

Poetry Series

John Tansey
- poems -

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John Tansey(June 4th,1961...Gemini)

"empty Nest"....

"Empty Nest"

With the boy's room, draped in white sheets
This whole year, like a cocoon, preserved, in amber,

She closes another album: The fossil record of their marriage,
Steeped, in the earthen layers of clay.

Then, turning to face him, two huge land masses:
He, the old world, she is of the new,

And with thirty years of continental drift
Having poured an ocean between them,

They live, now, in different time zones,
Sleep, eat and speak in different tongues...

11.15.71 John Tansey

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John Tansey

4: 00 O' Clock Am...

4 O'Clock AM

Like a frantic, deep sea diver
beneath the Arctic waters,
caught and cold under the ice
his escape hole, frozen over
and the oxygen tank on low,
beats, furiously, under the ice floe,

I, too, in a panic,
beat along these four walls,
the floor and the ceiling,
looking for some plaster hole,
some way to escape,
this sparse, dark room

then, at the darkest point of night,
just before dawn comes
and morning arrives
you'll find me gone,
and the diver,
 sunk to the bottom of the sea...

John Tansey

A Gift For The Romantic

A Gift for the Romantic□

□

It is in the subtlety
And not the blunt insult,
The threat and not the onslaught;

The implied and not the explicit.

It is in the first gleaning,
remembered scents of Spring
And not the direct,

Overhead heat of Summer.

The autumnal dread
And not the dead of Winter;
The sweet dream of sleep

And not the bleak morning after.

When somewhere between the gift,
And it's crumpled paper wrapping,
Lie an infinity

Of finite things to be chosen:

But of a thousand choices
if I must choose one,
I would settle, instead,

For the choice and forego the choosing...

John Tansey□1.25 07

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John Tansey

A Gift For The Romantic...Second Version

A Gift for the Romantic 12

It is in the subtlety
And not the blunt insult,
The threat and not the onslaught;

The implied and not the explicit.

It is in the first gleaning,
remembered scents of Spring
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For the choice and forego the choosing...

John Tansey 1.25 07

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John Tansey

A Gift From The Romantic

It is in the subtlety
And not the blunt insult,
The threat and not the onslaught;

The implied and not the explicit.

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remembered scents of Spring
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John Tansey 11.25 07

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John Tansey

A History Of It In The Family

□

Eyes aglaze in the morning rush,
Suspended in thought, I stare
Through the window of the car, □

Adrift in this diffused glare
Of the green traffic light, □
I am too absorbed to go through. □

□

I have scaled life's stair to this rung
Where my mother stopped, doubting
She could continue on,

Collapsing right there in a slump,
Bent half-over from the fear □
Of seeing their before her □

In the shape of her father on the stairs- - □
His grim infirm slouch, praying □□
She would not follow after

To where the ghost of him stood,
Fearless and fearful even at that height
That he still could not see God.

□ II

How old was she then when she descended □
Back down, stumbling □
Over words she would choke on, □

As she spoke of her life, regressing □
To the gestures of a child, □
Spiraling through the years

□

To where it all started, a girl lost □

at the bottom landing, turning
with a face flushed in tears,
□
'My father', she said, 'would sit in a chair
drunken fits of silence
so steep he did not notice me there',

'Standing in that immense air of depression,
where only mother would speak, breaking
the silence like a bird of premonition'

'He thought his life a loss', she said
alone, and given up, he abandoned
every hope I was the love of'.

□ III

Was it then she bit her tongue
and folding back her limbs, buried
every white flower in her mouth, □

Extinguishing actions like words
she withdrew by lantern, alone
to the cavernous echoes of her soul.

Is this is my inheritance, this brooding trait, □
this inherent sadness that states
I am sole heir

To my family's flawed heirloom
□ of depression, passed down
□ an ambry of gene.

This shell of a man, host
to its genetic strand,
its rogue chromosome

That looks back from the mirror- -
like these hands once thought mine
seeming now to have always been yours.

John Tansey

A Love Poem For Anyone...

For you, the hapless peruser,
who happens to thumb upon this page,
along a dusty shelf of books.
Was not haphazard at all;
For the page found your thumb
as it was fated to be,
as the effect finds the cause
and the cause finds you.
the heart bleeding reader.

If you would these words for you
then will it so.
for the subjective was never anyone
but the objective was always you,
the sensual stranger,
the romanticizing, lusty lover
who never turned my corner.

John Tansey

A Marriage Of The Stars... Experimental Grammar!

Astrology☐
(In The Stars)

You,
Aries, born of flame
and forged in fire.

I,
Gemini, a gourd
of air, poured of sky.

You,
consume me;
So that I, too,
assume the body.

I,
an idea with no mortar,
placed moral
into your rage.

Without...
you would slowly
blacken to waning ash.

And without...
a chalkline in the rain,
I would never know the flesh.

Ah, but once, did we dance!
briefly, but beautifully,
like burning Birchwood in the hearth.

We loved furiously and, as quickly,
collapsed together into a heap of the sparkling past...

(7/08/07)

John Tansey

A Patch Of Earth Under A Thatch Of Sky□

□

Each man must have a corner
A patch of earth

To call his own
Under a thatch of sky.

As the Homeless
Have their the memories of one,

Crawling back through
A ball broke window of the mind.

And even a leaper
Must have his ledge,

A bit of rock face□ jump from.

As sure as the dead,
Lay claim,

To the plots for graves
That, in the end, receive them.

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John Tansey

A Tragedy In Two Acts.....The Slow Death Of A Marriage

ACT I

It was not your presence, □
rather its absence□
felt; □
when in the theater
whispering to you□
how good the play was □
you, □
snapped shut, like a mussel,
□
leaning away.□
No good actor like they upon the stage, □
you could not feign□
nor mask your feelings enough□
to even laugh.

Rather, looking for a que, □
forget your lines□
as your voice dropped...□
and out dribbled
the terrible silence
of your act of love that flopped.
□
Reaching for your hand, □
five fingers scampering away□
into your pocket
like a crab to its shell, □
I was speechless, forgot my lines.

And there we sat, □
two sad mimes, □
staring at our play□
of life, □
both, standing in the wings,
with bit parts and nothing to say.□

ACT II

In bed, a kiss□
neither wet, nor passionate,
no tongue, nor lips...□
we pecked, like birds□
at the hard shell
of our roles cast in marriage.
□

Your caress;
not the grip of one□
holding dear for her life, □
but rather of letting go; □
more formality than bliss□
in the absence, of which,

Either lip, eye or finger
or the sensuality of taste, sight or touch
could not prop up a lie, □
even a gentle white one
to pretend, act or defy
□
this final act...□
of our death scene, □
with heads bowed,
and without applause,
I drew the curtain, □
bowed, said goodnight,
and turned the house lights out.

John Tansey

A Whittle Of Words...

A Whittle of Words...□

Sitting, slumped in a chair,
On a wooden porch
And under the sun
That, moving slowly, like a brushfire,
Across this steamy afternoon,
Burns the underbrush, the dead, twisted leaves,
Of my depressed thoughts,
That leaves an open clearing.

With nothing done and nothing left to do!

I am absorbed by this moment
And open to each one that trails after: □
All, reoccurring shapes in nature; □
Echoes of the same first sound□
Come from the whittling of mere words,
like a piece of wood;
Its shavings, fall to the ground
□
As so many crumpled pieces of paper.

It is in the shaping, the carving,
The very paring down of the fat; □
That the art, itself, disappears.
And the value of nothing remains
In the palm of my red, overworked hands:

And it is this gesture, an open hand, all that I, humbly, extend to you...

John T Tansey 06/10/07

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John Tansey

After Shocks...Tremors

Allow me, just these tears,
which well up, from inside
bedden around the eye.
With face flushed,
and, stammering, speak of
what I most loved, and then lost...

For, if nothing else,
through such sorrow,

God, I have earned them...

So, allow me this rumination,
this reminiscence,
this languishing of the past.

To indulge, completely, in this self pity,

for, there is not one other who will...

JT6/30/07

John Tansey

After The Ball.....In Two Voices, Mother & Son

Son: □

After the breakdown, □□
euphoric fits in a room□
lit by one candlelight of pretense□
denying the end of marriage, □
you twirled by yourself on the floor.

Softly shading your moods□□
to the subdued warmth of lamps□
cloaked in the hue of a man, □
have you always denied □
the life that direct light imposed?

Floating through the rooms□
veiled in scarves□□
and talismans of tarnished silver,
was it illusion you followed after□
in the trailing ripple of curtains? □

Mother:

Mine was the black in magic; □
romance that dined □
among shadows shaping someone□
of another time, □
and yet it was madness□
that watched love burn his clothes I draped, □

Too near to the warmth of its flame-
This masquerade of marriage
consumed by the brutish pale
of a bare light bulb
intruding upon my dream,
dispelled it for the fraud it became.

Unveiling back to its drab walls,
the smoke-filled mirrors
of my delusion-
I awoke each morning

divorced by this truth, robed □
in its tattered ruins of daylight.

John Tansey

All Hallows Eve

Brisk, this cold October wind
pruning husks of brown-balled leaves
into effigies of Autumn's wane,
sweeps with besom broom
all the cluttered corners,
and the recessed secrets, □
from the hollow's outgrowth, □
flushed from the shadows□ □
into the sickle of a quarter moon, □
its crisp sheen cold upon the throat.

Fear is unmasked in the witching wind□
far from the pranks of tromping children □
who dare, amid the leaves, to taunt□ □
with old songs and a cut switch, □
the stark, cobwebbed clapboards
of grave side ghosts□
loosed upon the world, □
to haunt this last slanted sheaf of corn, □
stalked by the scythe□
in the dread season of the harvest. □□

Even fire hides from the cold□
in the skin of the gourd□
on All Hallow's Eve, □
its wind prying the brain's stonehenge -□
where death feared by the aging heart□
close to the grave
becomes but a game □
mimed by mischievous charades□
of children, costumed □
for their parade of life and death in the park. □

John Tansey

All Hallow's Eve.....

Brisk, this cold October wind,
pruning husks of brown-balled leaves
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of children, costumed □
for their parade of life and death in the park. □

John Tansey

Alzheimers Or Dementia...

Shiftless, as a tot
without tooth or firm foot,
the old bald man
unable to stand, upon infirm legs,
left abandoned in a chair
rambles on
mindless of what dear possessions
he once held claim,
having settled into dust
with a dry mouth thirst for remembrance
of a name, dying upon his tongue,
cleansed of the sorrowful
cognizant self,
unaware of what past life
drowns,
in a salt sea
of saliva ebbing down his chin.

Naked, as a babe
into a toddler's pose
sloughing all long term renown
of years gone, he relapses
oblivious, to what lies beyond reach
as a sot, feeble on his back,
bowels inherently unburden onto the sheets,
shucking limb, bark
and all the layered graves of his learning
he returns to the womb, stripped of all skins;
peeling back, the leaf
until only the soft shelled nut
of the senile child,
remains,
having come full turn,
to the babbling origin of our native tongue
he folds back the husk
through the seasons of his age
to the short term timelessness
of contentment and tantrum...

John Tansey

An Artists' Baptism

An Artists' Baptism

□

Fanning the pages,

The fresh, unblemished smell
To a ream of blank paper.

□

A primed, white-washed,
Mounted canvas.

The sculptor's arms wrapped
Around a square block of Venetian marble.

Or a fresh, fallen snow
Just as your child's first foot fall.

All are Sacraments of Baptism:
To wash away our wrongs,

□ Like perennials, blooming again every year...□

□

John Tansey

An Artists' Baptism...

An Artists' Baptism

The fresh, unblemished smell
In a ream of blank paper;
Fanning the pages.

A primed, white-washed
And mounted canvas.

The sculptor's delivery
In a square block of Venetian marble.

Or a freshly, fallen snow
Just before your child's first foot falls.

All are Sacraments of Baptism:
To wash away our wrongs,

And attempt, again, to start anew...□

11.14.08 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Anonymous Love Poem...

For you, the hapless peruser,
who happens to thumb upon this page,
along a dusty shelf of books.
Was not haphazard at all;
For the page found your thumb
as it was fated to be,
as the effect finds the cause
and the cause finds you.
the heart bleeding reader.

If you would these words for you
then will it so.
for the subjective was never anyone
but the objective was always you,
the sensual stranger,
the romanticizing, lusty lover
who never turned my corner.

John Tansey

Aquarium Sky...

In an aquarium of the clear water day
and under an Autumnal sun,
I see depth
in the clouds, layered
like fish in their schools, drifting
through
the sea blue watered sky.

In the milk warm weather of Spring
thawing the solid ice floes
of winter,
to a sky of sea blue water;
hydrogen clouds of birds,
liquified
in a white wash of sun, splashing

Under the white caps of the clouds,
and amid a glimmering
shaft of sunrise;
where, swimming to its distant light,
scattered off the spindrift birds,
I plunge,
this first water wave break of day.

John Tansey

Artists' Baptism

An Artists' Baptism

Fanning the pages□

The fresh, unblemished smell

To a ream of blank paper;

□

Or a primed, white-washed,

Mounted canvas.

The sculptor's delivery

In a square block of Venetian marble.

Or a freshly, fallen snow

Just before your child's first foot fall.

