

Poetry Series

paul bamberger

- poems -

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a) Oaxaca

when the inner voice screams out just above the cut of your hair consider this
most see only cobra eyes
homespun perhaps
but only the cobra eyes of a peddler's daughter
each day i squat before this wall my hand outstretched my child at my breast
para mi nina para mi nina por favor
the tourists squeeze by
disturbed
and ten thousand years in the eyes of a beggar go for not
in november when a man dreams a leaf falls

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aa) Mother and Child

they struck him down hard early in life
he slaps me around plenty

but i cannot make myself leave
my child never cries

*

i will take on the whole lot of them
to feed my child

the young men
howl

*

my first child a love child
the wedding date set to make it right

it became a family joke
one my daughter will never be privy to

*

i am a mother in a time of famine
my daughter dying at my breast

my husband wants
a son

*

they have a one child policy here
he took my first child

my daughter
sold her to the americans

*

for fear of my pleasure you mutilated me
you think i do not know what you did to me

my daughter
my joy

*

no matter what they tell you i love my burqa
keeps my secrets

someday
i will teach my daughter

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aa)
Stench

The Authority of the New Machines Carries with it a Certain

(currently three billion people 240 million of them children slave in sweatshop factories for two dollars a day predominantly to serve you)

shadow bent to machine among the many other faceless shadows is all she is this girl
this shadow girl
the prudent men at sundown pull their fedoras low and head home
midnight
she is still working
3 a.m.
she is still working
shadow bent to machine
is all she is
is all we mean her to be
abandoned to the machines of our new world order
this girl
this shadow girl

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aa) The Accounting

someday they will come knocking at your door
to ask how you could feed your dog so well
as four children were dying of starvation every ten seconds
but of course silence

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aaa) A Fundamental Stated Twice

if we had the heart to end poverty
we would not have the heart to start wars
the absence of war is not peace
the absence of poverty is

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ad) America

a black man once came to teach us how to dance all hell broke out

*

where tracks of mother and father and child fall away to forest shadows
the possibility of a new nation

where fictions built from fires struck by dark figures on a hill circling as if to keep
some deity at home
all of a wilderness in which to wander

we chose to run the Indians up the pemigewasset into the coos dogging them into a
season of starvation
the cool easing down into savagery got liquored up in the high country

*

it was a time of stray dogs and lean wolves
we came to fear our shadows on the wall

in the end knew only where we did not want to be
grew restless

traveled west beyond the towns beyond kentucky outposts
further out

traveled up rivers
where silence shadows a man

all gain soon lost
only the raw awareness of death

lost our children to their fear
nowhere to go but up river

nothing to do but to say nothing
and move on

*

we came a long way on the pocket change of what he said
naked before the old dream

eager to dance the watery circles that don't easily reverse their speculations
wanting only to sing among the yellow reeds

bowed to the aesthete of the dry well
crossed into a cold land

where the rabbits circled back to set snares against the long short of our days
shadowy birds swept low along the horizon

we thought often of home and the sweet things carefully chosen to please
and watched for clouds

*

some say the word came down the land was ours for the taking one dare call it gift
we would be under god a people a nation to be reckoned with

*

they whispered in the back rooms give them their nation
we will always have their tongues

*

and swift on the wing of the carrier pigeon word came down
the land is taken a nation is born

but as smoke trailed low to the west out of the towns the need to distance oneself from
the unmarked graves
the women in their dark silence understood

questions cropped up some lost faith
heads rolled of the people by the people for the people

in the hollows at night fires burned
the nightriders slumped drunk on swayback mounts

their coarse women of hard intent dancing with their hair shaken out
in the shadows the slow swing of black men

*

soon they came from everywhere
for love of the nation took new names

for love of the nation quarried the rock worked the factories fought the wars
for love of the nation gave their sons and daughters over to the nation

the census scripted possibility
but in the cities the unsaid had at them

the streets renamed after dark had at them
the last bet laid down had at them

and keeping one eye to their backs fearing the penalties severe they had at each other
in the cities they grubbed for longevity and died unresolved

died down the alleys strung out along the deafness of the age
died without benefit in the streets among the discard and the crowds

died against the chatter of open windows their untold stories spilling down the window
ledges
died behind the drawn shades their screams going unheard into the cold sweat of the
night

died leaving little more than what they came with
died face down among the many faceless others

they are dying still
and morning some distance away

*

soon the worst of us lashed out made good on their promise
with small fanfare the days faded into a hard fix on chaos the evenings shaded toward
frantic
across the silent eternal flat steely countenance of moon on the rise

many leave and go down after closing to where the homeless are at home
down to where the beggar asks nothing of you
down to where the drunk sees clearly and the shadow girls know they will never go
home

down to where you keep it slow
down to where you work the dog on the prowl

down to where the unspoken spills into the dry space between each new insistence
down to where under golden light flashes of the sullen ingenuity of the pure meticulous

and the rats on the move
dreaming of rat tunnels opening to the sea

here you wait
then you wait some more

*

the nation came of age in an age when savage little men criminal in their intent small
in
their aspect carrying promises they never intended to keep knocked at our door
we let them in

in the time it takes for a nation to die may our crime be gotten at
and let there be no mythology of plentitude no dogma of the unretracted

or would you rather let it be see how the thing turns out slide on by
it being after all so brief a time to the settling of the thing

or is it simply a matter of no luck at all
as these little men with their savage secret make themselves at home in our house of
plenty

one need not die to walk in the valley of the shadows
as do our children walk in the shadow of who the hell brung ya here anyway

