—to lend the speaking voice and the dramatic gesture to language. The serial or long poem seemed to be the perfect solution for material I was developing. The remainder of this Introduction briefly describes the various ideas and forces at work in *Houses*.

In an important sense, *Houses* is concerned primarily with the juncture that occurs between physical space and psychological space—the way in which each world informs the other. Taking a step back from Charles Olson’s insistence on “the local” in a geographical sense, I began to write a poem which would investigate the *sources* of language and perception. In that way, the Self in *Houses* replaces Gloucester and Paterson as the locale of discovery; yet I have attempted to maintain a sort of balance between the outside and the inside by always placing the Self within a material context. By shifting the emphasis of the serial poem in this way, the Persona or Voice in the

poem assumes the primary interest and pivotal position mediating between all parts of the poem. Not only that, the Voice in this manner provides the essential connective between interior (psychological) realities and exterior (physical/material) realities. I think that we can safely assume that most modern poetry is engaged in what Matthew Arnold called "the dialogue of the mind with itself," and that the appearance of multiple voices in poetry can be attributed to this development:

My use of multiple voices or selves (all fragments of the larger Self of the poem) in *Houses* was an attempt to convey or to create that experience of life which is both continuous and fragmented. Information flows into the brain in a series of discrete message units which are spatially layered in the mind—we comprehend the universe in any one glance and yet are confused and burdened by the multiplicity of its forms. Each of the six sections of *Houses* is keyed by a different voice, speaking in an appropriate tense, grammar, etc. These speaking voices represent or rather *present* the various levels of fragmented experience and perception which operate at any given moment within the mind. Further, the notion of multiple voices is carried into the creation of characters who are present in the form of historical analogues and semi-hallucinatory figures which people the pages of the poem—moving in and out of the edges of action—as the named and nameless of a street scene in film. I refer here to all of the ancestors recorded from the family books: Merriweather Lewis, the ladies, and Howard as well as the immediate family members who speak through letters or whose presence is conjured up in memory. All of these characters have, by their very existence in the imagination, *voices*, which speak through actions, physical appearance, or language to impose a dramatic tension in their interaction with each other and as objects within the actual field of the poem.

In any exploration of the Self, there is an absolute congruence of that fragile figure called "self" with all other *possible* selves which are budding and dying off continually. There are no absolute limits of Self. We, like the world around us, seem always in the process of coming into being; we are in many ways, the products of everything we

touch, see, hear or experience. We are a conglomeration of the responses of our senses to the physical world, of whatever we have experienced either "factually" or imaginatively and of those other people with whom we inhabit our psycho-physical space. Any voice a poet creates is, therefore, necessarily fictive, and any belief is a *created fiction* that can be used to explore the universe. *Houses* is an attempt to record these voices, to map out the psychological space of a woman at a given moment in time. It is also an attempt to define the conflicts which are generated by such a process of exploration. At the same time that the poem records a psychological history, it also presents a struggle on the part of the persona to strip away preconditions and to destroy the fictions which have been *imposed* upon the poet by an essentially alienating culture. But coincidental to this struggle is the equally important theme that new fictions must be invented and that they must also remain fictions, never fact.

A primary tension of the poem arises in the conflict between the authority of an established, absolute reality taught by family and society and the radical stance that all knowledge must be incomplete and that nothing is absolute.

The poem becomes a dramatization of the need to escape, to liberate the Self from the weight of historical and cultural fact—to demystify, to discover what "truth" there might be in any set of "facts." This is a quest which of necessity must end in failure—the facts will never become clear and the truths will never integrate themselves into anything more than another fragmented, contradiction-ridden version of existence. But what is finally uncovered by the persona in the poem is that it is the idea of process itself, the recognition of multiple potentialities, and of the interrelatedness of all elements in human perception, and by extension, in the universe, which generates the Self. Further, the persona realizes that the process of perception, like that of creating a poem, is one of discovery, of a revivification of the world over and over again toward an ultimate integration of all possible voices, i.e. phenomena.

Houses differs also from the serial poems of Olson and Williams in my use of

Emotion as a genuine thematic concern and source of energy for the poem. I have defined the psychological and inhabited space of the poem through an exploration of the emotional geography of the persona. It is emotion which endures in the presence of all other fictions appearing and disappearing from moment to moment. Just as the historical facts and social environment create and impinge on the interior life of the mind, so do emotional facts experienced simultaneously through memory of the past, the ongoing present and fear of the future, form another life parallel to and in conflict with all other lives of the individual—thus forming a sort of personal and psychological symbiosis: the ecology of the soul. Since the emotional life of an individual is filtered, generated and governed by the memory operating in alliance with the unconscious and its manifestations in dream, imagination and fantasy, memory becomes a dominant force in the poem. The memory creates an interior landscape made up of its different components: genetic, karmic, and cultural. Memory provides the shadowy figures of the ladies in *Houses*—whose presence is so disturbing and laden with emotional meaning for the persona. Memory weaves the fabric of Self which becomes a net threatening to force permanent stasis on the persona. The seasonal superstructure of the poem (the four seasons comprising the year of the duration of the poem) in conjunction with the archetypal formulae of birth, life and death create yet another kind of memory whose strictures are a source of ambivalence for the woman faced with the inevitability of genetic laws. In a larger sense, memory functions like history to impose a structure which disarms what is otherwise a seemingly random universe completely at odds with and threatening to human consciousness. An individual refusing to abide by such a form is constantly assaulted by the disorder and entropic violence of the universe. The woman in the poem endures her life in a natural environment in this way—at once perceiving the beauty and the danger in her surroundings and struggling to abandon the established preconceptions imposed upon her by cultural memory.

The historical passages of *Houses* exist as yet another aspect of cultural memory

for a family and society caught between two obsessions: to move ever westward in search of the promise of new material riches and to establish roots and stability by settling some place (anywhere, as long as it *looks* like home). Moreover, the letters from the mother in the poem function to evoke that Romantic vision of lost tradition and lost unity which plagues the new garden and its inhabitants with stories of life in other houses and other times.

I entitled the poem *Houses* because it provides a metaphor capable of expressing the complexity of such experience. First, I wanted an image which could hold that idea of enclosed space which is a natural receptacle for our dreamlife and our memory. Yet, it had to be a space laden with meaning, both culturally and historically. Just as Jung saw the house as a metaphor for the structure of the mind, so it functions in the poem as a vehicle through which all activity and meaning is conveyed. There is a natural tension in the poem between the rooms as enclosures of space and the relatively open space perceived in the external world of nature. The Self is continually in the process of trying to liberate itself by an identification with the world outside of its own mind—to move out of its rented rooms.