All are perennials in Baptism:

To wash away our wrongs,

And attempt, again, to start anew...□

□

□

John Tansey

As If Love Could Be Sewn With A Butterfly Stitch...

It was a long and loathsome day.
You and I had been fighting.
I was so sure the sight of blood
would have moved to soften you.

But you barely noticed.
I had to bemoan the pain
for you to ask 'what happened? '

'Cut my finger in the kitchen', I said
hoping, you would lead me to water,
And wash out the bad blood between us...

But rummaging the bags of your eyes
for some fonder time to recall,
I reclaimed an empty palm.
Then, with cradled arms and sucked thumb,

watched you whisk away...
unraveling, as a butterfly stitch,
You disappeared downstairs
even before the bleeding stopped

Clutching my self tighter then,
I knew it was our love that ebbed away...

John Tansey

Ash Wednesday.....

Your words cut,
gut and disembowel me
as the crude, roughly hewn edge
of a black, obsidian blade.□

Tied, spreadeagled,
across a stone slab,
atop the temple mount.
The high priest
and his minions
rip out my bleeding
but still beating heart

As my blood marches through the grooves,
like soldiers into the abyss;

Dripping into four adobe goblets;
A virgin waiting at each one.

This is what my whole life has been for;
To be martyred, sacrificed.
Like animals we kill to eat,

I was bred for the slaughter...

John Tansey

Astrology

You,
Aries, born of flame
and forged in fire.

I,
Gemini, a gourd
of air, poured of sky.

You,
consume me;
So that I, too,
assume the body.

I,
an idea with no mortar,
placed moral
into your rage.

Without...
you would slowly
blacken to waning ash.

And without...
a chalkline in the rain,
I would never know the flesh.

(7/08/07)

John Thomas Tansey

John Tansey

At Such Time's As My Depression...

At Such Time's as My Depression...
You are my Manatee

It is as the moon, passing,
Into its new phase, then disappearing.
This is the mood I am steeped in,

When my heart, like stone,
Heavy from the memories
Of all I have buried there...

Slips from its grave stone,
Sinking, swiftly,
Down to the ocean's bottom.

Surpassing the depth
Where, even, sunlight
Stops, turns, and diffused,
Breaks rank, back to the surface.

Leaving me to plummet the final mile
Alone, in stark darkness;
Finally crashing, at bedrock bottom,
broke and bed-ridden;

Where the oxygen is scarce
And hallucinations thrive.
It is here, through shallow breathing,
That I swear I see you:

Robed in white, with a smile
Wide, as a child's open arms,
Deep longing eyes, and a mane
Of black, silken hair,

Reposed in your worldly sadness.
And your ancient, ethnic eyes: □
A beacon, bright, like the full moon,
That, alone, holds up a starless sky.

At first, I thought you a Manatee
Of old world sailors,
When many years ago and too long out at sea,

First saw as a Mermaid,
For the memory of a girl they left behind
On the shore, weeping and waving good-bye.

It doubles me over with grief
To think your heart is as
heavy-laden as mine;
To have plunged you
To such abysmal depths as me,

But we have always known this,
Both being conjoined at the soul;
It is the bittersweet melancholy
That allows us to feel this deeply
And experience each moment so fully

So, in my darkest days, my head bowed,
I should know to simply look up
And that I will always see you there.

But the quantum wormhole between us collapses,
Quick, look out your window, through the night air,
Up at the full moon,
It is no more but a mirror
Put in the doorway between two rooms;

We will always see each other up there,
Just like two children with a string and two tin cans...

John Tansey 12.12.08

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John Tansey

Autumn Birds

Heading home, toward the sun;
its long drawn-in breath of twilight,
sucking the last gasps of birds
toward its mouth,

I glimpse a flock of sparrows, □
gathered up in squalls
to forage the last bruised fruits of summer,

and know winter is approaching.

Waves of starlings and ocean spray
sparrows,
splashing across the sky,
gust like the rib of a wind sock,
a white sheet falling
upon winged chairs,
saying time has come to head South.

Seeking comfort among circles,
when the weather turns
and daylight dwindles,
they gather at dusk,

With cropped wings, bank the air
then swoop down to roost
like the evening's frost
condensing on the trees.

It is the ebb of Summer, its last glimmer;

The sweeping undertow of geese
carrying shells
disappear in the dusk
and are swallowed by the sun, like a river,

drowning every echo from our mouths

Baptism Of The Artists...

An Artists' Baptism

I

The fresh, unblemished smell
In a ream of blank paper;
Fanning the pages.

A primed, white-washed,
Mounted canvas.

The sculptor's delivery
In a square block of Venetian marble.

Or a freshly, fallen snow
Just before your child's first foot fall.

All are Sacraments of Baptism:
To wash away our wrongs,

And attempt, again, to start anew...□

□

II

For as long as the Artist's hand is still raised,
The world is still a dream, in which
A plethora of all possibility exists.

But, with the fall of axe against chisel,
The artist's vision is chosen,
And the world is both made flesh and finite.

11.14.08 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Being 'In The Moment'...

In the Moment

Time...

is a construct of man.

There is no future or past.

Even this moment

Is too fleeting to last.

All we can do, is corral,

Like wild stallions,

The streaming, flow

Of these chronological

moments, and see them,

collectively, as one moment:

Like an omniscient body

of moving water, like kids,

we must jump right in,

splashing and frolicking,

in order we may be and live

among the

"Present Moment."

Where, even, "Eternity" resides.

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John Tansey

Between The Poems

Between the poems
I sleep and am sleepless.

Between the poems,
I am empty and then nervous.

Between them...
There is applause and then silence

And between the poems.
I am alive and then lifeless.

Tanse man...

John Tansey

Body Language

Speaking gutturally in the fractured
fragments of a foreign language
a tongue unknown to her

She is come from another country
gesturing with her hands
between the islands of broken English

Within her hesitations are the silent
stutters of clarity.
Using her body as a language,

I know what she is asking.
Between the atolls of words
are oceans of sterling imagery.

John Thomas Tansey

John Tansey

Bridge Crossing.....Like A Twilight Zone Episode

Crossing the bridge, eastward□
morning's yawning commute;
it's long, worm-like procession□
leading our scripted lives.□

The sun, hung
from its seasonal spot of Autumn □
in blinding□
line sight of the driver's eye, □

Veering, for a moment,
off the road
squinting, dreamlike, □
at a starling□
seemingly lost...strayed from its flock□
and soaring toward the horizon-□

A wormhole of remembrance,
recollections,
the unabridged diary of childhood, seen□
in a fleeting moment-

I fell through the same whole in the sky, □
as that bird
and did not come back
nor make it to the other side...□

John Tansey

Broken...Very Short, Terse Poem

Like a wild Stallion
that wont be saddled, spitting the bit,
I bucked and threw every rider
galloping toward the infinite open....

Nostrils flairing, mane blowing
it was a brief sprint of being harnessed to noone
until, as all dreams, I stopped at the end by a fence
only to be led back, by a lead, broken and bridled

John Tansey

Brutes In Brown Shirts....Recalled By My Oma

Nazi Germany□

The Recall of a Story by my Oma

"It was in 1930's Germany.
During the early years of "Hitler's rise:
Brutes in brown shirts,
The night of the long knives".

"Throughout history,
This was the most brutal of man's cruelties",

She said.
Speaking more to herself than me;

For, I could not have been, but more than seven,
sitting there, in a chair, at her kitchen table.□
Yet, I absorbed so repletely,
All the blood, pulsing, from within this story.

My Oma continued sadly,
but with vivid memory...

"They rustled up all the men
in the early morning dampness.
Some wearing pants, others without".

"And they lined them up with a perfection
that only Germans could do..."

"Barking orders,
They were looking for someone,
or something,
Just whom or what, I do not remember."

□

"All the men complied, for one!
A lone wolf among a flock of sheep;
I mean that the rest were no less men because of it! "□

"This proud, stalwart stance of a man, □

pulled out of the line,
strutted, defiantly, in a prance□
and swaggered, right, out of sight, out of town...

And was never seen again! ”

We fell silent...

John Tansey

Burnt Offerings

My love has no edges

it is like a great ripe fruit,

both, sustaining and life giving

Your love is a sword

its' hilt as a cross

both, protective but life taking.

As it cuts me in half

sucking the juice I provide

in willing sacrifice to sustain you

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John Tansey

'C'

They said, 'I have Cancer'.

Just then, a hundred and one birds,
 circled around, back upon me,
like a mass beaching of whales;
 each one was a future.

And I said, 'What does this mean? '
 'that my body, no longer in love
 with me, has turned against itself? '

Sitting at the foot of the bed.
 a room where you first learned
□ of the dark.
▣hereby, being a child, afraid,
my mother said their was nothing to fear
□ and that I would always be safe.

'Where are you now mother? '
▣an I still be a child at this age? '
▣an I let go of all this anger? '
'And not resent those who continue living? '

'And as the future repeats the past, '
▣an some memory of me remain in you? '
'Can I smile back at a child who smiles at me? '

'Can I let go of my life before it is taken away from me? '
 'And walk willingly unto my fate'
'Like a child to the open arms arms of his father'

'Mother, there still is a monster under the bed,
▣ut I know, now, that he just wants to play!

John Thomas Tansey

John Tansey

C...A Man I Knew Through His Cancer

C

They said, 'I have Cancer'.

Just then, a hundred and one birds,
 circled around, back upon me,
like a mass beaching of whales;
 each one was a future.

And I said, 'What does this mean? '
 'that my body, no longer in love
 with me, has turned against itself? '

Sitting at the foot of the bed.
 a room where you first learned
□ of the dark.
Whereby, being a child, afraid,
my mother said their was nothing to fear
□ and that I would always be safe.

'Where are you now mother? '
□Can I still be a child at this age? '
□Can I let go of all this anger? '
'And not resent those who continue living? '

'And as the future repeats the past, '
□Can some memory of me remain in you? '
'Can I smile back at a child who smiles at me? '

'Can I let go of my life before it is taken away from me? '
 'And walk willingly unto my fate'
'Like a child to the open arms arms of his father'

'Mother, there still is a monster under the bed,
But I know, now, that he just wants to play!

John Tansey

Caduceus....God, I Still Love Her

It is always in the Spring and Summer
That I feel the cold most,
But
Sitting in your mother's backyard,
Sensing the organic sun
On my back;
Its medicinal rays,

I soak up, like a ripening tomato,
Dangling,
From your mother's garden;
Each one, a quanta of sunlight
On the vine.

Swinging in the loveseat,
Beneath the vineyard
Your mother planted and tended
With years of a sour sweetness
As if she bore it the year
Your sister died.

Drinking water and eating grapes,
Peeled back, so I could pop the pulp
Into my mouth.
Licking our sticky hands,
Our limbs, lax
As shadows, slacken along
The life of the house
Hiding its age.

Suddenly, a chill, as if a crucifix
Has just fallen to the floor.
A chill of the heart, not the air,
Like fall's first early morning frost.
And I look to the two
Wisteria trees,
Bound by their boughs,
In a way your mother
Must have planned;

So that they would never be alone.

Then I look at you, our arms
Around each other;
Like two birds, their feathers
All in a flutter
Under the quills of a swans wing;
That is how we sleep,
Arms and legs wrapped
As an intertwined caduceus;

Our Hippocratic oath to help heal
Each others wounds.

John Tansey

Caught, Like A Fly, In The World Wide Web...

The World Wide Web:
designed to connect,
globalize & localize, at the same time,
further separates us
into isolated, nightly browses.

Reduced to skulking, □
slumped over shapes of shadows in the dark.□
Clamoring, over greasy keys, □
typing out emotions, intimacies
promises of devotion
to reveal ourselves,
though signed, Anonymously!

John Tansey

Childhood....For My Sons, Wherever They Are, I Don'T Know

Is a boy with a kite, □
Who, catching the wind
like a winged gull,

Runs toward the glinting sun
setting on this summer's day; □

And, stopping briefly
at the park's rim, □

For a picture and a warning□
not to go in or near the water, □

Perches on a rock,
turning toward his mother,

This small spot of a boy,
Growing smaller in her eyes□
as he wanders off

Alone for the first time
without her,

Waves his hand,
filling its palm with sky,

And wades into a river□
she can no longer see; □

Having been pulled from it years ago,
for fear of drowning.

Then stretching his limbs, □
the hair of his arms like feathers- □

Quills from a birds wing,

his heart, lighter than air

He alights, at dusk, with the geese
across the river

Flown, grown into the years□
that come, headlong

From across the sea□
like a wind, □
The child, has gone into a photo
from which an older man, years later,

holding in his hand.

wonders when, if ever, the boy will land! .□

John Tansey

Circle, ...Kind Of Metaphysical

Is a woman's arms, extended
Around her expectant womb.
A robin's egg in its nest
Moments before its beak breaks through.

Is the widening eye of a child
Catching his first ball in the park.
Is the blue earth, wintering
In the far away look of your opal eye.

Is going when we die
To the same place where we were born.
Is the world, as an apple, dropping
Into the awaiting palms of a child.

And, it is my mouth, agape, at suddenly
Seeing you before I speak your name....

John Tansey

Circles & Straight Lines...