*

and in a flash of we have figured out the thing it is gone
only the rumors finding the house comfortable

it has happened before
dogs take to chasing their tails cats take to the alleys the children turn mean

and there is talk of bringing it all back home
as though it were only a small indiscretion at the dinner table

*

but for want of a dream one becomes an apologist for america
its radical dressed to kill

for want of a dream one travels america with fist in mouth
its heavy footed mimic its swill eater its fool repeater

for want of a dream most become america's wasted disconnects
the nobodies of its tomorrows

for want of a dream there rose up amongst us the lords of disproportion the purveyors
of

gouge
and they took the day

*

and now we wait the time when all the birds will fall screaming into blind
death not amused

a time when he who once knew nothing of death
will run cursing into the night desiring the ease of death

and when the mountains echo the word forgotten
all will be forgotten

*

a black man once came to teach us how to dance we strung him up after dark

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ae) The Vanguished Army Returns Home Victorious

no matter what the talkers told you it was our brothers they had us kill
we had come to believe in what the talkers told us
but the talkers have took the night train
fled the country
it is time we go home

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af) The View from the Red Stone Tower

where the brilliant rational burn nerve endings of the paradox hum
I think thereby I am that paradox
at sundown that lone figure traveling across desert into the slow decay of sun
moving quickly as though the murderers have something to tell me
their savagery giving credence to what has gone for so long unsaid

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ag) You Can Hear a Silent Place

you can hear a silent place as you can hear a clock in an empty room
who is spared gathers a thousand blows
walk this silent place as though it never knew you were here
soon it will be light
soon the wind will come up

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ah) The Kiss

five decades she waits the stirring of a small legend
a scream the length of a life gone unheard
with the coming of his death no change in the direction of the wind
love returns for fear of having never been
for fear the ending might be told
in a moment's improbability takes all there is to take
and all that was is secreted away
she kisses him one last time
he lifts his head to kiss her back

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ai) The Horse Cutter's Dream

like a meanness racing around an incongruity's slow burn the horse cutter's day comes
to an end
nothing but the slow dance of the swizzle stick makes for evening's fast times
where the drawn shade rattles whisper's whistle sweeps across a dream
one of these days i will go home to where the white haired men sit around warming
their meanings
on no meaning at all
and what is said lashes out like snap of whip across a storm's eye
hambone hambone where you been round the world and back again
the horse cutter knows to keep the teeth of his saw sharp

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ak) Season of the Unquarried Stone

this old man the alchemist feared
the martyr wanted to be
this old sparrow of a man
death's angry rival
in his season of the unquarried stone

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al) Harvesting Wildflowers on the Dark Side of the Moon

let the easy swing of their axe shadow its own to and fro
the moon has its own brother to keep
not even the element of surprise can turn that around
don't let them know it's the wildflowers on the dark side of the moon you are after

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am) The Source Essence

"They were the copies, the tired phantoms of something they had been before."
Mark Strand
from: The Story of Our Lives

it began somewhere else in another time when no place to be sought the constant in
the
source essence
but somewhere else stumbled in another time played the fool no place to be grew
cynical
and the constant in the source essence began selling itself on the street
the source essence itself on the fast track to fame got lost

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ao) Scatter

rankled by it
revisited
as today's
used to be
eye to eye
with him
this stand up
kind of guy
chasing it
all the way
down to
pain's bore
tear's dull
curiosity
in its cave
fire lit
and distant
refusing to
spare him
we all scatter

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ap) Rise Up No More

even this
is a lie
that there
he is
go
get him
brother
this stuck
pig
turning
on his spit
is done
tear off
a piece
eat
the pink
flesh
that
you too
might live
the lie
of a
stuck pig

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aq) A War Story

(Chu Lai, Vietnam, January 11,1970)

the gods may come and go the storm in the pass is eternal so many have come to die

we came upon you
body rolled into a ditch
tossed to the oblivion of the untagged body
the talk of men casual where the dead carry no weight
hunker down boy
keep low boy
grab on
roots and all boy
storm coming up this hill boy
night coming up this hill boy
and no way out boy
there are boys who travel with death slung across their backs
boys whose stories are told only in the return of the bones
war is a river twice crossed once by the living once by the dead
on the far bank of a river stands a boy old as a church bell ringing
and in some small place at a small time in history this war goes on
old men walk silent among the ruins
young women too long without their men rock in shadows crying out like cats down an
alley
the children run about in long spells of silence
soldiers in the square
and far from this war tonight fathers drive the boulevards looking for sons who they
only dare
whisper about
drive masquerading as ready to deliver
drive looking for sons who must keep moving
drive looking for sons who had asked why
drive to forget they never said a word
drive to resist what they know
drive to end a long journey
but their sons
their beautiful sons
they are gone

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ar) A Little Bit about Us Back Then (a work in progress)

we got ourselves into but could not get ourselves out of another war another war on the horizon worry all around. we marched for peace vigiled for justice left the war dead where they fell worry all around. good people considered bad things worry all around. we had little serious thought listened hard to the rhetoric wished hard for the rhetoric to be truth worry all around. we kept ourselves busy kept our plans to ourselves worry all around. the capitalists of course blamed the communists who feared the socialists who denounced the anarchists who said we told you so worry all around. we moved freely from place to place made deals became lost to those deals worry all around. books were written to settle things down worry all around. where art spoke out we called for a new art got the art we wished for worry all around. for comfort we walked dogs careful to pick up the dog shit after them worry all around.