Moreover, the house functions specifically for a woman as the space in which all of her archetypal life dramas are enacted. In that sense it is the receptacle of her memories as well as the prison she cannot escape. The house becomes an homology for her body in the universe—its breathings are hers—the physical space of the house is her psychological space—they inhabit each other. The house is at once proof of her existence and stability and proof of the *illusion* that there is such in the flux of the universe. Yet, this restriction of space has permitted the woman an opportunity for a most careful inspection of her interior landscape—Emily Dickinson did not have to leave her rooms to experience a lifetime. Historically it has been the special province of women to know that interior space as their male counterparts have known and charted the exterior landscape of the social world. Just as memory furnishes the mind with figures, scenes and

voices, so the objects of the external environment exist as embodiments of emotion and experience for the woman. The physical furniture of the house assumes an almost religious significance—relics of her pilgrimages inward and outward. It is her special struggle to free herself from the fictions she herself has imposed on the material world of her house.

The serial poem, for me, was a necessary form because it allowed a massive accumulation of details, scenes and moments through which the multiple voices could dramatically emerge and gain life. Only a spatial form could convey the cinematic technique I needed to build gradually through a series of images, a complex pattern of feeling and meaning—to invent the world anew. I have always been struck by Bergson's sense of language-as-reality as opposed to language-as-instrument. The idea that language has an intense life of its own and should not be merely referential to reality has been an operative principle in my use of image in the poem. I have tried to convey "objectness" in the poem—thereby, tried to radicalize the consciousness of the reader, through the experience of seeing a *thing* for the first time, as if he has come upon the world anew, all the old forms swept away—anything is possible.

Notes toward *Houses*:

There is no question about what I have to do now. I have discredited the world of ideas. Stripped it bare. There are only things. Skeleton details pressed into brittle presence. I am burning the connectives as if they were the dead twigs and leaves of last fall and a winter of strong winds. I refuse to join in. Refuse to read anything that suggests more than I do about things. I need to see simply these things . . . to see clearly outlines . . . to fill in forms with themselves in colors and plumpness as in birds bracing cold in early morning. The being able to name of things has seemed sufficient—eliminating coefficient factors. no logarithmic progressions from trees into skys. I have been lonely. the familiar has remained that. have missed fusion into intimacy with eyes picking over the day for messages. What happens when you pull up the wooden stake yr mailbox sits on in front of yr house. when you lean it carefully against the cement blocks in the corner of yr garage where it rests for several years. yr name as fresh as day you brought it in. at first angry letters from postal service curt warnings a few phone calls from friends where are you an obvious question the telephone answers. you do not send out yr mail. do not have it done at the laundry in town. as you wld use a sharp knife to scrape rust off tools. so that sound of wintering bird singing in back frozen yard is no more than that . . . is itself sufficient. a thing. williams: no ideas but in things . . . me: no ideas, just things. most curious is feeling.

The book begins as the poem also:

This Record is lovingly dedicated to the
memory of those of our family now in the
Shadows. . . .

Generation No. 1

1. Maindort Doodes, the first known of the family, born 1617, died 1677. He was a Dutch sea captain who came to Middlesex county, Va., 1640. He married, about 1639, Mary Johnson, a daughter of Garritt Johnson. She died Jan. 9, 1687. They had two children:

to make a fact personal
make it more than a mirror
so both of you come out alive

SECTION I

PRATT MORE BOND

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I am moved by
a desire to assemble
the families to present
them with a plan
a logic so to speak
or a chart
of where we have come
and why it is that
I am dying at the end
of it all

to make it clear
once and for all
just what has
been involved

a mystery

the voices

speak

A man i meet in a letter
A sheriff she says
My grandfather

a picture (one of many she sends

"The school board that built the high school —
Daddy served for 20 yrs
Why do they all look so sober?
He had a great sense of humor —
He is the tall one"

she writes
my mother
the mad one

and i stare into
his stare
his eyes
so harsh and strange
his mouth set
a man not afraid of having his
picture taken

yes
he is the tall one (6'4" and very slim

surrounded by
shorter even weaker men —
soft they seem
beside his leanness
but not cruel
no

it is that moral dignity
expects
no more from others
than

a selfmade man began to work for Mr. Popper at 9 yrs
owned the store at 19

his own son
howard (a weak name i think
drunken with unknown sadness
perhaps a wife is enough
fell one night (laid down

the tracks his father
made the ties

a business for expanding railroads:

"he kept many of the hill country people employed
these people were his firstlove and concern always"

and howard
the first born

(aunt betty and I the children
of their mature years

put himself
onto the tracks

some mistake
they always sd to each other

His mother was a neat
woman and Howard was
not thoughtful of her

Generation No. 2

1. Doodes Minor, born 1640; died 1695. He married Elizabeth Cocke, daughter of Maurice Cocke. They had six children. (See record.)
2. Mary Minor, born 1642. She married Peter Montague, son of Peter Montague, the immigrant.

Issue of Doodes Minor and Elizabeth Cocke, six children:
(Take a good look at the name Doodes—it's the last time you'll
see it in this record.)

I am mailing you two books. If these are any help to you good. They are valuable only to me. They are all the pictures I have of my father and of his people. Maybe you can get the feel of the hill country people by looking at them. Anyway, will you please return them as they are all I have with the exception of my mothers graduation from college pictur of my family.