From morning unto night,
your day revolves around routine; □
Cycles, aspects of interaction.
Each phase, ascending
through different chores; □
You move, among
tight knit circles
of close friends, family and your sons.
Waxing and waning,
as the moon, herself,
in her orbit around the Earth, □
you show the same pleasant side

to everyone...

I, a lone meteor, a fading cinder,
streaking, in declining line, □
through the frictionless void.□
I can teach the origin of stars; □
But am fated to travel straight: □
In the trajectory of an arrow through the dark□
from one end of space to the other
with everything to come already gone.
Look, over your shoulder,
just above the horizon:
For a brief, flirtatious moment,
I intrude into your life;
See the dark side of your face□
□
and am gone...

(To my ex-wife Suzy/J.T./07)

John Tansey

Collage

I am a torn photo album of memories,
Whose pictures, strewn out of order,
And chronological date
Lay about the floor in a collage.

A serial killer of images.
I lie in a heap,
Here, among the snapshots of the past,
Where I exist the best.

Isolated moments of nostalgia
Are made mythic, perfect
Out of the rewritten past..
For what exists of the future is bleak,
And existence in the present is bestial;

For proof, look toward the night sky
as God exists, only, in the past
and its evidence is reflected
In the, biblically-old,
no longer existing, light of the night stars.

John Tansey

Comes A Doubter...

Nonbeliever

If one you should know
Is felled by a deep grief
Into a black hole of depression,
And you, armed with clichés,
Come to console, relieve,
Before you open your mouth,
Know this:
That, in the absence of the right words,
Silence will suit the situation well.

Like the wearing of basic black
For all formal affairs and funerals,
It is proper,
always in style
and goes with any occasion.

Just ask the petitioners of God
Who, all too well, know:
It is through the long terrible silence
Of unanswered prayers
Made under the duress of the dark,

That we, too late, learn to survive this life on our own...

9.24.81 John Tansey

John Tansey

Coming Home From Kieth's House

Coming home from dinner with true friends,
I had too much to drink,
so you took the wheel to drive.

It was a fine wintry night
and out of the clear, cold sky
the stars were voluminous and crystalline.

The full moon lit the country routes we drove along.
My eyes, aglaze, with the sparkling champagne of stars,
I outstretched my hand to catch them in my glass.

But it was our future, still pliable, with countless constellations
of how it could take form.

'The Stars were ours for the asking, ' I said

But you were quiet. You would not talk to me
'Had to go and get drunk again', you said
and then, the punishing silence.

'We could have any star for a future, ' I said
'Shut up', you said, succinctly. I did
because you'd rather scream than listen. I sobered quickly.

Parking the car, you rushed upstairs
The twenty-four hour leave was over, our ceasefire had ended.
So, I sat alone for a moment in my happiness designed for two.

Then I opened the door, got out and looked toward the sky.
The stars for our future were gone, washed out by the city lights...□
□

John Tansey

Concerto Of The "akashic Records"

Concerto of the "Akashic Records"

The band shell, quieted,
A pianist,
In black tie and tails,
Walks out, bows then sits down.

A lone forefinger
Drops upon the ivory;
A small footprint
In the freshly, fallen snow.

A breath of sound vibrates
Along the string,
And here I am;
Another, one octave higher,

In sympathetic vibration,
Stands up, to see and takes my hand.
We linger, in harmony,
One, two measures longer.

Then are gone, forever, before
The harsh clash
Of the brash, sad chords;
Starting the Concerto

Of the "Akashic Records" in E minor...

7.X.81 John Tansey

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John Tansey

December 3rd,1991 @ 1: 38pm...Not Finished, But?

December 3rd,1991 @ 1: 38PM

On the day you were born,
I knew then
time would come
you would grow
and move on.

But not like this:
Too soon torn from my arms;
I was not near ready,
wise enough, nor old enough
to lose you;

As when the time would have
truly come, with me,
of my own will, opening the door
and let you leave
just at the exact moment, you
were ready to...

John Tansey

Delusion Of Evening

Delusions of Eveing

Evening comes. My self-delusion
stirs the synapses
with a steaming cup of coffee.
A dimly lit oil lamp
shrouded with Saffron scarf
casts the room in an amber hue
with subtle shapes in the shadows
while words as gold ingots on the page
forming this poem
with an alchemic blaze.

Morning rises, lighting the gray room
dispelling truth
from every fold of darkness
to a sterile whiteness
that turning back
such atomic weight of words
into leaden blocks of stone
I wake, both bleary eyed and blood shot,
into this failed, pale bleak
truth of morning

John Tansey

John Tansey

Delusions By Moonlight.....In The Image Of Her

When the days action is done,
Right or wrong, and evening,
Like a friend, comes lying next to me
In lusty form...
Like a much longed for lover
I am still lovelorn for.

When everyman's subconscious wish
Is to be, once again, the child, swaddled
In bath towels, I embrace my limbs...
Wrist bone to cheek;
It is my sex that feigns to be of another
As I snugly pull the covers over.

And as water, which seeks its own level,
Abides in such little, tide pools
of a dry riverbed,
It is you the moon reflects,
as a moist, pooling nude,
I make thirsty love to, then,
Enfolding myself in my arms...

Sweetly, delude myself to sleep.

John Tansey

Delusions Of Evening

Evening sets with self-delusion
stirring the synapses
with a steaming
cup of coffee.
A dimly lit oil lamp
shrouded in Saffron
casts the room in an amber hue
where words meld like gold
onto the page
in an alchemic blaze.

Morning rises, dispelling dreams
out of every fold of darkness
to a sterile whiteness
that turning back
such ingots
into leaden blocks of stone
I wake, both bleary eyed
and blood shot, into this failed,
pale bleak
truth of morning

John Tansey

John Tansey

Depression.....

Once we lay, limblocked
in love, woke to reckless sex□
and sweet dreams, brash young □
hearts that joked age would lose this□
race we double-dared it to.

Now you slink from bed.
All future gone from your eyes,
as you flash this sad
smile, that turns with your thoughts
to too much of our hopes gone past.□

John Tansey

'Der Kinda, Der Kinda'.....For My Oma

And as my mother would cry,
'Mama, I can't go back to him'

She would, look up from her knitting

(How long it has been
since someone called me
by my first name, she mused)

But stopping her in her blindness,
I tugged at her house dress
while she was arranging her yarns.

'Oma', I said
melting into the apron of her
grandmotherly warmth

'Go back with your husband',
□ she replied to my mother,
'He is a good provider'
□ and no matter what, all men cheat'

And I, her young grandson,
seeing her droop and shake her head,

know now, as an adult,
□ forty years later,
what she knew then, what she meant when

When she mournfully intoned...

'O' but what of the Der Kinda,
□ Der kinda'?

John Tansey

Dewpoint.....Final Couplet Is The Poems' Kernel

I am at the point
Where I can absorb no more.

You can only get so rain-soaked
And then rain-soaked no more.

Like a slug, sliding across the floor,
I leave a slimy trail, like fingerprints,
Wherever I go,

Bleeding my lifeblood,
I wear the hematomas like a shroud.

The body can only take so much pain
before the bones break, the marrow spills out
and the face becomes twisted, wrung...

An old, sunken in, sponge.

Stepping out of the shower, upto a fogged mirror
Where my face is no longer visible.

I am saturated with heartbreak
And at the dewpoint of its breakdown.

John Tansey

Do Not Ask....An Old Poem When Was A Wee Lad

Do not ask
what is this thing
that is this tree;
from where it has come
what it is to be
when it has grown.

Do not ask
what is this thing
that is this bird;
having caught,
we no longer see
when once we have heard.

Do not be conscious
of a purpose
to reveal at you
what you should know
at this present time.

Do not commit
to reason
one mote, of things
you have caught, named
and filed
in the school taught, quarter
of your mind.

Do not start
there, or anywhere
away from the wordless art
of simply knowing,
that alone, should walk you home
in the night air
steeping you with being.

To ask me again
is to commit the crime
of attempting to know

what you should only feel.

□ 3/8/88

John Tansey

Emailing Her....(Spam, Emails & Postcards)

Comes another endless e-mail; □
Of desperate note, an S.O.S□
addressed, solely, to you: □
A torn paper shred, □
written and stuffed in the fragility
of a glass bottle□
& tossed to the opens ocean, □
of the Internet, □
bobbing, somewhere,
among its electronic waves,
hoping, at end, to wash up at your feet.

All my intent, wrapped up
in a software packet and sent.□
With no guarantee
nor acknowledgement of delivery: □
O' the sting of this unroutable ping.
But, Susan, ever worse:
Is the awful feeling of dread, □
of never even knowing□
whether it is received, read or even replied to!

John Tansey

Empty Nest

With the boy's room, draped in white sheets
This whole year, like a cocoon, preserved, in amber,

She closes another album: The fossil record of their marriage,
Steeped, in the earthen layers of clay.

Then, turning to face him, two huge land masses:
He, the old world, she is of the new,

And with thirty years of continental drift
Having poured an ocean between them,

They live, now, in different time zones,
Sleep, eat and speak in different tongues...

John Tansey

'Empty Nest".....

"Empty Nest"

The boy's room, draped in white sheets
This whole year, like a cocoon, preserved, in amber;

She closes another album: The fossil record of their marriage,
Steeped, in the earthen layers of clay.

Then turning to face him, two huge land masses:
He, the old world, she is of the new,

And with thirty years of continental drift
Having poured an ocean between them,

They live, now, in different time zones,
Sleep, eat and speak in different tongues...

11.15.71 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Entropy.....

All tends to disorder

I adapt to the decaying
Squalor that surrounds me

The sun goes down,

A light bulb blows

I learn to see in the dark

The heat's been off for weeks

The cold is intergalactic

I simply wear more clothes

My phone is cut off

I learn to talk to myself

Caressing my children

More intimately with words

As if I could protect them

From the nothing I see coming...

John Tansey

Epitaph Iii...

Epitaph III

□ I

When we were, but kids
and our feet swung,
carelessly,

below the seat,
and just above the ground.

It is right at that spot,
where I seek to be:

Suspended between
the moment, gone
and the one, yet to come!

Light, airy and carefree!

Able to rise above
weightless, like a cloud! □

□ II

Not this mile deep
wreckage, beneath the sea.

Where the pressure per square inch,
crushes me!

Waiting to be found, by the scent
from a rent by the week room.

This abyss, this black hole,
where neither sound, light nor even

the claustrophobic soul can escape!

John Tansey ~~S~~ometime,07

John Tansey

Evening Comes Like A Delusion...

Evening Comes Like a Delusion...

Evening comes like a delusion
With dimly lit lamps of amber,
And just enough shadow, For
Any ghosts you want to step out of.

The day is over, right or wrong.
Nothing more is to be asked of you.
But to dream; The expectations
That things will be better tomorrow.

Only to wake to the bleak,
Bleary-eyed, onslaught of morning.
And its demand upon you
To walk, from dawn to dusk,

in lockstep with the ecliptic of the Sun.

12.6.07 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Exiled...

Exiled

Exiled...

from my tribe;
Outcast, ostracized
For defying the elders.
My spear, broken,
Sling and skin gourd, taken.

Banished...

Pelted with stones
By those pockmarked with sin
Beaten beyond the mountains I have known
Down into the hinterlands,
And the cold, wintry wild, alone

Excommunicated...

To be alone, even in death.
Without such security
As the clan and cave,
I shiver in the cold,
Get wet in the rain.

Disowned...

No more to be one of them.
I seek shelter on a patch of land,
Under a thatch of sky
I must fend, now, for myself,
A lone, lean wolf, scavenging

On the frozen Tundra, alone.

John Tansey Sometime in 06

John Tansey

Exorcism Through Verse...

Exorcism Through Verse□

□

Since I was a child,
you have stalked, shadowed
and cornered me at every turn.
Springing out of every dark closet
and under every bed.□

Scattering my family:
My father abandoned us,
and all I knew was dread...

While my Mother slipped into madness.

□

You infused it all within me:
This timidity for the world.
Like the rapid heartbeat of a small, nervous bird.

Even you, in your wickedness,
your dominion over all,
you, too, must be small, after all,
to terrorize children with such tragedy.□

Is this your way of enlisting your legions,
to traumatize children so they learn hunger for revenge;
But, as always, you slouched ahead,
as I, sheepishly, followed by the tracks of your three toes.

□

As Adam gave names to the animals,
by which, he could then subdue them, □

lessening their power.
I, so, sought through poetry,
To give a name to you and your horror.

So that, I too, by incantation;
Calling you by name, □
Could tame and leash you;
make you powerless, neutered;

And let you out, only,
so to write and give you form.
And, thereby, exorcise the demon of you.

This was the Genesis of my poetry...
A lighthouse, warning others,
who might not see the deadly rocks.

IV

But no, no name, no description could define you.
Like before the heavens, you, too, are formless;
A spirit. born of the evil thoughts
that men, of free will, will freely do.

So, we blame you, O' lord of the flies,
when it was always we who committed the crimes...

John Tansey

Faithless & Godless....

Hopelessness is insidious
until, suddenly, like a revolution

Man admits to a Godlessness
and the ensuing schism divides his being;

There is a rumbling at the border of your life,
making midnight raids at the countryside.

The first casualties are the extremities,
the outer environs of your limbs...