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as) Citizens by Night

day ends
the crowd gathered to watch their city reach for the sun is gone
figures bent to shadows make their way home along the broad avenues
the homeless nod and ask nothing of them
on the corners boys make their jokes
the rifle-shot of laughter
and in their rooms young women turn to the mirror only to find there what seems less
than their
 rumored selves
what is whispered about the city in its swift give and take swallows up
the river pitches its green warning
pigeons keep watch from window ledges
moon on the rise dogs on the prowl
yet for a few bucks the sweet promise of things going one's way
and the hawkers come to the street looking to sell just the one thing
old men squat in doorways in the shadows beyond the street lights and know to stay
awake
women huddled to their coats hurry by
workers walk from out of the shadows of the factories into the crosshairs of river light
boys born to the street climb the back fences into the long season of the lie looking for
the clarity
sought after after hours
young men lean against walls smoking thinking why not anyway
but find that there is always the catch always the thing unproposed
in the joints the gray women dance out the evening on what the boys who have
nothing to say say
the boys' laughter backing them to the wall where the hands that know their thighs
slap the years
 beneath their skirts
flesh is where bone shows its wound
and do they come these boys each answering to the absurdity of his own question
the gray women never letting them down
in dance timing is everything
at dawn the petty criminals jacking it all in for some low rent memory head home
the cart men come to the street looking to tell their only joke
a young woman walks a bridge
morning burns through the night

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at) An Existentialist Dreams of No's Suicide

in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams of a shepherd singing for a traveler sitting beside a road who whistles a tune for a sculptor who chips away stone to call forth a white bird who having had something it wanted to say flies off with a snake in its beak to a place where an old man throws himself down the long blue slide of laughing sky body without rags tumbling for ever. in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams of hands caught in the light of a woman belittled by the night who nails the terms of her endearment to his door in the shadows someone runs away. in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams of a zebra who puts on her stripes against the lion's eye then runs off to flirt with the rain. And how is it a zebra can know to put on stripes against a lion's eye. you have reason to laugh she tells the existentialist less would be an easier truth. in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams of a hawk who wheels down upon the fate of a smaller thing giving birth to generation of no luck. in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams of a lion who dreams of men who crammed and crannied full bend the mule deer's ear where freight yard pounding keeps a man silent and truth like oil on water shines. in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams and theater lights go down a man caught in what is about to happen hears the click of boot heels watches the spiders move in. nothing so loud as the unsaid brushing up against the need to leave when you are unable to leave. in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams against the hard fact that thirty-two year old george david edenfield of savannah georgia along with his father repeatedly sodomized six year Christopher while george's mother looked on then choked the boy to death putting his body in a trash bag to be dumped along side a country road. in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams of no's suicide. In the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams of saying good-bye to what's up doc and walking away from the troublesome accolades tied to no wonder the struggle has lasted so long. in the room of shadows and neon an existentialist dreams of an ordinary man who tells him ain't no use to talking to me no more. but in a room of shadows and neon when an existentialist dreams surely something is gained on the outskirts tinkered with here and there where shifty makes his deals in handshake the lie can ill afford otherwise and baby's on the balcony all grown up not spoken in years. show him baby what you can do to his ya know wha d'i mean.

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au) Hawk

on pivot of wing hawk
swings out beyond outcropping
in thin weave of flight
eyes sharp belly lean
uneasy to keep moving
to conjure the old conspiracy
light to shadow shadow to light

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av) Thirteen Observations on the Middle Class and One Statement of Fact

the poor are poor because you cheat them
your money doing more harm than your work does good
fact is three billion people two hundred and forty million of them children work in
sweatshop factories under the most brutal conditions at two dollars a day
for you
they carry the weight of slavery on their backs
your stuff is your arrogance
your arrogance is your greed
corporate america feeds off your greed
as a liberal you are just left of right
as an environmentalist a be green sticker placed above the exhaust on an SUV
you are the slag that in capitalism rises to the top
you are a freak show
your need to win is the need of a loser
your desire for wealth makes you a fascist
your affluence has turned you into a coward
you are living in a most dangerous time of your own making

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aw) The Man Who Sits in a Dark Garden

while others wait time's wornout words to take them home
he sits among the dark flowers silent before the oncoming night waiting the return of
the
small anonymities
and knows to eat his losses and to sleep with one eye open
time's unsalvaged man
knows that when the mouse outwits the owl it finds itself lost among familiar things