she writes
to her
daughter

Our ancestors left Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Virginia, to come to Missouri. Walker Gilmer Meriwether and his wife came first, in 1832—bought a large tract of land—many thousand acres—built their home and named it “Aberdeen.” [According to family history, supplied by several members of the Meriwether family and in conversations with Louisa H. A. Minor, author of “The Meriwethers” I am of the opinion that Walker Gilmer Meriwether

the tree is picking
at the window
(i don't know how long
i can hold out
it has grown here before me
outside the house

why does it frighten you she asked
a long distance

i can't remember
you can hear it tearing
at the walls when
the wind blows

it doesn't matter
she sd
there are the facts

Grandmother Jones (nee Houtz) mother's mother was as I have told you a real manager. Having gone to Kearney State herself getting mother educated and her boys located on their farms seemed to fall easily within her scope. Mother told me she was the neighborhood midwife for no pay just a little help at harvesting time for her own corn and wheat crops. Frankly, I don't know how she did it. Mother was the second from the oldest at the time of her father's death. There were 4 of them: Glenn who was about 10 or eleven mother who was nine, Wesley who was about 6 and Raymond who was 2. She reared them as good farmers. Financed the purchase of their own farms but had the sadness of seeing two of her sons die before she did. Raymond seems to have been the adventurous one. Mother has pictures (tintypes) of him that show a sensitive laughing face and the post cards and letters from him when he homesteaded in Montana are so poignant and lonely sounding that last summer when I was at Mother's and we got the boxes with her memorabilia and went through them I cried. He was not strong and the winters in his cabin unwinterized took its toll. He developed T.B. the great killer next to pneumonia of that day. He came o Versailles to die. I remember it as a very sad summer. My two girl friends Pearl Ruth Bremer and Mary Grace Spurlock and I used to go sit in the yard of the house Grandmother had rented in town so he could be near the Dr. and wait for Grandmother to come out and talk to us. We were not allowed in as Daddy said it was contagious. Again, those post cards of that young boy and his letters to his mother and sister are really heartbreaking Mother will not let them out of her reach, I kind of think they are a comfort to her. Oh Yes, Mother told that one of their neighbors was an Indian they kept having children much to mother's disgust, on the night she was to leave for college the indian came to get Grandmother just about supper time and mother sat up all night worrying about whether Grandmother was coming home in time to get her to the train in Versailles. When Grandmother arrived exhausted and barely in time Mother informed the Indian man there was now a Dr. in the town of Gravois and would he please make arrangements to call him the next time. In halting English the man told her his wife couldn't have a baby unless she was attended by a woman.

All day the wind blew
the clouds back and forth
before the face of the sun

the horses bowed their heads
to pull at the new grass

it rained softly today
streaking the horses' coats
but the sun did not shine

the wind blew
but the sun didnot shine

it got colder

All day the big bird was chased
by little birds
they swung in great circles
above the fields
where the horses stood

the family books
uncover
the strain
of life
on these
men

like howard
i believe
in the right
of destruction
but our deeds
are undone
in the secrecy
of their lives

they will not let us die

Note R

Meriwether Lewis(6) was born at "Locust Hill," near Charlottesville, Va., in 1774. At eighteen years of age he relinquished his academic studies, and engaged in agriculture. Two years after, he acted as volunteer to suppress the whisky insurrection ("Whisky Rebellion"), from which situation he was removed to the regular service. From 1801 to 1803, he was the private secretary to President Thomas Jefferson, when he, with William Clark, went on their celebrated exploring expedition to the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Jefferson, in recommending him to this duty, gave him a high character, as possessing courage, inflexible perseverance, intimate knowledge of the Indian character, fidelity, intelligence, and all those peculiar combinations of qualities that eminently fitted him for so arduous an undertaking. They were absent three years, and were highly successful in the accomplishment of their duties. When shortly after his return, in 1806, he was appointed Governor of the Territory of Louisiana, and finding it in the heat of internal dissensions, he, by his moderation, firmness, and impartiality, brought matters into a systematic train. He died in Tennessee, in 1809, at the age of 35. The history of his expedition to the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific, which he wrote, was published from his extensive notes, in 1814. It was at first thought by many that he committed suicide, but investigation since then decided that he was murdered by his French servant, who had stolen his horses, and money, and disappeared, and never heard more of again. His mother from the first believed he was murdered by the servant. The Legislature of Tennessee in 1848 erected a monument to the memory of Meriwether Lewis, in Lewis County, which county was named for him.

are you still there she said
why didn't you call collect
what are you doing in that place
why don't you have a phone
listen, don't be depressed

the words turn back on themselves
tense and coil
become the facts
all we are the knowing is
a picture
family portrait
snapshot
i am

Yesterday today
i am calling you
friend too

Generation No. 3

1. Minor Minor, born 1670, died Dec. 3, 1716; married Elizabeth Norman, Aug. 8, 1710.
2. William Minor.
3. Garritt Minor, born April 13, 1679, died Feb. 20, 1720; married Diana Vivian, daughter of John Vivian and Margaret Smith. They had two children: John Minor and Diana Minor. Diana married John Goodloe.
4. John Minor, died infancy.

To continue
about grandfather. He served as a "circuit Rider" a form of ministry that was used in the back country where churches were scarce. His territory was the Osage river country around Proctor Missouri. He married and buried and comforted from the church located there. His formal education I do not know. Mother sees vague about this too but some where in the background seem to be years at a seminary or its equivalent at St. Louis, Missouri. Wish I could be more definite. Anyway, he was called to the bed of a woman who was dying in childbirth, the river was high there had been many days of rain, he was swept off his horse and downstream, he was finally pulled to shore but his back was broken, he was to remain paralyzed and bedridden for the rest of his life. My father was 9 years old at the time. Amanda Emmiline Willson gathered her family together and told them they would have to help her provide for them. There were four children my father the oldest.

Isn't this silly? I'm sitting here typing this and I know you will be weary of such senile ramblings by now.

your mother imagines
 the plot to be personal
reads the world wrong
commits the crime
and is locked up
 the play goes on
she is glad she is safe
 a prisoner of war
 in the enemy's hands

AND KINDRED FAMILIES

Generation No. 3—(cont'd)

5. Peter Minor, died infancy.
6. Elizabeth Minor, married Tobias Mickelbrough.

she stands large
in your childhood

(you regret that i named my child
laura don't you she said
you think its after her
your mother

i mean
but
it isn't
i just like the name

when the child grows older she'll think that—
what I do — it won't matter why

the pony stood over the body
of the dead horse for 2 hrs
that afternoon the sun
filled the form with heat
he stared into the woods
his back to the house
and he would not let the deadwagon
pass through the road in the pasture

i spoke to mother last nite
she sounded good
you don't remember
what it was like

you were always
the favorite

they never hit you

no

they thought you were so good
you were always a good child

you really disappointed them

they can't talk to me now
they cut me off adrift
they will be relieved when I am dead

Generation No. 4

1. Major John Minor, Jr., married Elizabeth Cosby.
2. William Minor, born 1738, died 1759. No issue.
3. Thomas Minor, born Aug. 5, 1740; married Mary Dabney. They had five children. See record below.
4. Mary (Nancy) Minor, born March 7, 1742, died 1818; married Joseph Herndon, Aug. 15, 1765. They had nine children. See record below.