Your possessions, your job and the children you clutch most.

So you close the castle gates,
hold up in the tower,

Discard, but your faith, to the hunger of the crowds,
as advisors whisper over your shoulder

'Give up your crown, your reign,
your palace, even abdicate'

And in the strait shape of a white shift,
without mistress and head shaven

You walk the steps to the Iron Maiden
and are stillborn into the next life!

John Tansey

Fighting Autumnal Fires...A Well Crafted, Worth While Read

Autumn has rounded again
for the thirty-second year of my life
and still,
I cannot comprehend fully
its passion, nor ingest, viscerally,
the flavor of its sweet pungency passing.

Too overwhelmed by its extract of colors
bleeding in my eyes,
like the red corpuscles of leaves,
their demand on the present
to be devoured whole
or not at all,

I rush inside
past the burning trees
to burrow, predisposed
in the tragic logic of passing time.□

Never in the right mood
nor frame of mind,
to sit and sift the air
or glean, through my pours,
the autumnal breeze, □

Like birds fleeing south
when the first tree turns,
I let it go
for the wake that it is
to remember better□
upon observance of the day□
through the urn of later years.

In fact, I fear the feeling less□
with each passing
of Autumn through the years,
so much that I scrawl

this expression
with this metaphor
for how fleeting splendor is
as to egress from these flames
we should, as martyrs, clearly enter in.□
□

John Tansey

For My 'Oma'

If the foreknowledge of our own impending death
is not enough to put proper perspective
upon things,
then to clear the stern leer of our hatred,
to forgive the unforgivable
to cut through the flippant diversions
of possessions
and find at the bottom of the bag,
playing in its emptiness,
the child, within, that matters most.

My grandmother, old and blind
was,
like zen, in her old age...

still able to keep the world in order
carefully absorbed with every action
it almost seemed to evolve around her
she would arrange the yarns by notion
and fold the grocery bags
pat them and place them
into size-ordered spice tins
and the denominations of money
was a mathematical formula which

was more complex than quantum physics, even...

John Tansey

For Those Survived By...

It is terrible to mourn life
longer than one should live it;

Both friends and family,
preparing years for your disaster.

But, is best that death come sudden,
all at once, without lingering,

And the grieving proceed naturally after
it, sooner still, return to the living...

I

John Tansey

Gandhi...

Gandhi...

"And a Child Shall Lead Them"

As a young boy, my bones still growing,
I was given to sudden fractures or breaks.

Thin and frail. My self-assurance was fragile,
The callous toss of an insult would knock me down.

Given to colds in Winter weather and bed-ridden,

From my window I would cry over the harming
Of both the helpless and hapless ones.

I was born during an Earthquake
And raised along its fault line.

At seven, the separation of my parents was the death
Of God; I developed Asthma as a way of crying out "No! ".

With the rapid heartbeat of a sparrow, nervous tics
and head twitching in the fear of surviving each moment,

Any loud sound and like an animal, sensing danger,
I would head for the higher ground.

In Sparta, a baby, malformed at birth,
would be tossed upon the rocks below;

They could not see in a baby, born lame,
The wisdom his personal pain of survival could bestow them.

When young, my Asthma attacked my mind with a lack of oxygen:
Hallucinating, delusions or visions, I suffered their truths.

And wherever the world, already, smolders from too much anger,
What will humble it is another frightened, timid child to show it sorrow...

John Tansey 12.5.08

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John Tansey

Gemini

My mind goes from mood to mood,
With no chronology nor sequence of events;

The effect of one thing falling into
the cause of another

I can be a dozen different people
In as many different moments.

My changeability is due to my
Volatile ruling planet of mercury.

Like the medical term for a man
with no short term memory,

Everytime I see you, love,
is as the first time.

John Tansey

Getting Over You...for Susan□

Getting over you...□

Is as getting over a speed bump:

I cannot get, quickly, over you...□

Without noting, looking back, □

stopping and turning around to see, once again, you; □

Or just check the vital signs of my car! □

No, I must proceed, slowly, □

Allowing time to brake;

But this, taking time, is what undoes me! □

It forces me to look back, longingly:

Like the full affect of seeing Autumn, through a window -□

its' leaves, spiraling down, □

and the overwhelming, utter sadness of it!

With you, I second-guess, regret and even tear.

Yes, Susan, getting over you is as getting over a speed bump!

There is no right or wrong way to do it.

I cannot go fast, slow, below or go around;

But, must simply, get over it! □

John Tansey

God Lives In The Moments You Cant Relive, Nor Take Back

Like a lifer, behind bars,
until his death.

Who finds religion, between
the latrine, the slop
he eats
and the indignity he submits to
on his knees...

not for your prayers, but your apathy

Like the giving of last rights,

when all along, we went on living
never knowing we had
any rights at all

God, you always come too late
and like the devil, robed in black,

You, too, march in the procession,
that gives the tortured body back...

John Tansey

Going Out

going out
I leave a lit lamp
and t.v. on
so on return
I come back

to some
sense of light and sound
a litamber hue
someones voice
like coming home

john tansey

John Tansey

Grave Heart

I have gained many pounds
since you went away these many years.
Mounds of flesh piled as a berm
to defend against
intimacies...

I am proud of my girth,
it tells me of the many untold sorrowful dead
that are interred here.

Accreting, each year, like the outer bark of a tree
 recording both feast and famine...
With each pound a pain, I am of the earth
and my season is winter.

You see, my great heart
is a grave yard and
I am running out of plots
to bury the bodies.

But I will continue planting
to grow among the pulp,
as memories of our lost loved ones
For it surely is within us
that our loved ones live ever on
and are passed-down to our children
 who will grow,

Listening....
John Tansey

John Tansey

Grave Heart.....

I have gained many pounds
since you went away
these many years.

Mounds of flesh
piled as a berm
to defend against

intimacies...

I am proud of my girth,
it tells me of the
many untold sorrowful dead
that are interred here.

Accreting, each year,
like the outer bark of a tree

recording both feast and famine...

With each pound a pain,
I am of the earth

and my season is winter.

You see, my great heart
is a grave yard
and I am running out of plots
to bury the bodies.

But I will continue planting
to grow among the pulp, as memories
of our lost loved ones

For it surely is within us
that our loved ones live ever on
and are passed-down to our children
who will grow,

□listening....

John Tansey

Harbingers Of Morning...

HARBINGERS OF MORNING

Seam-splitting the rim of an eastern sky,
morning's radiant gold,
grading
down the crumpled brow of mountains
leapfrogs
out of the high hilled horizon
with the sun
come upon the winged
molecules of birds
sun-stirred from their trees.
Advancing
under a sun-burst sky
to undulations of flight,
these verbs, in action
swoop down
the white steeped streets,
loping in sunlight
to gather
amid the eaves of a still sleeping town
and resound
as bells
under a bandshell of sky-
this palavers of birds
breaking rank

into the melee of morning.

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John Tansey

Here, In The Past, I Repose In Time Everlasting...

Here, in the past, I Repose in Time Everlasting

I have found immortality...

In the black hole of my depression,
Where time stops
Like the posable arms
Of a wooden school clock;
Where every day is set to three O' clock,

I have found eternity...

Here, where even light and sound
Cannot bound out of it;
But the boneless, limp memory of a boy, □
Tears streaking the glass as his father left,
You were neither seen nor heard, even then.

I found the everlasting, hereafter,

Languishing, knee deep,
In the standing, stagnant pool of the past,
Where old photographs
Bobbing along the surface, are windless, □
In the morass of the Sargasso Sea.□

I have circled around, upon the Isle of Circe,

Where nothing changes, ever ages;
Like an old photo of you in a frame
You will never outgrow, or break through its glass: □
As nothing ever really dies, here,
So, too, is true that nothing ever lived.

11.19.08 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Home Is A Memory...

Home...

Is a memory;

A recall to where I grew up.

Some ever lost place,

Torn down, years ago.

Now, just thoughts.

An abandoned, falling down house,

Gone to seed.

That, on lonely nights like these,

I crawl into a small window in the brain

And talk to my ghosts

As we play, through morning,

In the large gap of its synapse,

Because, by then, I wake up and leave...

9.15.81 John Tansey (Original Version)

John Tansey

Hupa

Under the Hupa of the blue sky,

we are all equal;

The loved, the loathed,

the hopeful, the hopeless,

the wealthy and those who long endlessly.

Those who are wronged

and those who are wrong

Those who play, frivoulsy,

under arches of white marble

And those who sway upon frayed rope over

elements of rubble

Yes, under the blowing linen of the white sky

we are all equal

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John Tansey

I Am A Spirit, Now...

Fallen Angel

I am most, at bliss,
when exhausted,
so, completely, depleted
I am too tired to care.

It is as a sleep walk;

And I am adrift, aimlessly,
sauntering through the crowds.

Gliding, gracefully,
around such emanating loneliness, □
of people, dying, but for the touch of another;

Yet, hardened by the lack of it...

So as, not to let the heart reveal
what propriety would hold back.□

I have become a spirit;
□ Ethereal...
□
You must be clairvoyant to speak with me, now!

I hope this is what death is like!

Slipping, unseen,
between the locked lips of lovers;
And, in such intimate, conversations of others,
I do, pleasurably, eavesdrop...
Straining for their tenderness

Else, either, side-stepping, deferring□
or with a timely, toe-step,
I employ geometry to my deft dance.
of avoiding others

I Am Cold-Blooded...

I am Cold-Blooded

I am cold-blooded.

No heat of my own;

Like a lizard, burrowing

 Into the desert sand

□At sundown

When the temperature drops below freezing;

Or the lifeless moon.

Its lack of any molten core.

Just a cold, wasteland

 Cast in shadow.

It is the bodily warmth of another

I need to survive.

Like a flower with photosynthesis,

 To thrive, alive in the sunlight of a lover...

(10.1.7)

John Tansey

I Fear The Day...

I fear the day
the sheer length of it.
It's call to actions
and not words.

Fearing it while it is
and loving it when it is gone,
right or wrong.
Evening beckons...

It's soft, amber hues of lamplight.
As I peruse a book,
another day passes
into fables of mythic storytelling.

Swaddled in the womb of sleep,
I delight in an eternity of night;
Until sunrise and the dread of morning,

I wake, trembling, at the start of the new day.

John Tansey

I Have Had My Fill Of This Lifelessness Of Winter

I have had my fill of this Winter,
the lifelessness in its frost
Fingers stiff, face pale
It's cold pain in the bone
to the black and blue bruise
of a cracked thumbnail

Huddled in black overcoats
and breathing out smoke.
It must be hard for mourners
lowering a loved one
into the bone white earth
in the dead of winter
inside a wooden coffin. with arms folded

as if they could still feel the cold

John Thomas Tansey

John Tansey

I Live With Ghosts.....

Everywhere I go,
I am surrounded by ghosts.

They are very lonely, like me,
Accompanying me wherever I am.

I do not want them too, they sadden me,
Contrasted with the flesh and blood walking by.

Old friends I have not seen in years,
Walking down familiar streets,

They hang out every window,
and shout from every street corner

Calling my name
In every neighborhood I once lived..

They do not age.

They are the same as when I knew them years ago.

Of this, I am sure

I know that they are really ther.

Because it is I who live, with them, in the past....

John Tansey

I Love The Darkness About You

Darkness surrounds you
As spirals of smoke
Wrapping you in myth
And the delineated danger
Of the world,
But your proud defiance
Breaks through with gestures
And chiseled features
To dally with the heavy air
And tilting your face
Out of shadow into light
You flirt with a foreboding
A Newport in your hand
And whisper in a trepid voice
Aware of your mortality.
Such a crumbling beauty
Leaning forward in a skirt
Wisps of black hair shading your eyes
Your sexuality is in your frailty
You are as the motherly moon
Scarred but proud
To hold up a starless sky.

John Tansey

I Want To Live In Theory, Like Faith...

I Want To Live in Theory, Like Faith□

□

I need to be embraced, enveloped
by the engaging, though theoretical, limbs of the abstract.□

The love for fables, tall tales and myths □

I want to be ethereal, intangible.□

I do not want to be fact,
to be finite,
to exist within the boundaries of the physical;

Trying to quantify the Infinite...

By counting, with numbers, those that are numberless.

Oh, I want to live in theory, like faith! □

The faith that a child's mother will soon come home
or that he or she will call
or that job offer will come just in time!

For the faith that must be proven, to believe,
is no faith at all;
It is an extortion of the soul!

□

I want to experience the orgasm of celibates.□

I want to be the dream in your mind
that compels you to be something more!

I want to take, by the pommel,
the ethereal, hammer of a dream

And shatter the Nucleic bond of matter: □

Its latticework, the backbone of reality to all that we see;

And make love to that which we do not...

John Tansey 5/23/07

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John Tansey

I Wish This Chronic...

I wish this chronic...□

I wish this chronic,
clinically diagnosed, disability: □
This obsession to write;

Its need to place letter beside letter;
in sort of intimacy, caress; □
A matchmaker of words, so to speak.
It is this I wish would cease and desist;
It is incurable. a terminal disease
that will claim me at end!

A bloodletting...
From back in the feudal ages;
With leeches, heated, bulbous, glass jars; □
And, still, the demons persist;
prodding! □
Until I insist, myself, to pare the vein,
and let the venom out...□

John Tansey

If You Should Catch Me...