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AY) The Slaughter House Bound

i can hear you not hear me
no matter what you say
underground
for want of a future
hurrying along
one blind step
chasing another
to the thin man in the fatal hat
he tells all
go to him
in the light of day
place yourself in his outstretched beggar's hands
i can hear you not hear me
no matter what you say
otherwise would the hooded cockroaches not be gathering
and nobody asking why

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az) Ambiguities in a Spring in which the Body of a Boy has been Found

shadow of march cloud staggering down field to river's edge
scent on wind keeping the hounds beying
it's ok maw he was no good
across the town the faith of lovers shaken where the will is still and desire forewarns of
lie
rumor says he touched a child then another then another and yet another until all
clocks stopped
in a field down by river's edge the body of a boy has been found
and dare we the one last joke
we little men full of pinkish words most absurd
who do as we please as if to do as we please is all there is to do
and our sons dancing round the round as lovers go up and shades come down doing as
they please
what they please being most absurd
to kiss the words of we little men
who do is as they please when what we please is done upon their knees
dare we the one last joke
mornings had whistled the boy into the street
where meanness is nothing more than another game
laughter a lesser god of things gone wrong
the years became his cunning
ventured into the shadows
made his preparations
lashed out
who is this boy
lashed out again
then again
until the ground bled
who am I now
lashed out
until the cruelties came home
and lovers lie still behind drawn shades

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ba) In Humor's Way

Rose Mangano came by her death through days pounded into obscurity by little whacks
of determination
step into the road dear friend
look both ways
go to where the bear's been seen crossing
walter mitty's there giving out the password
now go to where coyote scratched his mark on the willow tree for all to see that he's
been dreaming again
time will call out to you to ride on the wind of the sorcerer's trade
know the joke is on you

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bb) Keeping Faith

(for Faith Allen)

those who keep this child know
suffer her a moment's compassion she will sing for them a song of love
but dare they whisper into the ear of what the secrets have to say
the night orchid will shed a tear for Faith Allen

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bc) An Old Man in a Worn Out Coat

walks the dunes of the outer bank mystery stretching after a long sea sleep
storm his signature the dunes his solace
walks as night gives way to morning moon among the acacia trees
walks as we in town in our half sleep curse the nation for not keeping up
walks as on the edge of town the jackals lick the blood from their paws behind the
stoves the
dogs waiting their meal
walks as we in town wake to find the sun shining another day in the stony places
walks as the clock strikes the whistle fades the door slams shut
walks as we who say there is nothing not to be gained pen our names to the dotted
line
walks as we go about our business as having come too far to be sniffing dogs at the
winds of
change
an old man in a worn out coat walks the dunes of the outer bank keeping to himself as
a
whisper at the edge of madness keeps to itself

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bd) Cross Current

in the beginning there was i'll show you mine if you show me yours and she gave birth
to a son who could sight read in any direction
the old huckster said to her you and your son have become as one of us
the arrow that flies in only the one direction crossed the skies of paradise
she took her son and by morning they were gone south into a land where the old
huckster

dare not follow

with a smile the old huckster tipped his hat and moved on to other projects
for her the nights weren't pretty
but the honeysuckle dearie
the honeysuckle will soon be in bloom
and you will forget such garden visions ever came to you
her son grew fond of shadows and became a salesman
became notorious for selling notions from which the language of destiny flows
travelled the flat lands where rounding corners meant nothing
where the word up held him in crisis
evenings found him drinking in the park

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be) Who are these Middle Class People

they are who they propose to be unfulfilled
believe themselves among the victims
recall sends them flying out the door
looking to make another deal

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bf) Repository for the Joyless History of the Hapless Soul

the unloved ride the shadow soul's down to its knees
where the hangman gives confessions to the given over to
laughter broods bones rattle

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bg) A Vagrant History

old man
old dog
old sea
in the distance a baby cries

she takes a bite from the apple
so it is we come into our own
being a holy man he will have none of it
passion bows

to the south young families turn north
leaving only footprints in the cooling ash
soon they come to fear the journey
spiritual man shows up to show the way
never the fool he dances round the round
the path to his unspoken wears circular
routine can get the better of a man
rumor is we don't travel well

towns are built
the people are worked hard
a terrible secret kept from them
in the back streets the secret begins to unravel
the lie givers say it is only the wind wreaking havoc on the driven sun
but everyone begins to sweat
jokes are made
some run away
others argue
the girl next door smiles
keeps smiling
no one warns her
the towns become cities
some become great cities
in the railway concourse of one of the great cities an old woman sells flowers
a question hangs above the concours
trains arrive crowds hurry
a night passenger steps down from a train
in her eyes she so many others

on the street goodfellow dressed to kill hustling whatever he can to the other guy
presses on
last one on the street
wife pregnant
sunday rage
pain
shake it off
wife pregnant again
take a second job
never was they really took to each other
last time she saw him he was standing in the shadows down an alley asleep on his feet□

and so it is the lie givers stand their watch not for us

the signs are there
boys still sent off to war
the savvy keep silent
bury their dead
but the dead lack paradox and run to the river of the never was

and now they say the fish are all but gone
that in the arctic the white bear can no longer make the next ice flow
she smiles then takes another bite from the apple

it took whimsy to get us here

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bh) Fascism's Ruthless Brother

a sure moneymaker in good times
a ruthess one in bad

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bi) The Box

it was easy to talk you into it
done without a shred of evidence
you came drew your conclusion and were content
who are you with that constant skittish little smile on your face
what were you thinking this is not rags to riches not the place of dreams
nonsense and the long haul brought you here
soon you will be asked to leave

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bj) The Illusion Eaters

What a poor wretch man is. Fortunately he doesn't know it.