all these gone too

a crime against the state of their existence
condemns me to solitude
i must fill in my face
with a portrait of facts

the past is dying within me
trapped it is suffocating

i find its death in this house
a place i have not been

i live here among
strangers
who claim my body

the child asks me
to kill her
afraid of my uncertainty
for my birthday she gives
a yellow porcelain bird in a small wooden cage

the man
is pursued
and pursues
the shades
he futilely
embraces

at nite we lie together
a hundred hands stroke
our bodies
and we submit
to the lovemaking

a distillation of time

[Date: about 1786]

My dear Daughter:

I am not able to ride about & visit my relations & intimates, as once I have been, & indeed it is this cool morning that makes me capable so much as to subscribe my name. All my natural powers, both of body & mind, are much weakened, & I have sensible warnings that my remaining days are but few, & as my whole exercise now can only be about past times & future prospects, & warning others from serious experience; I pray God may lead me honestly to improve it. You had an incomparable Mother for parson, every virtue & piety; she went to heaven, & left me Guardian for our dear & excellent children; but when I consider how I have discharged my trust, I cannot put up w^t myself, defrauded my fatherless orphans, & widow condemned a slave to a large family of white & black; in which estate my own have ye least share; whereas I might have got clear of the world, lived a freeman in my daughters family, been a chaplain to keep our fathers religions—practice in her house; & now, taught her little son to read. These omissions now greatly trouble me, day & night; & disquiet my night reflections & make my life uneasy. I know you can forgive me, but will God forgive me; yes, I will trust in him. He is infinite in mercy.

SECTION II

A piano waits
for fingers
to sound it

The woman waits
for a lover
who won't wound her

ladies in long dresses
walking casually
shopping
stopped

a hair
a single hair
in the light
shimmers
is gone

the boy turned
and turned again
a good parody
she said
its not enough
laughing the gold in her teeth

seeking
what is sought is found
the dish of blue berries in blue light
emptied by a spoon
slowly no easily.

the child cried
every night in her sleep
her mother her mother
was not there
being there was not there

lights shadowed
the room

she read slowly each word
her lips moved the sound
out to the room

whispers rose above
beautiful flowers
sucking the light away

pulled her body over
the rose opened
to his lips

the ladies sat down together
placing their purses
each one
under
a
chair
between their legs
crossed at
the ankles

the trees stopped scratching at the house
the springs on the child's bed creaked as she moved in her sleep
the man breathed slowly in and out with dreams
 he would not remember in the morning

and you, my friend

could not would not
 sleep

SECTION III

(Concerning the suicide theory, no historian has ever satisfactorily explained the appearance years later, of the effects of Meriwether Lewis, which were found in a "hock" shop in New Orleans. Historians have blithely accepted the suicide theory, and while there is no incontrovertible evidence to deny it—Lewis was, however, on his way to Washington with his papers about the expedition, and also had many reports which were to be made to the government concerning his stewardship as Governor of the Louisiana Territory. Also he was returning home to Virginia for a visit, and there was every reason against the assumption of suicide. There has been much conflicting evidence offered both for and against—the charge that he was moody has been set out by the "Jefferson" notes on Meriwether Lewis, and it is admitted that he was of an introspective nature. Still, that does not seem to be sufficient in itself to support a theory of suicide—and local gossip at the home where Lewis died gave a great measure of support to the fact that he was killed by his servant. The strongest link in the chain supporting this contention is the fact that the servant did disappear *at that time*—and that years later the *personal effects of Lewis* did turn up in New Orleans.

RECORD OF COL. GARRITT MINOR AND
MARY OVERTON TERRELL
(Eleven Children)

Generation No. 5

1. Patsy Minor, married 1st, Robert Quarles; married 2nd,Hall.

the book goes on
relentlessly
it records
us

oh the wind the wind
is blowing

i ask him
“are you a man of feeling
he/ i think of sentiment as my piano-past —
playing for lots of old ladies and old men

The night seems a long time
you wake over and over
light shifts in from
cars the moon and finally dawn

once you dreamed a figure
stood beside the bed
trying to enter your body
your deathly lover
waking you see it there
vaporous shining cool
in the dark room

a struggle
it insists
you try to scream
to wake the man
sleeping next to you

you cannot even
turn aside
or
refuse

it glides into you
horribly
fits your body
disappears

you move at last
roll over

sleeping anxious
know
you must die

You do not dream of death
anymore you say

The man goes away a late afternoon sun
warms the air
you kiss in the cool garage
he forgets the day
at nite you sew
feel a cool breath on your arm
he does not return that day
or the next

All day the moths rest
do not move
beside the long light
but at the same hour each night
their wings begin again
to batter against the
wall around
the lamp

there is no hesitation
you wait and watch
the moment
then lock the door
and climb the stairs

it is still light outside
when you put on your gown

signal to begin

the house creaks
a dog barks far off
the sun settles
into premature night

I find the days very easy, she sd
staring as the light crossed and recrossed
her friends hair

Meriwether Lewis was murdered and robbed of his money, watch and valuable papers in 1809 as he was crossing through Tennessee on a trip to Virginia from St. Louis and he is buried there in what is now Lewis County, Tennessee, where a monument was erected in his memory in 1848. He was Governor of the Territory of Louisiana from 1806 until his death. The watch that was stolen when he was murdered was afterwards found in a pawn shop in New Orleans. This watch, his

Your Grandfather Agee remembers him as sheriff. He was 6ft 4 and very slim. Also at this time in his life he became friends with Grandfather Agee's father, William Tecumseh Sherman Agee who was prosecuting Attorney for many of the years Daddy was sheriff. He was very casual about his responsibilities, his main source of pride for the 16 years he was sheriff that he only carried his gun when the accompanying officer demanded it on an arrest and that in 16 years he had fired it once at a prowler a woman claimed was around her house and that he missed him and the man was innocent and he was glad he missed him. Actually he was a terrible shot since he had never hunted as a child only worked in the store it must have been a relatively crime free society. I asked my mother about this one time and her classic remark was "Well, usually a few words from Charles stopped them from stealing chickens".

there is a lady
lives in my study

she dresses slowly at 8

The wind blowing the curtain

the ladies
sit twirling their straws
in glasses
beside the pool
they stare out
across
the water
into the light
squint
and drink

the attic is inhabited
you don't pretend
the child tells you a man
you listen
he builds things
walks around
shores up some crumbling brick
is restless
you make the house yours
while he is away

Louisa Apr: 12, 1790

Dear Daughter

I am now old and good for nothing, and reflect with sorrow on ye ill usage I have given you, my children, & myself, in allowing such a mean rabble to intromete with what providence had so kindly favoured my family with, which if well managed might have made us all as happy as ye world could have done; but thro' folly has forced me to be a slave to oversee & provide for a great family, & all ye idle vagrants who want to trouble us & whom we have no business with. But I cannot help it now.

a note
a strain
heard
refrain
you stay on
he is unsure

the ladies walk
clicking
into the bathhouse
one by one
they are say

disappointed
in you

For it was well known that when the women lose
their virtue the buffalo go away. But there
must be nothing unjustly done, for if the people
try to deny a good woman the right to leave one
man for another, the calves come weak or not at all.