If you should catch me,
in the act of being kind to myself, □
Crossing my arms, □
in effort to caress.

Or brushing my hair, taking pleasure □
like a child of five might recall of his mother;
Or tenderly touching the shoulder of him.
If I primp or preen my feathers,

place a hand on my thigh,
or the like of a sensual spot, □
Or resting, with wrist to cheek,
so as to think, she is there: □

My lost love, lying, once again, beside me!
Eventually, I will take advantage, □
indulging in some erotic act; □

Though it might apply pressure to the wound, □
at end, it is anticlimactic:
A letdown, pleasurable for a moment,
but a lie to myself, for I am still here, alone...

And without her!
If this confession should disgust,
repulse, or insult your pious religion. □
Do not condemn me for the ghost □
of a lover I long to lie with:

The ordeal of an Ideal
I, simply, cannot get over!
She is become flawless, now, in my thoughts, □
than ever she was when around me.

For, I have placed her on a plinth,
made Goddess of her.
I have Sanctified the Church of her in my heart
And hope, if she should come,

that she will look, know, then go, leaving it alone...

John Tansey

Imprisoned In The Cell Of The Mind...

Imprisoned in the Cell of the Mind

This loneliness,
Its exile, □
Unto a solitary cell.
Twenty-three hour lockdown,
One in the yard
Then back to the Cell...

A memory cell
of the mind.
This is where I exist, subsist,
Confined,
To do my penance,
The spare change of my sentence, □
All the while, dying sweetly,
In her arms of reminiscence...

11.11.81 John T Tansey

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John Tansey

In Shadow...

Of late I have been feeling it...
even gleaning a Spring wind
that comes on a breeze
leaves me in its shadow.

But like the small animals
that too know their time
to disappear,
I have no thicket of twigs to crawl into.

Evolution, Nature's choice for moving
need not rush for anything
Subtle and insidious
like the slow creep of continents.

Until overwhelmed
with the proof it is so
and through all the poems I would write
to all the volumes I have lost

This rushed homework of words will have to do

Tanseman

John Tansey

In The Language Of Angels...

In the Language of Angels□□

For the last two years that he lived, death was kind,
To have taken his mind and left, only, the child, again.

So that he would be oblivious to the ways he was mistreated.
Through all the indignities, he just smiled, recalling nothing.

This old, anomaly of a man, endured, simply to write, □
Had, one day, written himself, out of life; □

So, that night, staff had entered to pull him back
From the white light; Then, child-proofing his room,

The following afternoon, took away his pens, journals and books,
All that had given him life, they took away.

And, from thereafter, served his meals
With plastic sporks and spill proof cups.

Still, enraptured or insane, he would flail his arms:
A wild, white-haired, bed-ridden Maestro, □

And waving his hand through the turbulent air,
As a light bulb becoming more brilliant, just before it blows,

He wrote, frantically, in this way, the last of his words,
But, this time, he ended with his epitaph.

□

Epilogue

They say, it was both written and lost on the wind;
That no one could transcribe the ethereal.

But, I say, he wrote in the Language of Angels,
You can read it all, replete,
in the Annals of the Akashic records...

8.3.8 John Tansey

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John Tansey

In The Language Of Angels...For The Poor Man In The Nursing Home

In the Language of Angels

To the senile, old man they abused, nightly, in the nursing home

□

For the last two years that he lived,

Death was kind, to take his mind and leave the child again,

So he would be oblivious to the way he was mistreated.

Through all the indignities, he just smiled, remembering nothing.

This old anomaly of a man who, lived, simply to write,

Had, one day, written the end of his life;

But, later that night, staff entered, pulling him back

From the white light; They child-proofed his room;

Taking his pens, journals and books,

All that gave him life, they took away.

And, from thereafter, served all his meals

With plastic sporks and spill proof cups.

Still, in rapture, he would flail his arms:

A composer, his wand through the air,

Like a light bulb, brightening, just before it blows,

He wrote, frantically, in this way, the last of his works.

A wild, white-haired, bed-ridden Maestro,

And, yet again, he ended with his epitaph.

□

Epilogue

They say, it was both written and lost on the wind;

That no one could transcribe the ethereal.

But, I say, he wrote in the Language of Angels,
You can read it all,
in the Annals of the Akashic records...

8.3.8□

John Tansey

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John Tansey

Indiscriminate Verse

Feeling a little world weary,
Tired of the tactile

The coy and flirtatious ploy of it all.

I walk around on all fours.

Attired in the conduct of courtesies,
Muzzling the shushed yelp of my anima,

That is restrained, soulfully, alone,
Behind the smiles of soft skin and bone.

Though our finger tips touch,
They no longer sense...

Sex alone is not enough

For what passion the heart lusts after.

As we are both born and die alone,
Thus must we be sentenced for life.

Like the tinged blood cell, setting as the sun, itself
Into the marrow of the bone.

I lay, fearful, In the dark, within this body
Waiting for the union of flesh and soul.

Here, in the membraned dark
Of God's ethereal omnipotence.

John Tansey

Institutionalized.....For Me, The Last Line Defines The Poem

I am like a too distant cousin
far removed from any semblance
of an adopted family.
My identity, fishwrapped in a shattered
mirror, is a dismembered visage I see,
among shards of splintered glass.

Like a disfigured face in a funhouse,
of an unfinished, pockmarked puzzle
in a mental ward,
Where half your day is spent lining up
and the other half lying down.
Take a tiger from the wild,

Bolt it away in a cage.
Declaw its paws, pull its teeth;
And neutered of it's nature,
its instinct to kill for its meat.
It will, instead, feed on schedule.
A whip in the hand will leave it meek;

And an unlocked gate will keep it caged.

John Tansey 2014

John Tansey

It Is Finished...

It Is Finished... Final

I wanted to spend my whole life

writing poems;

□

A "Life's Work" so to speak...

But then, I think, even if I lived to be a hundred,

still, I would not be finished

speaking through words...

A million years and still there would

be thoughts that have not dawned before.

Poetry is without end:

Creation, itself, continually changing and adapting:

It is "Darwin's" Evolution..

Ever evolving.

And as "Quantum Physics" says that every point in the universe is its center,

Thus, it does not matter where in this genealogical,

lineage of verse,

Where I decide to cease and desist:

It's stream of consciousness will always continue to flow:

Now, or fifty years from now,

the tongue would still be shaping breathe into words ...

So, I might, just as well, stop right here,

put down the pen,

and call it, either, a life well or miss-spent, that is up to you, the reader?

Just, do not forget to turn out the light...

John Thomas Tansey 4.7

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John Tansey

It Is The End Of The World...

'It is the end of the world...
This time it is coming'

With every new generation
comes predictions for the world's end.

As if we are all too afraid to die alone
and must take the whole world with us.

Even at the sake of our children's living in it

Like when I stood before you, Mom,
in my five year old body

As you prayed every day,

'Sweet Mary, Jesus and Joseph
Please blow up the world already'

Even now I could not understand
why you would want the world to end

while I was still on it

Tanseman@

John Tansey

It's Just A Single Tear... Relatively Recent

It is just a single tear.
All that my manhood can muster.
One solitary, dew drop
forming in the corner of my eye;
The very condensation of my pain
that seeps down my cheek
like the melting of an ice age
cracking the granite rock of my face.
It could be of the self-same water
as Noah's great flood,
or a tiny earthquake,
the beginning of a rain,
an old man's baptism
or the first leak in the concrete
that brings down the dam:
My thick-skinned redoubt
that prevents you from getting in!
Look, at my children,
laughing and splashing
as they swim, happily, among it's bead,
like a water slide, streaming down my cheek.

Then, with the lap of a tongue,
the taste of salt in my mouth,
I dispute such proof, such evidence
that denies, once again,
any existence of such grief! □

(JT/5/27/07)

John Tansey

Just Allow Me This Hour...a Deal I Would Say To My Ex; -(

Just allow me this hour...☒1☒

Suzy, psychiatry calls this "Sublimation".

Just allow me this time,
Afford me this hour,
To kick and scream,
Throw a tantrum
Tamped down, in the back room.

To summon up my demons
Then, like a boy
Holding his stomach,
After throwing it all up
Looks up, again, and smiles.

Only with words, verse
I exorcise, expunge
These ills from my soul.
Then, looking up as that boy,
All smiles,

I would be yours, for chores, through the rest of the day...

John Tansey☒.18.08

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John Tansey

Letting Go.....To Be, Or Not To Be?

Upon a roof,
A potential leaper,
Held by the hand of his savior
In a fingerlock hold on humanity.
One dangles from the brickface,
The other hangs over the ledge.
Both facing the enmity of danger.
Locked in each other's lives,
One prays for death,
The other holds on for life.

Both are one in the same,
Gemini, the signs of the twins;
Is one person of a dual nature
whose planet, the volatile Mercury
burns in both desires to live and die
Both hang and help.
And the one that is dropped
Is the one that was holding.
Leaving the one hoping to die,
Left alive, to cope with the meaning to this treason.

John Tansey

Like The Single Bird Nestles Upto The Polished Glass,

...

Like the single bird I bought
because it was cheaper than the pair

Knows the polished glass it nestles upto
is just a reflection of itself,

I know, too at night, that the back of my hand
upon my cheek is no other's but my own.

In such loneliness,
the mind will play the fool when it has to.

The neighbors respect the right to such oddities;
They seldom intrude.

And therein lies their crime, as mine was
to break up such a devoted pair of birds.

John Tansey

Like Zen In Her Old Age

Like Zen in her old age,
she moves as calm water
within the slow metabolism
of ancient stones and giant redwoods.

She toils like the slow rutting
of running water through rocks.
With finger to wrist,
she feels the tide ebb and flow within her pulse,

And within the ice age of an eye blink
she lives through the millennia
moving at the pace
of the slow creep of continents

as she steps back into history.

John Tansey

Like Zen, In Her Old Age, Picking Tomatoes...

Picking Tomatoes

In the midst of my angst,
I stooped to see a woman
picking tomatoes;
Choosing with such deliberate surety,
the plump ripe one at the right moment.
Suddenly, sensing the world was upheld by her,
I felt safe, being near this earthly gardener.

Like Zen, in its old age,
She was an elegant, gray haired woman
named Eve, a biblical, ancient beauty
who left Adam to stay and care for the Garden,
a maiden of the woods,
married to the tree of knowledge.
And as I reached out to feel her essence,
she picked the one that I was on!

John Tansey

Lost Fables...

Childhood
is the Bibles' lost fable
in the Garden of Eden.

Which we left only
after enough years
had whirled about us
that we could see over the top
of the hedgerow

Then setting out on our own
to stake some land,
take a wife
and make a family,

And, building a home,
plant a garden
of our own;
Naming it the Garden of Eden

So that it would never again be lost
to our children who would always know it
for the way home...

John Tansey

Love Is A Defenseless Child

Love...

like a defenseless child,
sheltered
by the embrace of two
crouching downward, over it
like a cabin's eaves,

Should be tended by gift,
gesture, and the vow
of one hand interlocking another;

Should be nurtured, praised
and caressed
until rocked asleep, gently
in a limb-locked love
cradling dreams.

For once, having looked away
when it beckons,
tugging at our sleeve,
we look back, too late
down the years,

To find it flown, grown
and with it,
the marriage
we have forsaken...

□

John Tansey

Love Letter.....The Game Of Tag & You'Re Not It! □

Is it because I come to you, pleading
that you turn me away as less of a man

When others, who ignore you, leave you
wingless and weeping, like a widow, in a bay window

Am I so safe you seek danger
in the clutch of a soulless stranger

Shunning what too easily comes
for what too quickly goes...

If I went away, earned my fame,
proving to be a man

Would you wait for me
would you want me more, then

Must everything come to ruin
must all the photos be torn

Must everything be too late
in your wish to mourn instead of love

As each gender chases they who flee
also run from they who come

Must we, too, play and lose at this game
or aren't we both more than the sum of it?
□

John Tansey

Love Poem To Anyone

For you, the hapless peruser,
who happens to thumb upon this page,
along a dusty shelf of books.
Was not haphazard at all;
For the page found your thumb
as it was fated to be,
as the effect finds the cause
and the cause finds you.
the heart bleeding reader.

If you would these words for you
then will it so.
for the subjective was never anyone
but the objective was always you,
the sensual stranger,
the romanticizing, lusty lover
who never turned my corner.

John Tansey

Love Subsists On Lust...

Love Subsists on Lust□

□

Like an animal, sensing your smell,
I skin sift your approach.

A concussion of air;
A draft that draws us close.

Eyes widening, my ears prick up
At your hand on the door,

Your foot in the jamb.

And as your lips purse to utter my name,
I place a finger to your mouth...

Swallowing the vowels between us,
We grow in the silence,

Like a faith;
And through such suffering, learn of love.

And, thus, love subsists on lust.

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John Tansey

Loveless...

Loveless

My heart breaks under the stress
Like I am under the ocean floor;
The pressure per square inch is immense
And if I let out my last breath
The water will rush in and crush me
And I will breathe no more.

It is not self pity,
It is factual.
I have no body,
I am asexual.