If he did, what a poor wretch he'd be."

Pallenberg

From: Der Brave Sunder

they scare you into denial and call it truth of the day

hungry for truth you are pleased

their triumphant march into the plaza has your stamp of approval on it

look over your shoulder those are not shadows coming after you

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bk) What of It

for want of it never know what sends so many to their death
what of it
for want of it never dream or be wounded by the very fact you dream
what of it
for want of it never go screaming into the night i am alone and be alone
what of it
for want of never walk among the shadows and silhouettes
what of it
for want of it never find the junkyard dog in you
what of it
for want of it never round some corner never to return
what of it
for want of it never find that there is no way out
what of it

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bl) Marathon Man

if they find your cup half full they empty it
If they find your cup half empty they make you pay to fill it
they can turn a man darker than his shadow allows for
they know give a man the fear he yearns he comes begging
they know give a man no promise of tomorrow he is theirs for life
they say they are the great ones
they say they know things we can never know
they say it is they who make history
if one of them hands you an empty bucket and asks you to do just the one thing for
him
just the one time
run

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bm) The Primal Paradox

nothing exists without nothing

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bn) Lunch Time in the Suburbs

he thinks not so much about the lie as about what is to be gained
spending his life chasing it
without the chase a goner
hey man how much you pay for that jag

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bo) Hangs

little
if anything
brings it
about
surely
a smile
brief
hint
of it
where not
meant to
be and
yet
is

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bp) Ockham's Razor

didn't you never go to high school stupid yes and i
graduated the same way

Abbott and Costello

you're free to go there anytime you please now that the doublecross is in
if only you could let go for once it's there in your own paradox
nothing keeping the strings vibrating

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br) Night Passenger

tonight the terrors are in a laughing mood
the white noise of 3 a.m.
who's there
no one's there
be still
cold sweat
tells all
body in the street
bullet to brain
no
just shadow
at 3 a.m.
have gone off again
take it easy
let it go
the dream again
lights of passing car
be quick
into the shadows
night departure
multitudes and switchbacks
long haul to the coast
leave off with the small talk
get to anywhere
body in the street
at 3 a.m.
the cold stones echo
some men travel this world anonymous and very dangerous

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bs) I Think They are Preparing Us for Class Warfare

the gate repaired
the monolith raised
the numbers crunched
the odds calculated
the vote prepared
the dog people asleep
ham it up if you like
but the fix is in
they have us on the run
be sure to lower your eyes when they pass

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bt) On the Wing of Each Circling Crow Sits One Angry Dead

we lose count so many dead so many used to dying
work the numbers until each account is balanced
on the wing of each circling crow sits one angry dead

paul bamberger

bu) Wall Street

for Richard Ney whose books, The Wall Street Gang and the Wall Street Jungle, unequivocally show that it is snake-oil salesmen who run wall street.

“The con man always laughs because his game is so simple, belief so easily had.”

Thomas Williams

From: The Hair of Harold Roux

never sell short to the specialist's inside straight
if you know this
you know wall street's dirty secret
what keeps the dogs howling
above all keeps the dogs howling
telling it like it is being a lie of the first order rigs the market
so that you put your money where their mouth is their mouth convincing you
it is by your own stupidity you lose your money
fear needs no name
dropp the name

paul bamberger

bv) A Troublesome Matter

what more were you asking from each turn of events
you came to be that which you feared most of all that which you could not salvage
so that when death lowered you into the place of the what could have been
you were what you had always meant to be

paul bamberger

bw) Gulderen Baran

more honest the truth would have to be told
he chose to walk away into infamy
done with that he held out for for so long
but we got what we came for
he the shepherd we the flock
in istanbul tonight Gulderen Baran twenty-two blindfolded stripped naked dragged into
police headquarters raped strung up to die
tonight we sing to his glory and pass the hat
in istanbul tonight Gulderen Baran refuses to die

paul bamberger

bz) Dilemma of a Contemporary Man

motherfucker i
so desperately
seeking
time's
lost
untouched
unloved
unforgiven
unresolved
throw them all
into the sea
that i
might move on

paul bamberger

ca) Density of Light

talk
all around
was it
the hard
light
slammed
down
on the bar
like from
who knows
where
call
last call

paul bamberger

cb) A Theory of Hierarchies

never trust all you hear
it's a pyramid scheme
prosperity in a vacant lot
slope too steep to climb
a boy once climbed night's back fence looking for it
found midnight's neon shadow
freud once blindsided a child looking for it
sidled right up to her
told her she was cured
then turned away
most pursue it looking for the comfort in it all
so where'd ja who
on every street corner
who'd ja where
saturday nights
how'd ja who
in a lover's embrace
who'd ja say
miss lonelyhearts
look all you want
but you will find no takeout service here