Issue of Samuel Overton Minor and Lydia Laurie Lewis,
eleven children:

Generation No. 6

The flies in july
are big and green
stick hard on the horses
sucking drops of blood
drawing others
the horses are uneasy
all day
you lock them away
in the cool dark barn

summer passes
ladies in hats
walk in the heat
slowly
speak/linger to look in a window
continue

the last month is upon you
couples visit you
talk
sweat rolls down the backs of their legs
they rise
and leave
you are alone

watch yourself write in a mirror
before the bed

hear the gate move
trees hiss

it will rain before morning

A face of pain
she said
the day hot
building to rain

a fire
ambulances
don't move her

all day she does nothing
but watch the ladies
rising
sitting
rising again

they speak distinctly to her
advise her impossibly
their voices
sound like her mother
a friend, her lover, the child

One of the ladies in the family owned a very valuable and historic painting of James Madison and had it hung behind a door. An acquaintance asked why she had put such a fine possession in an inconspicuous place and was answered with complete Meriwether candor: "Well, you know, my dear, he is not one of the relatives."

it was a large chemical plant
they expected explosions
the fire crusted the night
with excitement color energy
but was not enough
they turned away, went home
he touched her nipple
she silent

the ladies frowned
and put on their hats
in the mirror

Turn your face
he murmurs movie style
kiss
she hopes they are asleep

Linda watched
her make love
to a man and
a woman

her husband follows them
down long country
roads in old cars
on bicycles
hitchhiking
in the closet
he sleeps

Anyway, When he was 32 he went to hunt for a cow a man had reported as lost or stolen and stopped at the school house at Gravois Mills, Missouri to ask the teacher and children if they had seen the cow and met my mother who was teaching her first term of school after graduating from Warrensburg Normal College. She was the first College graduate in Morgan County to return and teach actually she was the only woman I ever knew who had been to college until I went to school. They were married and their courtship is hilarious if you can get mother to describe it. She was being courted by Peter McDonough at the same time, it makes an enjoyable story and one you would enjoy I am sure.

a man calls
but i want love
on my own terms
 will not wear wings
 at a midnight
 not chosen by me
strange lips
soft or hard
try to move me
 the voices
 ache out of phones
 'i am drunk
 no i am not
 i want to be free'
i stroke my body
lovingly
with hands
that do not hurt me

Governor Lewis had from early life been subject to hypochondriac affections. It was a constitutional disposition in all the nearer branches of the family of his name, and was more immediately inherited by him from his father. They had not, however, been so strong as to give uneasiness to his family.

The hungry birds
swooped
into the cut field
dotting it black
their backs
shone
in the sunlight
and nothing could scare them
away that day.

STANDARD BOND

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the ladies
buy groceries
at 4 o'clock
and rush home
before dark

An amended note to the first part of your life
which you have not found to your suiting:
alone you found the road
in the country there were three blackbirds probably of
earlier origin as they stared with a familiar glance
at the day today yesterday they have been as lucid
as the wind a typewriter and an indian are involved in
the magic: there are empty chairs and ladies sitting
like question marks neatly folded into the scene
i hear that death song baby
you begin your death lines in slow motion, released they
move slowly like nothing you can think of and there is such
tension in the machine that it hardly lets go of each
letter: no formulas: the patterns pass away as the fall
did — in one day the sun shone the leaves brightly at nite
you see grey sticks cover the hillside behind the house
Dream: houses, all of your houses, you clean the last one,
unable to secure the balls of dust with the mop
Words: and time will tell who has fell and whose been
left behind

SECTION IV

3. Judge Garritt Minor, born Nov. 15, 1815; married 1st, Hettie McClanahan, in 1843. They had five children:

1. Bettie Minor, died young.
2. Ada Marshall Minor, who married her first cousin, Samuel Overton Minor. (See record of Samuel Overton Minor and Ada Minor in this book.)
3. Nannie Erle Minor, born Jan. 4, 1857. After her mother's death, she moved to Versailles, Missouri, where she lived with Judge and Mrs. A. W. Anthony. On March 4, 1875, she married John Haywood Spurlock. Issue, eleven children:

Ann Erle Spurlock, born Jan. 22, 1876. Married J. B. Arnold, May 10, 1914. They have two children: Louis Arnold, born March 20, 1915, and Francis Arnold, born February 2, 1916.

the sleep of the mind
differs greatly
she sd

While he lived with me in Washington, I observed at times sensible depressions of mind, but knowing their constitutional source, I estimated their course by what I had seen in the family. During the western expedition, the constant exertion which that required of all the faculties of body and mind, suspended these distressing affections; but after his establishment at St. Louis in sedentary occupations, they returned upon him with redoubled vigor, and began seriously to alarm his friends. He was in a paroxysm of one of these when his affairs rendered it necessary for him to go to Washington. He proceeded to the Chickasaw bluffs, where he arrived on the 15th of September, 1809, with a view of continuing his journey thence by water. Mr. Neely, agent of the United States with the Chickasaw Indians, arriving there two days later, found him extremely indisposed, and betraying at times some symptoms of a derangement of mind. The rumors of a war with England, and apprehensions that he might lose the papers he was bringing on, among which were the vouchers of his public accounts, and the journals and papers of his western expedition, induced him here to change his mind, and take his course by land through the Chickasaw country. Although he appeared somewhat relieved Mr. Neely kindly determined to accompany and watch over him. Unfortunately, at their encampment, after having passed the Tennessee one day's journey, they lost two horses, which obliged Mr. Neely to halt for their