Yes, in our angst and drink,
We scream we want to die
Swearing, we cannot live without love,
But death will come soon enough
And at that time, we will swear to God
It was all a lie.

John Tansey

Magnanimity

Brandon, the world
depends on the existence
of fireflies

A simple kindness
toward lesser things

the magnanimity, the compassion
of not taking life
simply because you can

John Tansey

Man Must Have His Earth...

Untitled...

Man must have his earth, a soft patch
Under a thatch of sky;

And purpose each morning to go out.
With a woman to lure back and lie with him.
Should he lose his way in the dark.

As even a leaper must have his ledge,
his bit of rock cliff to leap from.

For even the dead
Shall stake claim to the graves that take them.

Tanseman

John Tansey

Marriage...A Tragedy In Two Acts

It was not your presence, □
rather its absence□
felt; □
when in the theater
whispering to you□
how good the play was □
you, □
snapped shut, like a mussel,
□
leaning away.□
No good actor like they upon the stage, □
you could not feign□
nor mask your feelings enough□
to even laugh.

Rather, looking for a que, □
forget your lines□
as your voice dropped...□
and out dribbled
the terrible silence
of your act of love that flopped.
□
Reaching for your hand, □
five fingers scampering away□
into your pocket
like a crab to its shell, □
I was speechless, forgot my lines.

And there we sat, □
two sad mimes, □
staring at our play□
of life, □
both, standing in the wings,
with bit parts and nothing to say.□

ACT II

In bed, a kiss□
neither wet, nor passionate,

no tongue, nor lips...□
we pecked, like birds□
at the hard shell
of our roles cast in marriage.

□
Your caress;
not the grip of one□
holding dear for her life, □
but rather of letting go; □
more formality than bliss□
in the absence, of which,

Either lip, eye or finger
or the sensuality of taste, sight or touch
could not prop up a lie, □
even a gentle white one
to pretend, act or defy
□
this final act...□
of our death scene, □
with heads bowed,
and without applause,
I drew the curtain, □
bowed, said goodnight,
and turned the house lights out.

John Tansey

May You.....An Old Poem But Holds Up Well, Rhytmically

May you
oh would you
if I were to ask
of you,
a few questions
a few answers
some suggestions
in a few stanzas,
concerning this
maybe that
and a bit of which
to believe as fact
a life with
or without
touch of this
all day throughout.

May you
oh could you
if I were to need
of you,
your all
and your most
and most of all
your loving ghost,
to crowd me
to soothe me
and when lonely
to be with me
for in return
I too,
would lovingly burn
my warmth around you.

John Tansey

Memories Of Youth.....A Personal Account

Memories of youth...

my toes, splayed open,
fingering the sand, deeper
as the undertow rushes toward the sea
racing me, backward, unto the past...

The whole horizon, enlarging before me.

For once, as a little boy, coming home,
at night, from the movie drive-in,
pretending I was asleep
in the backseat of my father's car.

I sucked on a lollipop, it was fall
and the leaves were crackling
under the white wall tires...

The speckled shadows of them, by street light,
reflecting on the Naugahyde seats.

And I felt the turns of the car banking,
like a starling within its flock, in Autumn.

O', how long it has been since my feet
were off the ground,
kicking them
like a little school boy on a bus...

and I still believed in the movies

John Tansey

Michelangelo's Lament.....Between The Pietas

□

Between the Pietas;
stone markers measuring the miles
of a life's work, in which lay the lie
I could not rework, nor explain,
but of a will, no longer mine, □
bequeath the church to claim as shrine

When in youth, truth was white□
pulsing within the veins of venetian marble,
I chiseled away
with the hammer of God□
and an artist's honest labor,
to etch the feminine face,
of empathy, amid her posture of stone.

Proclaiming, devoutly, of good and evil
refined in the hand tooled edge of shadow and light,
I placed a dead God, □
in the lap of his mother,
and shaped mercy in the face of Mary
her head bowed, toward the shrouded sorrow....

As the church prayed and angels knelt in the wings.

▮

Now, at life's end, doubting church and man; □
half-blind in art's hope, yet glimpsing□
the shrouded shadows of brutality
papal hypocrisy and its impoverished peasantry;
and the pooled delusions of an old man,
I take up awl and chisel, again
and kneel before this monolithic prayer stone
hoping to etch her grace once again

Once, such fine lines of smooth stone,
palm-cupped curves expressing passion
and hand tooled sense of virtue,

now give way, to these vague clumps
of unshaped clay, blunted by thick thumbs

Eyes, hands and faith numbed,
losing art to life and in it, the end of both
I stopped my work, dropping hammer and chisel
saw the truth in the statue's unfinished
and the sculptures' natural erosion,
and within the stone I left them

As plagued peasants reposed in death, and angels fled the Sistine.

John Tansey

Middle Age...

At end, when it is too late
to start anew.

When every chance to fly
lies like dead birds in your rear view

It was not out of love
nor any childhood dream

That we ran, ignoring every wonder
of life only to wind up here

By accident, and looking up to see
in the vaguely familiar face
of a stranger

every soulful longing of home
since we, last, left it

A sense of familiarity
running behind me as I left

Saying, 'Here, is your coat
you will catch cold'

Life is nothing more than this
a walk around the block when you were seven

At first wonder, and then the drudgery
of again and evermore...

John Tansey

Miracles...An Unusual, Uplift From Me

Miracles

Though science explains away awe to an emptiness,
reasoning, why rain falls,
or how the sun sets, to the West;

Still, it is of no less miraculous to me!

Rather, more so, for having seen the revealed magic
ito Gods slight of hand.

I am assistant to its majesty, re-creating,
each moment, on the celestial stage,
privy, to the mystery of it's' miracles:

For now, I know why the baby is born
Or Spring flowers bloom.
Why the sun dawns,
or slips, in eclipse, behind the moon!

Yet, still, I kneel in awe and reverence

as, once did, the neanderthal...

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John Tansey

Monopoly

With fifteen hundred dollars
And a token,
I threw the dice, pushed a broken car
And took a ride
To Kentucky avenue.
Engaged, I wed a bride,
Bought a little green house,
Paid the down payment, utility bills
And became a realtor with weekly pay.

Then the recession,
I lost my job
and it's two hundred a week.
I binged at three places
and wound up in jail;
And when I had nothing else,
My life going around in circles,
I hocked the ring, sold the house;
And, going bankrupt,

Mortgaged the spouse,
and traded in the car,
For one shoe;
Then, trodding from Park Place
to Baltic Avenue, I lost my shoe
And the once perfect life it fit.
You see dreams were but the houses
We traded our lives for.
Suddenly made aware of this,

Then walked barefoot and blissful off the board.

John Tansey

Mourning.....

Mourning

What is it that
makes one man
love, and in as much, to lust, long
for one woman so much
that, parched, from
the drought
of her sensual touch
perches to look back
for that one woman he'd long
to take with him...

John Tansey

Muscle Memory

Looking in the mirror at fifty

I am getting older
the loss of muscle mass

sink-holing the skin
with pockmarks

my sagging triceps and hamstrings
shows me so.

Ten pounds for every ten years

With such drastic loss of muscle memory,
I forget how to crawl.

John Tansey

John Tansey

My Collusion In This Global Warming.....

My Collusion in this Global Warming

Like the single bird I bought
Because it was cheaper than the pair,

That knows the polished glass it nestles upto,
At night, is just a reflection of itself.

I, too, know the back of my hand
Upon my cheek is no other but my own.

Evening allows such creative liberties;
And the mind will indulge the fool if it has to.

The neighbors respect my right to such oddities;
They seldom intrude.

But therein is their crime, as mine was
To break up such a lifelong, devoted pair of birds.

3.4.8 John Tansey

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John Tansey

My Father...In Memoriam

My Father
who wouldn't get close enough
to even hit me
imagine how much further
just to hold me
he would have to come.

He was that kind of man
who finally speaks only
after the incantation of my dreams
that leaves me
in a bed of sweat
unaware if he really touched me at all.

Having never spoken
in public or private,
only in these self initiated
seances did we talk at all.

The bond even more stronger
when I became a father
and saw through my sons eyes
how young and scared he must have been then.

Later, divorced
I see now all I did not then.
How he dissolved into lte night T.V
and cup cakes. Just struggling
to live on after love had died.

A ladies man all his life...
I never once saw him talk to one
after she left.

John Tansey

My Mother...Victimized With Dementia

My mother,
I have not seen her in years;
And, yet, I feel closer to her now
than, ever before.

We share the same Oceanic loneliness;
The uncharted isle of mental illness:

The hooves of horses beating in the brain...

□

Yet, in between
her days of missed dosages and receding pain,
are the occasional dreams,
laughs, and brief moments of sanity
between the insane!

John Tansey

Nazi Germany...A Story By My Oma

Nazi Germany□

The Recall of a Story by my Oma

"It was in 1930's Germany.
During the early years of "Hitler's rise:
Brutes in brown shirts,
The night of the long knives".

"Throughout history,
This was the most brutal of man's cruelties",

She said.
Speaking more to herself than me;

For, I could not have been, but more than seven,
sitting there, in a chair, at her kitchen table.□
Yet, I absorbed so repletely,
All the blood, pulsing, from within this story.

My Oma continued sadly,
but with vivid memory...

"They rustled up all the men
in the early morning dampness.
Some wearing pants, others without".

"And they lined them up with a perfection
that only Germans could do..."

"Barking orders,
They were looking for someone,
or something,
Just whom or what, I do not remember."

□

"All the men complied, for one!
A lone wolf among a flock of sheep;
I mean that the rest were no less men because of it! "□

"This proud, stalwart stance of a man, □

pulled out of the line,
strutted, defiantly, in a prance□
and swaggered, right, out of sight, out of town...

And was never seen again! ”

Then, we fell silent...

John Tansey□□7

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John Tansey

Night Dreams And Morning Work

Sun sets into self-delusion
stirring the synapses
from a steaming cup of coffee
and under a dimly lit oil lamp
Shrouded in saffron
casts the room in amber hues
imbuing words as gold
formed in an Alchemic art

Sun rises, dispelling dreams
out of every fold of darkness
to a sterile whiteness
that turning back, such ingots
into leaden blocks of stone
wakes me, both bleary-eyed
and blood-shot into this
Failed, pale bleak truth of morning

John thomas Tansey

John Tansey

Nihilism...

Hopelessness is insidious
until, suddenly, like a revolution

Man admits to a Godlessness
and the ensuing schism divides his being;

There is a rumbling at the border of your life,
making midnight raids at the countryside.

The first casualties are the extremities,
the outer environs of your limbs...

Your possessions, your job and the children you clutch most.

So you close the castle gates,
hold up in the tower,

Discard, but your faith, to the hunger of the crowds,
as advisors whisper over your shoulder

'Give up your crown, your reign,
your palace, even abdicate'

And in the strait shape of a white shift,
without mistress and head shaven

You walk the steps to the Iron Maiden
and are stillborn into the next life!

John Tansey

Nonbeliever...

Nonbeliever

If one you should know
Is felled by a deep grief
Into a black hole of depression,
And you, armed with clichés,
Come to console, relief,
Before you open your mouth,
Know this:
That, in the absence of the right words,
Silence will suit the situation well.

Like the wearing of basic black
For all formal affairs and funerals,
It is proper,
always in style
and goes with any occasion.

Just ask the petitioners of God
Who, all too well, know:
It is through the long terrible silence
Of unanswered prayers
Made under the duress of the dark,

That we, too late, learn to survive this life on our own...

9.24.81 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Observance & Reflection On Every Day

Observance & Reflection on Every Day□

The months pass, unnoticed,
like days of the week
and the years
like Seasons...

There is only so much we can retain.

Only so much remains in this narrow, thin wedge
of our consciousness
it recalls only so far back
and, even, less so forward...

And of this vast pool
of our lives,
We retain so little.

Moments come and go;

But, mostly, it is the tragedies we remember:
Threats upon our survival that stay etched in the brain.

But it is our short-term memory,
primed for survival,
that discards what is not vital to survive the day,

That is the culprit, that starts by stealing a day, here and there, a few weeks.
Up to a protracted period of months,

Until, one day, you or I will look up
And we will not remember or know each other, at all...

But, now, I still do remember...

Like the simple gesture of compassion:
Feeding my son's two goldfish.

How dependent they were on our kindness,
our magnanimity onto lesser things.

The whole of Zen can be summed up
in this one simple action;

It's expression of empathy.

It is soothing, to the soul, to know
that, although, we too will soon forget;

Humanity, itself, in its collective unconscious,

will remember to shake hands with every soul it passes...□

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John Tansey

Observance & Reflection...□

□

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like days of the week
and the years
like Seasons...
There is only so much we can retain.
Only so much remains in this narrow, thin wedge
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We retain so little of the vast pool
of our lives.
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But, mostly, it is the tragedies we remember!
The culprit is our short-term memory,
primed for survival,
that discards what is not vital to survive the day.
But I do remember...

In a simple gesture of compassion,
feeding my son's two goldfish;
How dependent they were upon our kindness,
our magnanimity toward lesser things.
The whole of Zen can be summed up
by this one simple action;

This expression of empathy.
It is soothing, to the soul, to know
that, although, we, too soon, forget;
Humanity, itself, in its collective unconscious
will remember to shake hands with every soul we pass...□

John Tansey

Of White Moths And Drunkards...