paul bamberger

cc) A Promise

a gift most dangerous

paul bamberger

cd) The Paradox in Happy

if you is
you ain't

paul bamberger

cd) Winter Wife

look for her where stranger turns away
shadow between the city and the sea
shadow between the dream and what the dream might be
only the bone bare altar of morning standing before her
nowhere to stand at her ease
no day without its routine
no word taken to its depth
no knock at the back door

paul bamberger

ce) The Chickens Caged Beside the Chopping Block

know

paul bamberger

cf) Janitorial Services

every day this guy spits his gum into the urinal

paul bamberger

cg) The Noise in Silence Takes a Funny Bounce

thorns in the willow tree
flames in the silence
hag
she is knee deep in it
taking it hard
out comes puppet
riding on his porcelain shadow
he his own muted remake
simply cut down the willow tree
he tells her

paul bamberger

ch) The Air Thick with Black

master too long
wretched drifter
carrying on as he does
making the shadiest deals
acquittal too good for the likes of him
he has trouble breathing the air so thick with black
his next breath a tumble into the unknown

paul bamberger

ci) Winter Village

the women sit before the fires scraping down the last thin hides
the men gone

paul bamberger

cj) Nuevo Laredo

where the dying give flight to meanness temple raised to sentencing of the soul
any fool can tell you the market's going to crash
but you keep opening and closing the door
looking for a boy who once stood where bridge crosses river
did he cross and in crossing find a world where sun's slow stone grinds down the day
as you gathered up your things
you who have never seen nuevo laredo
have never climbed a back fence into the comings and goings of a mexican night
to take a girl who in her youth had everything to give
in that one unnamed moment glad to be done with her

paul bamberger

ck) The Well

shadow of owl wing deepens the narrow opening
good fortune being after all all there is is our not her dream
laboring at that which can never be sweet memory echoing down harmony's last as is
and in the rough hewn light of that which you are suspect
you make your move

paul bamberger

cl) Olduvai Gorge

it is not a matter of race
but distant memory of place
that takes you back
where never there was the lie of white and black

paul bamberger

cm) The Go Round

angry fearful men lecture wretched men who bow to all their absurdities
speak of bootstraps and forgotten words
the lies we tell our children
the lies they must live by
too late
is it
too late

paul bamberger

cn) Homeward Bound

mountain clouds mountain shadows wind whistling through the pass
we sit atop a one penny cart startled as we cross into the pass looking for a life of
satisfaction
and wonder how brave the generation might have been
sense it all had something to do with symmetry
the hour of small notions descends upon us

paul bamberger

co) The Old Man with Hat Eschew

he made mistakes along the way long drawn out mistakes
had he not turned north into the country of low clouds
where little is known of latitude and longitude is a fool's paradise
traveling only with his dog and a sketchy weather report
would she have insisted on tasting the salt of tropic winds
the dog sleeps all day

paul bamberger

cp) Three for Charlie Reznikoff

there there is nothing here there is the fiction of naming it
and Charley Reznikoff standing on a sytrrt corner smoking
waiting for the small town uptown folk to take him away
what do rice and beans simmering have to do with this
look out the window
Charley Reznikoff is gone

in the evening the deer no longer come to feed at the apple tree
the deep woods whip-poor-will silent
they wait for Charley Reznikoff

she walks by the river at first light
to be with Charley Reznikoff

paul bamberger

cq) And Forever

don quixote
on a donkey
sancho panza
on a steed
forever
dancing
deliriums
on a mention of
unkindnesses
say he died
to keep it so
down
where the geese gather
down
where luck
as luck would have it
is all there is
in having shared a find with a friend
this man
this don quixote
who had you laugh
against all practicality
this man
this don quixote
for whom windmills
struck against all good fortune
this man
this don quixote
who upon leaving
called you friend
no friend
sancho panza
who upon leaving
called you brother
no brother
this man
this don quixote
who had you eat desert sand
as you drove across his desert obsession
dream turned
down
faith gone
undone
mad

paul bamberger

cr) Jeff Mooncat Drunk at the Kitchen Table

with what language do i dismiss the longevity of your insistence
there were times when what was gathered against the winter had its say
i have courted the darker side of your companions dined with their minor indiscretions
with what language do i stop the noise of you pinning down your legal entitlements
you who name the wretchedness as winner take all
you who swear to this with hand raised to strike the many gaunt faces
with what language do i keep from you there were times i would have sold my
legitimacy
for a walk in your park

paul bamberger

cs) Prosperity in a Vacant Lot

so many so much discard in a vacant lot

paul bamberger

ct) Conforming to Dance Rhythms at the Sunrise Motel

the lawn flamingo goes about its bobbing business rounding up the little breezes off the
little pond
the whisper knock of chambermaid
dancing light on window shade

paul bamberger

cu) A Brief History of Humans

in the naming of the legalities we came upon truth turned in our claim check for cash
and the old men drew myths on the distended bellies of their child brides
all is well the law said
and down by the river a man scratched his x upon the land
from the x sprang the word
and the word gave this man power over the land and all who worked the land
all is well the law said

paul bamberger

cv) The Arrangement

we settled in
by the signpost
half way
as are the dead half way
waiting in watery time
and dare she the question
when all else fails
dare she the key
what unmitigated gall
the two as we