My sister is a dream suicide
she wakes at dawn
 to clicks
of a hammer
 in an empty chamber
and rises
 to wash her pregnancy
with sad notes about
our brother who
 went to Florida
 leaving both wives behind
 to me
 she sounds regretful
but i see death too —
 bodies stretched
 between tree limbs
 in the woods behind
 our house
 catch my eye
till i know things gained
to be lost again
and cannot trust
the moment
with relief
at night i lie awake
listening
 for a heavy step
 a burst of noise
 some thing
 to fill
 the space
 of time before
 the last moment

my sister dreams
 of danger from within
like odysseus i see it
 elsewhere

John Robert Spurlock, born Oct. 10, 1881, married Linnie Merriott.
They have four children: Helen, Deloris, T. L., and Woodrow
Spurlock.

asking the local farmers
if we can expect
 an early winter
they scan the mountain
 trees
 speaking of
 animal fur
 and deer tracks
later i see the skins fresh with heads
 hanging
 from tree limbs
 outside their houses
so the dogs
 won't get them

I find
confusion
in my families
one turns out
to be another

The Huguenot colony at Manakin Town in Virginia was by far the largest settlement of those famous exiles in America, and as their innumerable descendants now abound not only in Virginia but in almost every State, this publication of its church's vestry book will interest a multitude of readers and supply much genealogical information hitherto vainly sought.

I am trying
to set the facts
in order

Ere Jamestown was three years old, Frenchmen, presumably Huguenots, were here, and for a hundred years and more these noble Christians continued to cross the Atlantic to our hospitable shore. In 1621 sixty families under Jesse de Forest asked leave to come to Virginia, but were diverted by the Dutch to their colony of Manhattan and founded New York. In 1630 Baron de Sanceé seated a colony on the lower James. Thereafter, as persecution increased in France and 'twas known how Huguenots prospered in Virginia and were welcomed there, the movement culminated in the coming of eight hundred for Manakin Town. Many others came, sometimes singly, sometimes a family or two, or a little band of relatives and friends, and located where they would in lower Virginia. In a single year, 1687, the Huguenot Relief Committee in London aided six hundred to Virginia, of whom, doubtless, some responding to the liberal offers of William Fitzhugh, of Bedford, settled on his lands on Occoquon creek, and some in Stafford and Spotsylvania. In 1700 came the largest party yet, bound for Manakin Town under

to clear the record
as they say
those ladies
of a lifetime

then it began to snow
so by morning
the horses had
ice
packed in their feet
until they could
hardly walk
without sliding
i found pieces of ice
streaking their manes
and legs and
chunks
stuck on the ends
of their tails
they steamed in the
barn air
and snorted the drops
of frozen moisture
from their noses

my grandfather
said it always
happens
that winter it snowed
for three months
straight
we never saw the ground

For the one hundred years after 1750 records of Manakin are very scarce. It appears that the congregation dwindled and in the early nineteenth century became more or less inactive; a situation in the rural Virginia of that time not unique to King William Parish.

Emilio came down
after hunting
all day in his
bright red clothes
and told us how
they had gone up
to Camp Choconut
he and some others
and found 7 does
lying together
dead with
nothing stripped
he said how sick he was
about it and how
it was a slaughter
he wasn't going
to hunt anymore
i asked who
and he the
guys from new jersey
gun happy
not meat
just killing
drinking alot
then shooting
they didnt even care
i forgot to ask what they
did with them, i mean
did the farmers
skin the deer
or what
because he left then

deer run soundless
in the woods
leaping not crashing
invisible noise
a wall between
them and me

* BOOK OF THE PARISH OF KING WILLIAM, CONTAINING THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE VESTRY OF SAID PARISH, COMMENCING DECEMBER 20, 1707.

The vestry assembled at Monocantown the day and date stated above, Mr. Phillippe, minister, being present.

Ch. wardens: Abraham Soblet, Louis Dutartre. Vestry: Jacob Ammonet, Andre Aubry, Jean Farcy, Jean Fonuielle, Abraham Sallé, Gideon Chambon, Jean Maseres, Timothee Moret, Pierre Massot, Anthoine Trabue.

It was decreed that the levy of the present year be made in accordance with the account given below, amounting to the sum of twenty-nine pounds silver, currency of the country, in such manner as has been arranged by the preceding agreement with the vestry, so that each person pay, following the present division, six shillings and one half-penny, there being ninety-six persons on the list made and delivered to the clerk of the said vestry, who * * * a copy of it to the church wardens.

	£.	s.	p.
— for Mr. Claude Phillippe, minister, for the present year, from the first of March past to the end of the present December, at thirty pounds per year, - - -	£25	0	0
— for Mr. Reynaud, clerk, for one year, from the first of January past to the end of the present December, - - -	3	0	0
— for Mr. Sallé for a register for the vestry and paper, - - -	0	12	0
— for Mr. Martin for a gallon of wine and transportation, - - -	0	8	0
	—	—	—
	—	—	—
Ninety-six persons at six shillings half-penny each makes - - -	29	0	0
	—	—	—

Clarinda Spurlock, born Feb. 13, 1883, married John Kelly, Oct. 30, 1905. They have no children.

Grover Cleveland Spurlock, born Nov. 10, 1885.

Anthony Wood Spurlock, born Jan. 22, 1887, married Faye Again. They have a child: Betty Jean Spurlock, born Oct., 1925.

Paul Spurlock, born Feb. 2, 1890, married Grace Clifton, June 24, 1915. They have three children: 1. Clifton Spurlock, born June 21, 1916. He is married to Mary Gleason and they have a daughter, Cathy; 2. Mabel Ruth Spurlock, born Jan. 24, 1924, married Ralph Anderson, Jan. 20, 1946; 3. Pauline Spurlock, born Feb. 19, 1927, is married to F. Steinbrueck, and they have one daughter, Paula Steinbrueck.

In the small warm kitchen
i asked old mr. baldwin
when he had moved into
our house and he said along
time ago he had forgot but maybe
1920 or so and his wife sitting in
the corner with her hands folded
in her lap leaned forward and
said yes yes and smiled

he said he had horses up
there then to do the work
not big draft ones just regular
kind and how he'd go down
to get his kids when it
was real cold or the snow
was deep after school

recovery, the Governor proceeded, promising to wait at the house of the first white inhabitant on his road. He stopped at the house of a Mr. Grinder, who, not being at home, his wife, alarmed at the symptoms of derangement she discovered, gave him up the house, and retired to rest herself in an out-house; the Governor's and Neely's servants lodging in another. About 3 o'clock in the night he did the deed which plunged his friends into affliction, and deprived his country of one of her most valued citizens, whose valor and intelligence would have been now employed in avenging the wrongs of his country, and in emulating by land the splendid deeds which have honored her arms on the ocean. It lost, too, to the nation the benefit of receiving from his own hand the narrative now offered them of his sufferings and successes in endeavoring to extend for them the boundaries of science, and to present to their knowledge that vast and fertile country which their sons are destined to fill with arts, with science, with freedom and happiness.