Of White Moths and Drunkards...

Fearing the night, linen white moths
Flying into the torch of lit street lamps,
Converge from each vantage point,
Out of the vectored dark.
Flirting, flitting about and dancing
Around the common ground of its warmth.

Some, lured too close, burst into flame.

Like the cold, clamorings of drunken men,
Phosphorescent from spirits
And tumbling down alleys
Bust into the local taverns,
Snorting, like bulls, from the cold,
They become shadows, against the fireplace,
Telling tall tales throughout the night;

Praying, the flame burns bright, right until dawn...

John Tansey 1.2.7

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John Tansey

Old Shirts...This Reads Like A Woman Wrote It

Old Shirts

I have not yet recovered from the potent
Memories of family outings.

They peel like the anniversary
Of a loved one's departing.

On such occasions, it is the intimacy
Of other families.

That defines the negative space
Of our separation.

Living in the old neighborhoods,
I am haunted by the old ghosts.

And now that your gone,
I shall wear your faults.

Like an old weather-beaten
shirt of yours;

Which warms me with everything I
Hated about you...

John Thomas Tansey 11/17/02

John Tansey

On Memory, And The Past.....

There is no past,
Just regrets;
That we carry within us
Through the years
That makes us heavy;
Storing pain like fat,
That puts the paunch in our gut,
The tallow in our jowls.

As there is no future;
Only the daily dread
That makes us sick with worry;
Aging us before it is time.
Mortified,
Our bodies break down
Over long, cast shadows
Which never come to pass...

John Tansey

One Bright Bounding Ball Of A Year...

ONE BRIGHT BOUNDING BALL OF A YEAR

Climbing piles of warm clothes, □
freshly folded from the drier, □

you pose, triumphantly smiling, □
beneath the soft glow of a lamp...□
its dimmed halogen amber.□

Toys, tumble from your hand
in a jumble of color, your face,

red like the flames of your hair, □
encircles the deep blue pools
of your eyes, transfixed upon

A hanging chandelier, that
lit and turning like the cosmos, □
fills the scope of your eyes, □
scanning the perimeter of its
prismatic light. For nearly one□
Bright bounding ball of a year,

you have rolled, tumbled, stumbled
and crawled into each newfound
corner of our lives.

Now, wrapped
in a warm towel, your skin, soft□
And pliable from talcum powder,

I thumb the dough of your face,
into a smile, cheeks rising like
flour from a baker's window.

And now, pleurably fatigued,
from the throb and pang of your
eyeteeth hammering through,

I stay up later, in the dark, rocking
you to sleep,

knowing that we will never quite be this intimate again...

John Tansey

One Bright Bounding Ball Of A Year...For My Son, I Fear, Will Never See Again

Climbing piles of warm clothes, □
freshly folded from the drier, □
you pose, triumphantly smiling, □
beneath the soft glow of a lamp...□
its dimmed halogen amber.□
Toys, tumble from your hand
in a jumble of color, your face,
red like the flames of your hair, □
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eyeteeth hammering through, I
stay up later, in the dark, rocking
you to sleep, knowing we will
never quite be this intimate again.

John Tansey

One Poem And Six Pallbearers...

One Poem and Six Pallbearers...

Writing a poem...

I spot a cat, stretching:
Limbic art in motion.
And using my pen to define her,
Soon the words will harden,
then stick

The cat will slow, stop
And dropp dead...
But no matter.

The eulogy is written.
The sale is fixed
Stuffed and suitable for framing...

9.2.8 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Original Sin....

Original Sin

The other side of love
Is not hate, never was
As most would have you swear;

No, they are both
Of the same family:
Incestuous cousins:

And both, aflame with passion,
Fueled by intuition
The realm of the Heart.

And it is only at the betrayal of one
That incurs the unbridled wrath
Of the other.

As was with Cain,
Envious of Able
That he came to slay all he loved.

And with such anger,
Condemned all of man forever

With Original Sin.....

9.18.91 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Original Sin.....If U Saw A Newborn, U Would Not Believe It!

Original Sin

The other side of love
Is not hate, never was
As most would have you swear;

No, they are both
Of the same family:
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With Original Sin.....

9.18.91 John Tansey

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Our Fathers, Once Gods, No Longer...Villanelle

Life was holier then when younger,
opened gifts at Christmas, I toyed
beside the shelter of my father.

Faith in the world was stronger
when what little I knew, relied
upon the lies he told me when younger,

For as the hand of God, come under
a cloud to part the sea for a boy,
I walked proudly through the crowds with my father.

But now, his iconic loom no longer
fends, like prometheus, the plight
of man from one no longer younger.

For I see in the winter of his growing older,
this frail mortal of him, that destroys
the hope I would hold his hand forever.

Empty by fact of having grown colder,
Christmas goes quietly without the joy
so omnipresent when I was younger-
and still knew God by the shape of my father.

John Tansey

Our Love, Unravelling, Like A Butterfly Stitch...

To my ex-wife

It was a long and loathsome day.
You and I had been fighting.

I was so sure the sight of blood
would have moved to soften you.

But you barely noticed.
I had to bemoan the pain
for you to ask 'what happened? '

'Cut my finger in the kitchen', I said
hoping, you would lead me to water,
And wash out the bad blood between us...

But rummaging the bags of your eyes
for some fonder time to recall,

I reclaimed an empty palm.
Then, with cradled arms and sucked thumb,

watched you whisk away...
unraveling, as a butterfly stitch,

You disappeared downstairs
even before the bleeding stopped

Clutching my self tighter then,
I knew it was our love that ebbed away...

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John Tansey

Paradox

All truth is quicksilver
slipping through the fingers

The moment I speak
is the same that I lie

It is when my tongue
seeps deep down my throat,

Knowing though not telling,
that truth remains alive

John Tansey

Parallels Of Mortality In Autumn...

PARALLELS OF MORTALITY IN AUTUMN

Something epic, looms
over the dismal gray cold
of Autumn's
overwhelming utter sadness
in the vanquished heart;
that slows summer's combustible pace
to a stillness,
mirrored in the pensive faces
of those
awed at all the Autumn dead
that lay leaved at their feet.

Something pale, plumes
above an Autumnal brush fire
doused,
by this mid November's rain;
vaporous gray clouds
pall bear this vestige
of the barren heart's
sloughed colors;
cobalt greens and cadmium yellows,
smoldering
to its bone white pallor of ash.

Something tragic, dooms
the foliage in the winter wood,
as our extremities, withdrawn
to the aftermath
of the parboiled earthen heart's
bare bronchial trees;
some sulfuric sediment, embering
in the fallow air
succumbs,
to the smoke of an old war
we wage until our heroic defeat.

Something grand, illumined

in the long shadowed distance
of a purple sky's
dark shrouded clouds;
some monumental quest
overwhelming in loneliness,
the naked heart's
stark terror of the id,
forebodes
this whole dark epic of man
plodding out of the awesome gray mist.

Something lingering, resumes
with a longing, like for those we grieve
planted deep
in the earth
of the mourning heart,
some embered remembrance
of them,
like leaves in their green age
grows
as fond prayers of fair days
on such sparse ones like these.

Something ominous, glooms
as the proud incongruous
crescent of the black crow,
perched upon a limb
in the sparse vermillion wood:
puce colored corpuscles of leaves
parallel grief
in the conquered heart's
coagulated wound
that eclipses
this metaphor of Autumn with a private loss.

Something final, consumes
this naked sensuality of Autumn
with all things that end
in sorrow,
breaking the spirit
of the giving heart's

commiserated sage
numbed by loss, to pray alone
beneath the white washed stars,
not knowing if God
is among that brutal cold.

Something bittersweet, blooms
in the slender sapling, tossed
to Autumn's embered war
of attrition,
some surviving magi
in the sojourned heart's
tender flesh wound
of compassion
learns, through the barren casualty
of life, lost
to the slow death of the year.

January 4, '92 John Thomas Tansey

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John Tansey

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John Tansey

Peering Out From Behind My Mother's Dress.....

Peering out from behind my mother's dress

Behind the sun-blown billows
of my mother's dress

Following her to a department store
Pushing, through the circling rounders of clothes

As she perused the price tags,
Oblivious to where I was,

This ghost of a boy, wrapped in
The stores white sheets and silken shirts.

I would bounce like a flea
From carousel to carousel

Occasionally, knocking dresses from their trees,
Pushing through worlds of color and fabric

The depth in degrees
Of spring colors turning to the cotton wools of "back to School" Autumn

Like the fading face print through a curtain
Muezzlin on a breezy day

Silks, cottons, nylons and stoles
Each one, a caul breaching so I could come through to the other side

like a dog, leaning his face out of a car window
Skin sifting the breeze.

And being reborn, pop my head
From between the clothes saying, "here I am"

At five, just the pleasure of being swaddled
With another layer of cloth between me and the world.

It happens now that I am older,
I must cover myself with blankets, sheets and pillows,

As that earlier comfort behind my mothers dress,
I sleep, as the cat lays across my still warm clothes.

John Thomas Tansey 8/21/02

John Tansey

Personal Gospel.....To Brandon, My Son,

To Brandon, my son,
I now know to whom belongs this tale
of the baby in the barn.
I now take to heart
this parable of the bible as my own.
That to me it belongs
and to everyone
who has been or bore a child
into the open palms of humility.

I have been the son
and now the father,
this compassion I feel
must be the other
pain, that strikes with a capacity for sorrow
in whether or not the world
will be kind to my child tomorrow.

I wonder, who knows this tale is told again
of the child in the manger,
whose sweet smile and saving grace
will not absolve this world
of its anger.

John Tansey

Picking Tomatoes.....

In the midst of my angst,
I stooped to see a woman
picking tomatoes;
Choosing with such deliberate surety,
the plump ripe one at the right moment.
Suddenly, I sensed the world was upheld by her
and I felt safe, being near this earthly gardener.

Gentle, like Zen, in its old age,
She was an elegant, gray haired woman
named Eve, a biblical, ancient beauty
who left Adam to stay and care for the Garden,
a maiden of the woods,
married to the tree of knowledge.
And as I reached out to feel her essence,
she picked the one that I was on!

John Tansey

Poem At The End Of The Year...

Poem at Year's End

In one sweeping, Spring Cleaning, at year's end,
I gathered up all the year's photos,
Letters and other mementos:
Placeholders for times spent with you.
I scoured all the closets, top shelves,
Dresser drawers, even pants pockets
I have not worn since.
Convinced, I found it all,
I threw them away in a Catharsis,
A ritualistic purge, in the way
Some might give all they own
When sensing death is near.

Then, I bathed, shaved
And lie down for bed.
Picking up my diary,
I opened to the last page:
And found, still, this bookmark you gave me
Along with this poem
I had written down about you.

12.31.71 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Poem At Year's End...

Poem at Year's End

In one sweeping, Spring Cleaning, at year's end,
I gathered up all the year's photos,
Letters and other mementos:
Placeholders for times spent with you.
I scoured all the closets, top shelves,
Dresser drawers, even pants pockets
I have not worn since.
Convinced, I found it all,
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12.31.71 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Poem Of Autumn...

Poem of Autumn

It is getting dark...

Feel the cold;

The snuffing out of the light

By a prim butler in long tails

And a white glove.

A long, wooden pole

With a burnished cup, that chokes the last flame

Of Summer,

From a gas-lit lamp.

It is night now,

All souls to their bedposts,

Time for most to go to sleep,

And some, to quietly weep in their pillows.

John Tansey 2007

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John Tansey

Portent.....

Sliding my chair into the sunlight
Of your mother's garden,
It is always in the Spring and Summer
That I fear the cold most.

Relaxing in anticipation
Of the sun on my back
Like your mothers garden tomatoes:

Each one, a sun on the vine,
is like a lemon wedge, peeled back
when all my limbs go lax;

Then, suddenly, a chill
And, invariably, you say,
"Someone just ran over your grave."

But no, it's a chill of the heart,
Not the air; For Christ, my crucifix
Has fallen to the floor.

And, like faith's first early morning frost,
I grab both my short-sleeved arms
And shiver, with dread...

At whatever future blackness
Comes bellowing past.

John Tansey

Possessions...

POSSESSIONS□

The possession,
a ring, a gift□
the momentary obsession□
for something□
to lift us out of depression, □

Each day,
purchasing something new, □
tearing its shiny wrapping, □
we buy back our lives
and for that moment, □□
like opening a bay window
we are renewed.□

□
Redeemed with credit,
this momentary bliss of baubles
is fleeting,
like fashion
disgusing us from the grave
with new clothes,
or the amulet of newness,
right before the discarded paper packaging.

Without possessions,
or obsessive material diversions
we buy to persuade ourselves
we are precious
like the gold hung from our necks,

We become naked
like undressed mannequins
in a store window,

Left with the realization
of a skeleton,
its sole possession,

a cairn of stone,
and that death is no more
but the settlement of debts
paid in flesh and bone.

John Tansey

Possessions.....

The possession,
a ring, a gift□
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John Tansey

Post Mortem... Not Sure, I Think The Point Is Unclear

But for the tick tock
Of a wall clock
Dripping like a faucet,
My room is drab, dark and quiet;
Almost death-like
As the decrepit crypt in which I was raised;
My mother, the mournful coroner.
With a monk's vow of silence,
Remaining mute,
I tip toe into the stillness.