paul bamberger

cw) Down the Tubular Mind Leaps Unsettled

bathed
in summer
blue
feathered
morning
leaps
down the
tubular
mind
unsettled

paul bamberger

cx) Drought

in the barn yard at noon the old hound rolls onto her side
the hatless farmer with rifle to shoulder an old friend cradled in the sights
in the field a mouse digs at the back of its hole
a hawk hangs in the blistered sky
a young couple walks a highway each afraid to speak
the farmer's wife comes into the yard without a wash to hang
high above a small cloud recedes
in drought she who knows what will come of it never dreams

paul bamberger

cy) John Wednesday's Fatal Flaw

that he was a man so possessed by a lack of meaning of
brought him years of good fortune as poet of
an age that he could smell the nothing of
the secret being in the misdirecting of
the it of
a thing so mysterious the people's misunderstanding of
became his metaphor for an age he had by the balls of
its own connotations of
and that he could spellbind by mere reputation of
any accusation that he might not have the meaning of
was in the end john wednesday's fatal flaw

paul bamberger

cz) The Day Hemingway Sent the Maker of the Song He Sang to the Hospital

he sings not a note reads on the line his fists are large his footwork fine
this fellow he thinks a little odd his footwork more than a little flawed
hemingway smiles and bows to the gang
nods to the maker of the song he sang
who knows a little blood can't change that
so into the ring he tosses his hat
strike the bell the call goes out
the maker of the song he sang is knocked about

paul bamberger

da) Nothing Let's One Ramble on Like the Sweet Demise of a Dream

you push so hard the cart spills over the discard of a life
let it go they say
a small cart
and too many trips
but count back if you must by the numbers
to when the small reasonings go wrong
there it begins
had it been otherwise would you be asking these questions

paul bamberger

db) The Patriarch

as a boy he knew not to cry on an island that cried
an island of white rock whipped by the sun
at sunrise as sheperds herded flocks to pasture
as fishermen turned open boats to the open sea
he would climb the cliffs above the village
to where the sea birds wait out the night
there to listen to the splintered lyric of things such as they are
as a man he could charm the meat from a thing unhatched

paul bamberger

dc) Any Time Now

at last i think
the matter well in hand
panic sets in
unexpected
men do cry
here it comes
straight at me
ready

paul bamberger

dc) The Gathering Storm

rumors of another war
today is not a good day to praise the sea

paul bamberger

dd) With Little to Say

squatter's rights being what they are
i laze in this the season of my foolishness
one of the sons thought brave before the little curiosities
the fact of my longevity even a mother dare not whisper into the ear of
fearless against the gods of common sense
flawless mimic before the mirror
pretty boy thinking he got it right
weaned on night's loose proximities
abandoned to the shadows of the sprung symmetries
at my window i watch for you to pass

paul bamberger

de) Pam and Jack

no busload of old folk these two

paul bamberger

df) The Betrayal

the new born child is a new nation
built on trust and gentle handling
we come to this new born child this new nation with a smile and a promise
and with a need to avenge our failings
so it begins

paul bamberger

dg) A Soul in Search of a Laundrymat

no earth shaking
got him here
passing
through the
quiet room of
failures
give him that
at least if he's
a mind to
no one goes to the river anymore

paul bamberger

dh) X

x
marks
where it
has gone
cold as
forecasted
miracle lasts
but a moment
dream against
the endless
daily slam
of the x
as it goes
by

paul bamberger

di) The Young Bride and the War

she lived to be old and a widow
and the war never ended

paul bamberger

dj) By the Blue Moon

down the road
the dog is barking
by the falls
the trees are still
in the fields
the moonlight
shadows
by the sheds
the wood
unstacked
in the homes
the fires lit
by the fires
the words
are whispered
who we are
we can't let go
what we fear
most of all
our shadows
on the wall

paul bamberger

dk) To Die For

he spent a life scratching out a living
this he thought the way it is meant to be
so kept a smile on his face
and was known as a good man

paul bamberger

dl) Rainbow's Shadow

"she feels she disappears"

Stephen Dobyns
From: Loud Music

one more lonely room
things go wrong in this room
her door swings open
the city is busy tonight

paul bamberger

dm) The Two of Them

the shopkeeper looks up from sweeping
dim light of the cave in his eyes
teeth bared
it's been a long journey
not for the likes of him will there be any turning back today
there's the door he says without a word

paul bamberger

dn) Come on Write Something

come on write something
a one penny opera
come on
whistle your way through
that high glacier country
that gathers in the years
from their wandering
come on write something
as if worlds depend on it
i think i will
soon's the sun comes up

paul bamberger

do) On the American Political Scene

there are the democrats
there are the republicans
there are the greens
there are the socialists
there are the communists
there are the anarchists
then there are those who run the country

paul bamberger

dp) Better You were Blind

you say you are color blind but that you still see black against white
better you were blind

paul bamberger

dq) Evening Shadows at the Edge of a Woods

they come each evening to bury their dead
then leave

paul bamberger

dr) Sink or Swim

'And patriotism has run the world through
so many blood-lakes: and we always fall in.'
Robinson Jeffers
from: So Many Blood-Lakes

what will it be
sink or swim
stay away
from the water
you say
but the water
comes to you
would you have it
turn to lakes
of blood