To this melancholy close of life of one whom posterity will declare not to have lived in vain, I have only to add that all the facts I have stated, are either known to myself, or communicated by his family or others, for whose truth I have no hesitation to make myself responsible. (This biographical account of Lewis was used as a preface to the "History of the Expedition of Lewis and Clark," published 1814.)

last summer he said
how he had five kids
in that house on the
hill and about 15 cows
he milked twice a day
it was hard work but
he didn't mind much

at the auction hed picked
up a mailbox for 50¢ and sold
it for a dollar he said that
was a profit for the day
in 1920 they hadn't
any heat or electricity
in the house but
just an old wood stove
in the kitchen the holes
are patched up there now
and covered with a plate
the wind keeps blowing it off

1719. List of tithables of King William parish for the present year
1719, taxed at one and one-half bushels of wheat each:

	Tithables.	Bushels of Wheat.
Abraham Salle, Sen.,		
Abraham Salle, Jun.,		
Jacob Salle,		
James Reasider,	9	13½
Wm Gardiner,		
Bob, Aigy, French, Harry,		
Bartelemy Dupuy,		
Pre Dupuy,	3	4½
Jean Pre Dupuy,		

and
he laughed because
we didn't know how
to butcher a rooster
we had & offered to help
but a dog got it so
we just plucked it
put it in the fridge in
the basement until
it rotted then threw it out

Second epistle to a dead man:
the rocks gleam whitely in the light
i hold my brain up to examine it and discover that the
typewriter is broken the indian has left the lay of
the land to the developers the plant lacking water
grows long and loses its leaves : it becomes clear :

The twist the turn the romantic fall
a substitute for experience

SECTION V

What happened
to
the ladies:

They packed the bags
stuck sharp pins in their hats
old fashioned veils

touching it with fingers
each one fit perfectly
by a black cloth glove

shoes wrapped in tissue
support hose tucked into
the pocket
close up the bag

a picture postcard
of the local museum
on top.

Henrietta Josephine Spurlock, born July 7, 1894, married
Eugene Field Agee, May 27, 1916. They have three children:
Eugene Field Agee, Jr., born July 24, 1917, and he married
Lauranel Wilson, June 9, 1938, and they have four children

the cancer patient filling
with fluid enters
the sleep unwillingly
it is drugged
affords no
amusement
no terror
at first she was thin
and weary
but i remember
the last days
when her skin
became soft
new & rubbery
the wrinkles
stretching out
as her cells grew

Today
a day that should not

i think lines:
 and there are desires
 not to have, desires

the coldness of August
a moment after May
and my longing for summer days
past into sadness

your mother too
begins her dying
another

 you think
i can not

her face
a picture at 18
she sends you to remember her
 before the broken nose
 in a sister's car
 or before anything
 really
 had touched that face
 clean
 and unsmiling
 looking into later
 perhaps
 a madness
 that soon
 playing on the lips
 the lids
 falling to
 deception in
 those beautiful vacant eyes

her face

one i never saw

 why don't you come home
who are these people

i ask

turning the pages

of the album

she sends

 you see

 the voice postures

i cannot

come home

to you

she writes
about Howard

the oldest
but frail

my memories of him:
his clothes ordered
6'8"
unhappy
then divorced
with mother & wife closer
than before
killed by a train
hearing not good
some kind of disability
and it is thought
that he did not hear
the train approaching

his insurance money
put his 3 children
through the university

Got a letter from Mother today and was reminded of another interesting episode in my father's life. Namely, as this month is the anniversary of the episode and Mother always reminds me of it. It was during World War I Daddy was the sheriff and because he was he did not have to go in the Draft. All Peace officers were exempt. Now, Missouri had some very staunch devoted German communities. Those in Morgan County were Stover and Cole Camp. Local patriotism ran high. One morning when Daddy got to his office a delegation of the local citizenry of Versailles met him and told him that the German flag was flying over the city Hall at Stover. They proposed an armed committee from Versailles go over and force them to remove it. Dad thought for a while and told them he would go over and take it down alone. The men assured him he would never live to get it down alone and further more he would never arrive back in Versailles in one piece if he tried it. Dad was adamant and refusing to wear his gun took the noon train for Stover. He dismounted from the train calmly walked to the city Hall climbed the steps to the roof took down the Imperial German flag, folded it under his arm and walked to the depot and sat down to wait for the 4 o'clock train for Versailles. He arrived home on schedule met the local vigilantes at the railway station and assured them the incident was closed everybody could go home and forget it.

In later years he took me to that little depot in Stover, I asked him what he had been thinking that long afternoon when he sat there alone in a hostile town. He told me he recited the 23 psalm about 200 times and thought the train would never come. I asked if anyone said anything to him. He said "no" the ticket agent and telegrapher one and the same man simply raised his head as the train pulled in and said "Thanks for coming, Charlie".

I was not alive at the time of this episode but when I was 12 years old John Otten the incumbent Sheriff decided to clean out the Safe in the Sheriff's office. He brought to our house the flag Dad had taken down those years before wrapped in the local paper that was on his desk that day. Daddy had already suffered the first of the strokes that were to end his life and as he sat there on the back porch that day so frail and so ill I will always remember the twinkle in his eyes as he retold the events leading up to this occasion. He laughed so heartily as he recalled that in the next election he carried the Stover precincts almost a hundred per cent. His kindness to those people who had sons and relatives fighting on the other side had been his main concern.

Incidentally, the wounds of war must heal rather quickly as your Aunt Celia was the first woman principal the Stover schools elected. She taught there three years and loved the people very much. Their Parents remembered Daddy.

A FINE OBITUARY

Fulsome and eulogistic obituaries were generally accorded the dead during the middle years of the nineteenth century. Indeed, this practice lasted well into the twentieth century, so it is interesting as well as unusual to find an obituary handled with restraint and truthfulness in the year 1861. Below is an account of the death of Dr. Fontaine Meriwether, which occurred April 30, 1861, at Eolia, Missouri. The account was written by an Episcopal rector, W. N. Irish. It speaks well for the firmness of Doctor Meriwether and for the forthrightness of the rector. "May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace"!