paul bamberger

ds) The Majors

they've named the ten worst dictators
same old cast of characters
except for the new guy from Eritrea
an up and comer

paul bamberger

dt) Dodging a Bullet

never look back at those who are coming after you
the whole lot of them put the smile on
run fast as you can with the weight of the years on your back

paul bamberger

du) The Dark Side of Modern Education

online and distant learning are like phone sex
they can serve a basic need
but never get to the heart of the matter

paul bamberger

dv) 911

a terrible wrong overcame my brother
and he shot our mother
then smiled
as he dialed

paul bamberger

dw) The Student Doesn't Know I Love Her

out there her life abject poverty
here a war against those who would keep her out there

paul bamberger

dx) What You Is Is Missing in America

when at midnight the neon voices spread their lie
the words come up to you from the street
flood in from every direction
the clock insisting the room be cleared

paul bamberger

dy) Behind the Double Doors

behind the double doors
a rash of slow deaths
and the need not to know
behind the double doors
caution in all its clarity
if only we had had the courage to

paul bamberger

dz) It all Begins with the Killing of a Sparrow

it must be that nothing drives nothing nothing being every is every was every could be
of
every thing
and that
something
drives
nothing round
its round about
where
every nothing is
its own is
as if is
could never
be
on its
own
then
back to
is
in its
infinite
throwness
every
thing's
everyness
dulled
suddenly
finding itself
home again
there you have it
deal with it
in the killing
of a sparrow
it's yours
it's you
it's sure to panic you
so much so
that you
being
in time
and
in place
here and
only here
now and
only now
standing before nothing's mirror
tracing thin mustaches on every sparrow that could have been

paul bamberger

ea) Just a Couple of Guys Trying to make it in this Worlf on Their Own

everything god has said i have said just as well

paul bamberger

eb) Flat

no adventure in the middleclass
just
i did

paul bamberger

ec) Among the about to be Buried

BEING AMONG THE ABOUT TO BE BURIED

when among the about to be buried be on your guard
you never know with the about to be buried
impervious to prayer they carry our secrets to who knows where
it is not unheard of for them to laugh
if only we the grieving could laugh
so much to be learned from the about to be buried

paul bamberger

ed) In the Hope That

every spring under the overpass they leap from their nests

paul bamberger

ee) 10

s
n
e
1

paul bamberger

ef) Precipace

i need money to come
in the amount of some

paul bamberger

eg) American Nightmare

the storm is here
dog has lost his will to be wolf
the night sharpens to no horizon
dog curls up with a good book

paul bamberger

eh) Can You Not Hear

can you not hear
the little man
crouching
deep with
clawing
to get out
he has something
he wants to say

paul bamberger

eh) Jesus and Mohammed Working the Same Side of the Street

her child is hungry
she runs into the street
finds jesus talking with mohammed
jesus my child is dying from hunger
tell me what i must do
pray for her
she returns home to pray
her child dies
she runs back out into the street
finds jesus talking with mohammed
mohammed my child has died from hunger
tell me what i must do
pray for her

paul bamberger

ei) Who's Shooting Holes in the Crossroad Sign

the crows have gathered
the woods are dark
sister is yours
until the singing lark

crows on wing
the morning breaks
sister knows
what it's going to take

river shadows
where the river bends
through the sunlight
then lost again

you are nothing
without your look
sister knows
when you give that look

pork barrel boys
brew their swill
in untamed rhythms
behind the hill

dance their jig
in quick step time
sister's gone
she's doing fine

mama rocks
in the evening light
young girl's face
at the edge of night

you wave to mamma from the gate
you know its much to late

paul bamberger

ej) Fundamental

the absence of war is not peace the absence of poverty is

paul bamberger

ek) They

you were born to wear a smile on your face
they took dead aim

paul bamberger

el) Chasing Down Jesus

hey jesus get back here where ya belong ya damn fool
we ain't gonna hurt cha

paul bamberger

em) Rambling

the sea shadows crawl ashore
the horseshoe crabs long gone
the shore caving in on itself
the sun refusing to pull back
we have gotten used to it
each comes to terms
says we
not believing it
not for a moment
this helps
down by the river
we sit
but the fish don't come

paul bamberger

en) Trompe L'Oeil

the old artificer had to understand reality before he could reproduce it.

Thomas Williams

From: The Hair of Harold Roux

driving down the highway sundown sun to my back

shadow racing before me

nothing said

sorry Robert Creely

things are not made out of words

paul bamberger

eo) Like I Ain't Got Twenty Minutes

probably not
bolder teetering
static aims
mediation
and more
rights laid down
by those who silence
damned if that bolder don't worry me some

paul bamberger

ep) Lobster Stew

a duck and a herring gull
they got together
to sit a spell
the one jabbered about heaven
the other about hell
each with a secret they wouldn't tell
one walked off
the other flew
neither letting on to what they knew
and it all boiled down to lobster stew

paul bamberger

eq) Freud's Every Man

he was a peddler's
home spun bit of
the motherfucker
never let go
lived a long
inglorious
distraction
dark rival
in dark mask
touched by
the sexual
where love
meant to be
he misspoke
was granted
96 years

paul bamberger