Died, at his late residence, near Prairieville, Pike Co., Mo., April 30, 1861, DR. FONTAINE MERIWETHER, aged about 70 years, formerly of Albemarle Co., Va.

After many years of suffering and infirmity this venerable physician has been removed from this world of sin and sorrow, to another and a better one. His death was immediately due to a severe accident which happened to him some four months since. His long confinement, aggravated other diseases which he had endured with fortitude for a long time.

The parish at Prairieville has been some time vacant, but as I once had charge of the same, and living but a short distance from it since I resigned, it has been my privilege to give them services as I was able. When I first entered on my duties in that parish the spiritual condition of Dr. Meriwether engaged my earnest attention. He was not a professor of religion and I was fearful that as he had lived, so would he die, resting his hopes of salvation upon a mere *morality*. As a man he was all that could be desired; amiable, moral, of an earnest and affectionate disposition, and he freely gave the benefit of his medical knowledge and experience, which were great, to those who were unable to remunerate him. Until the infirmities of old age prevented him, his skill as a physician placed him in the front of his profession and for miles around the people sought his counsel.

While rector at Prairieville I had many solemn conversations with Dr. Meriwether with regard to his soul's eternal interests, and on each occasion left him, with a load upon my heart, saddened with the

thought that as far as he was concerned, I had labored in vain. These conversations gave him confidence in me, and I was urged by himself to make him one more visit during a severe illness some fourteen months since, and even then I was not able to clear his mind, although he was greatly exercised by serious convictions. Recently, however, several persons in that neighborhood, under my past ministry, desiring Baptism and the Lord's Supper; while doing that work I was able to see him once more, when I found to my joy that the Spirit of God had done a good work with him. He was "humble as a little child." His proud heart was subdued by the grace of God. With "due care" I found him sufficiently instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, and after, as I truly believe, he placed his hope on Christ. I administered to him, with others, the Holy Communion.

I have written the above that not only his large circle of friends in Virginia and Missouri may be comforted with the thought that he died an humble Christian, but that the ministers of Christ may persevere in their work, although to their own view, in many cases, *they seem to labor in vain.*

W.N.I.

[Printed May 5, 1861 in Louisiana, Missouri.]

Tell me mother
why ladies
never whistle

Your ladies
are a
moody group
mother
they sit
pouting
over drinks
in cafe paintings
thin lipped
in their
long dresses
they stand
beside
doorways
in Kansas
and Missouri
muscles
hidden in the
layers of cloth
a woman's
skin is too soft
and pale.

SECTION VI

STRATHEMO RE-50003

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again and again
the birds arrive
one day
and the next
is there a day
when they will not be coming
yet this day
they are silent
this day
building for the storm
a rain
to come
in evening
where are the birds
today
all day
i wait for them
they did not wake me this morning
nor did i hear
an arrival
of the birds
at noon
when the horses
stood waiting for hay
now i hear
all other sounds
of my house
the cars on the road
a dog at a distance

my breathing
yet no birds arrive
today today
this day
of all days
i wait
and have time
to listen
there is nothing
to hear
nothing
to see
of black wings
it is very quiet
this day
of waiting
for rain
the wind
has not moved
a single tree
for hours
and it is april
a month
you cannot
expect much from
not even
this day
of no birds
is to surprise
us

My sister's house is long & narrow & tall

the ladies
never stoop
to climb the stairs

it is blue and white
inside
the correct colors for mourning
life i told her
why not

And you are the lady from Monterey,
come seeking a fix
for an indelible
situation

i begin again

exhaling the moment
in my frosted breath
a white cloud
in a black night
& I begin again
to know you
poet king
claims
2 men
a horseman
and a monk
made their way
to the shore
to pebbled shore
waves to be dealt with
ignored
a cowled face
emptied into
armor
its moment of grace
they joined
in the fusion of 2 shadows
with 2 minds
the poet scalpeled
the shape
from it

A fast lay (he claims
it may be a matter of perspective

the light fading

fading

it was a fast day

fading

there was no news

just music he sd
there must be music

the slender man
states his case
and retires into
the ruins
collapsing on a pile of rubble
he looks up to continue:

i say i must go
& he says that's music

i am the king
the poet king
who dares not twitch
even in his sleep
dreams
of golden lions on golden shores
in africa
an old man
a bitter old man
one who drinks too much
writes fish stories
pretends to be for the mob
but loses that elusive
quality of say feeling
a 20th century index
it extends from my left to
right hand
and the whole lower portion
of my body
is hopelessly pinioned by
feeling

When the spring finally came
it had not been such a long winter
only the cold stayed on
and the farmers worried
because the grass was late
the fields too wet
with the feed getting low

and he left as she knew he would

the man was angry
 lips eyes
she spoke
 maybe get the radio fixed
 then we won't fight in the car
 yes he sd.
outside wires strung
 the words
 house to house
 they passed
a motel a field
 a large blackbird (maybe a crow
 flapped up into the air
 then settled back into
 the bare tree
its over
she thought

and that was in the morning
 the sun shone
 against the ice
 covering the fields

'in greece we have passions
which burn up our love'

the woman thinks it is always that way
there are no ruins
to shore up
everything is lost
we do not search for it
we are not bad children
gone too far into the woods
our parents do not call us
words do not follow us
pulling us back to safety
at night we fall off the cliffs
again and again

we are not aware
until we hit the morning,
the morning light breaks us
shatters us into pieces
at the bottom of the day
we get up
we get up again
we get up
to piece it ourself
into pieces
we repair the room
with the light that has broken us
we are not lost no we are not lost
we are broken no we are not that
we cannot discover our malady
it dwells in the light
we cannot see it
at night we know it is the cliff
dreams we fall thru
into morning

how can you speak of love
at a life like this
the light dilutes me into shadows
which one shall you catch
and kiss

no i am not lost
no i am not broken

the dogs
barking
are barking

the moon
full
of itself

outside
coldness
fits
the trees
leaves
like
a glove

and you
my love
are restless
tonite

i stay home
i lock into the bed
i drink
the dogs bark all night
at nothing
no moon
no friends
nothing
but sounding the silence
can warm them
to themselves

* * *

*I cannot resist using an inscription that appears on a tombstone
in Elmwood Cemetery:*

*"He awaits the resurrection of the just,
While we sorrow in hope."*

N. H. M.

—here the book/s end
and i am struggling
to keep them up to date
but so many of us dying

you are in
a foreign place
the sun
is warm
the people
seem
shabby
on the street
and
not at all
rushed