But there is a familiarity in the air;
The aroma of toilet water and moth flakes
Wormholing time to so many years ago
When I would visit my Oma;
Old and blind,
She would sit still
In her living room, high back chair, ☐
Knitting perfect afghans with a passion
As if sewing the very pieces
Of my family back together.

As the past comes crossing the border
Into the present,
We embody the same existential void.
As she steps into my being
I slip into hers;
A little boy seeing with her blindness
the dead, that reaches out to me.
In a sudden paralysis,
afraid of death's immanence,
I extend my hand into the darkness;
And, as Adam, touching the finger of God
on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel,

I feel her hand and find reassurance
amidst her presence!

Pulling Into Grand Central Station.....

My feet sliding over the metal grating,
I stand in the doorway of a railroad car
barreling into station;
drops of rain water, leaking from the rivets, □
beat with a hollowness□
upon my fist, tightly gripping the rusted rail.

This train wends the curved tracks like a millstone.
The grind of iron against iron
break squeal and sparks, flying
from the under cars, combust with the taste
of rain and ore upon my tongue.□

Immersed in the damp darkness
of the tunnels, like a microbe
invading the body's hardened arteries,
I plumb like a worm through the earth
counting the pillars as grave markers.

Loosening my grip, I split the atom
of stone, iron, flesh and rain,
the essential elements of earth...
And am one haphazard half -step away

□

John Tansey

Releasing Balloons In The Park.....I Grieve For My Boys

My two sweet, sweet boys...
I must let you go
and, crawling back through the
gaping hole that is left of me,

Salvage some peace, some purpose
for this loss I endure
in letting you, both,
slip through my fingers,

Like the silken strings of two
helium-filled balloons
that float up and away, skyward
with all, our shared memories,

As you both run to your Mother
saying, 'Mommy, look up at the sky! '
'Somebody must be crying
over those lost Balloons'.

□

John Tansey

Religion

Ah, to hug the torso of a sensual woman

my fingers splayed between her ribs
like flying buttresses

supporting her arch like a shrine...

her palms, reaching steeple skyward,
as she releases white pigeons

and the world, too, flies home.

John Tansey

Reminiscing On Childhood...

Reminiscing on Childhood...

I

Remember...

When we were just kids
and our feet swung,
carelessly,

below the old bus seats,
And hung, just above the ground.

it was right here, this very spot
I believe, that our feet

Dangled between the moment, gone
And the one, still, to come.

whimsically, oblivious to both,

We belly laughed, to some timeless,
organic laughter, neither has know, since.

I am, again, that child:
Light, airy and carefree!

Able to rise, weightless,
And whimsical, like a cloud!

Upheld, by just the vapor of a dream
I kept, for all those years, ashamed

II

And not this mile deep
wreckage, beneath the sea.

Where the pressure, per square inch,

comes in and crushes me,

like some lost, tossed, tin can.

Waiting to be found by the scent,
Wafting under and over the shut door jamb.

Is this how far I have fallen: .
Into the black hole of an abyss,

where no sound, no light, or even
the kind, gentle boy that laughed, in ripples, beside you, that day,

could escape, but only give up on such levity
for the vice grip of sadness

in the oppressive weight of depression

that pulls me down, ever further
ever deeper, ever darker and ever colder,

forever always.

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John Tansey

Reunion.....

Dedicated to my ex-wifes grandmother

Upon the anniversary of his passing
that worm-holed the world
with a warped space,
leaving
the black hole heart
of one woman,
agape
with grief
and parted from the star of her life;

In the privacy of her longing,
she succumbed
to that portalled space,
aligned by stars,
that pulled her,
as earth herself
on the anniversary of his death
toward the gravity of their love
and in the orbit of their final place.

John Tansey

Rockport...Visual Imagery

Pea green sea squalls,
Whorled out of a Nor'easter
Ping with the sting of the ocean's spray.

Wind roped ocean waves
Lope, in the wind sail gales,
The chilled cheeks of my taut face,
Shouting windward and away...

Far up the winding slate rock walls of the jetty;
The wreckage of a whaler, among white caps
And Narwhale bones.

The bowsprit of the sea,
Rises like a fish tale out of the coast:

The imagined mermaid of the manatae...

□

John Thomas Tansey 6/02

John Tansey

Rounding Old Endings Into New Beginnings...

Rounding Old Endings Into New Beginnings...
For Suzy, the perennial optimist

My wife aspires toward new beginnings,
Arising, each morning, with the sun,
White washing the old endings
Of the tired evening, last.
When we, defeated, slunk into bed,
Retreating from its appendages.
She burns all bridges to that continuum,
And cracks the nut in each moment,
Pirouetting at every pivotal point,
Faulting from its sequence:
The coordinated order;
To mistake a tardy toe,
Step, astride some timeless organic laughter.

She, as the wondrous, zodiac child,
Is the galaxies fool,
Walking, the ecliptic, through the constellations,
She attests to old endings
Rounded up into new beginnings,
And that we are, in motion,
Through the celestial sphere of the stars
Perpetually, being recreated,
In each new coordinate of the moment,
Where, for its first time in its new space,
Like trying to step in the same water twice,
We can never do or be the same thing twice...

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John Tansey

Rumored To Be Living...□

Rumored to be Living...□

An Urban Legend

I have been holding my breath
Since boyhood,
Seated in the back row of every class.

Pouting and turning blue,
I waited, obstinately,
Grade after grade,

For the teacher or Hypoxia to reach me.□

Now, a lifetime later, and
Left back all of those years,
I still tip-toe around crowds,

Skirt the outer umbra of hot spots,
And live in an attic, like an urban legend,
Always on the fringe, just within rumor.

For, it is only in the negative spaces of photographs,
Or an empty chair at gatherings, that I am even sensed, at all.

12.28.07 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Rumored To Be Living...(An Urban Legend)

Rumored to be Living...□ (An Urban Legend)

I have been holding my breath
Since boyhood,
Seated in the back row of every class.

Pouting and turning blue,
I waited, obstinately,
Grade after grade,

For the teacher or Hypoxia to reach me.□

Now, a lifetime later, and
Left back all those years,
I, still, tip-toe around crowds,

Skirt the outer umbra of hot spots,
And in an attic, live as an urban legend:
Always on the fringe, just within rumor.

For, it is in the negative space of photographs,
Or an empty chair, left for an affair, at which,
Either Son will look, longingly,

And I, a thousand miles away, feeling a twitch,
Will, still, turn to look his way...

This is the bond between a Father and his Sons...

12.28.07 John Tansey

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John Tansey

Samhain... All Hallow's Eve

Brisk, this cold October wind,
pruning husks of brown-balled leaves
into effigies of Autumn's wane,
sweeps with besom broom
all the cluttered corners,
and the recessed secrets, □
from the hollow's outgrowth, □
flushed from the shadows□ □
into the sickle of a quarter moon, □
its crisp sheen cold upon the throat.

Fear is unmasked in the witching wind□
far from the pranks of tromping children □
who dare, amid the leaves, to taunt□ □
with old songs and a cut switch, □
the stark, cobwebbed clapboards
of grave side ghosts□
loosed upon the world, □
to haunt this last slanted sheaf of corn, □
stalked by the scythe□
in the dread season of the harvest. □□

Even fire hides from the cold□
in the skin of the gourd□
on All Hallow's Eve, □
its wind prying the brain's stonehenge -□
where death feared by the aging heart□
close to the grave
becomes but a game □
mimed by mischievous charades□
of children, costumed □
for their parade of life and death in the park. □

(December 5,1993)

John Tansey

Scents And Remembrance

Remembering birthdays at the beach:
wormholes
drawing you backward
with the undertow,
your feet still in the surf,
the sand rushing between your toes

As you look up to watch
the ever-widening expanse of the past,
moving fast before you,
and you grow smaller, a boy
snorting the olfactory senses of childhood
when you still believed...

Hearing, once again, your mother call to you

John Tansey

Sea Shores And Toes Slipping In The Shoal

Remembering birthdays at the beach:
wormholes
drawing you backward
with the undertow,
your feet still in the surf,
the sand rushing between your toes

As you look up to watch
the ever-widening expanse of the past,
moving fast before you,
and you grow smaller, a boy
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when you still believed...

Hearing, once again, your mother call to you

John Tansey

John Tansey

Self Exiled To This Isle Of Sorrow.....

Exiled, □
from my wife, child,
family and home
I am alone on this isle of sorrow.□

The totem poles of poems□
lay toppled,
like tombstones upon the shelves, □
God no longer found among them.□

I have put down the pen□

I am unable to write,
sitting quietly alone
in a room. deafened
by thoughts of the past,

I spend the night with ghosts
plunging backward,
through the years
to when I was a boy,
standing before the ocean,
and the long shadow of my father
saying go ahead, be a man

I could not then, I cannot now

Running back to the sand,
the image of my mother in her sunglasses,
I cried the water was too blue,
the ocean too vast

(I never learned to swim, □
it is a basic act of survival
that reveals a lot about someone)

With memories more vivid than the present, □
a blue mirage though my throat is parched,
life deserted,

and the tide gone out,

I stand, like a child, crestfallen
at my failed quest for manhood,
feet sinking in the surf
of the shoal's edge

And before the lapping waves of the sea,
to hear the song of the whale,
a sea goddess
like a woman, a mother□
the mythic manatee
of sailors,
her tail fin waving
go ahead, leap

it will be all right...
□

John Tansey

Separated In A Shipwreck.....For My Sons

My kids are drifting away from me...
Like lifeboats from a shipwreck.

I speak with them, long distance, on the phone...
consisting of cursory conversations

Like 'Hi, Dad, i'm home', 'School was fine',
'Goodbye Dad', 'I love you to, Dad'.

Some bully called my little boy, Dylan,
a cry baby, and I was not there
As he tearfully cried, 'I AM NOT! '.

Brandon's learning to stand on his own, knowing,
that alone, he'll grow to become a man.

God, they're both my left and right lungs;
Brandon, the larger and Dylan, the smaller one.

Seeing them both, is like taking a deep breath
and holding it, for fear there will not be another one.

John Tansey

Separation.....I Am So Sorry

Engaged,
plotting marriage,
I nodded,
while looking through you
at every women in the park.

Married,
seven years,
a child, come between us,
I miss the lust
publicly displayed by others,

Divorced, □
free to roam, I sit alone
watching couples with children, and lust□
for the blessed trinity...

of the three of us, to be, again, at home.

John Tansey

Sixteen....

When I was sixteen and it was Spring,
I met in a park under the umbrella
of a tree in the rain,
a lithe, young Hindu girl
named Shanta;
It was my first and last kiss.

She promised to meet me the next day.
I returned, she did not
I walked by her home
and stood under the tree every day
for a week,
then once a month for a year,
then once a year through the rest of my life.

And since losing her face in the bodies
of other women,
I learned this...
that the days of love

are less than the years of their loss!

John Tansey

Stay Away From The White Light.....

I have often preferred a skant lamplight
to the austerity of fluorescence:
Like being questioned for a crime
you have always wanted to commit.

But, safe, in the glowing aura
of sepia tones, honed
through an amber lampshade,
is the subtle, oblique plea of I might...

Rather than the snowblind sterility
of forceps and demerol,
bullies in white labcoats
yanking from a limp body,

You, conceived in love.
But pulled from this world, crying.
My son. in both, Birth and Death,

stay away from the white light.

John Tansey

Staying Alive Somewhere Between Past And Future

The past is mournful, □
the future uncertain, □

All we have is what slips by □
□ through this wormhole
of the setting sky, □

It is dangerous to unearth what you have done □
and frightening to know
what you might,

So stay safe in the now, □
stealing each moment like a thief, □
skulk in the shadow of the clock; □

move as it moves, stop as it stops
□
Do not remain in the past,
nor leap too far toward the future,
□
Rather, stay in the present,
in its swirling circle of klieg lights, □
the one enlightened spot, □
□
Whirl, as Shiva, □
at the edge of the stage, twirling □
until the curtain drops.

And if, at some pivotal point, pirouetting
from the scheduled order,
you mistake a tardy toe step,
□
Slip, miss or lose the beat,
tripping over your foot □
out of the spot light, □
□
Then smile, like the Buddha,
having stumbled upon some timeless
organic laughter,

□

Regain your spot,

your composure, your center

and find the rhythm,

□

The rhyme, the measure, the meter in a breath of time□

that sets the bodies clock, □

to the tide of the pulsing heart.

John Tansey

Staying Safe In The Now.....

The past is mournful, □
the future uncertain, □

All we have is what slips by □
□ through this wormhole
of the setting sky, □

It is dangerous to unearth what you have done □
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The rhyme, the measure, the meter in a breath of time□

that sets the bodies clock, □

to the tide of the pulsing heart.

John Tansey

Submission.....

If I must be used,
then make it an abuse of love
so I will know it was for a righteous cause...

for their in is the most noble usury
of ourselves and humanity

the misguided labors of love
that both sustain and drain us

Silken tethers that sweeten the bondage
on my knees, I give what you need

on my feet, I reclaim my manhood
standing upto mankind's nihilistic doom

Governments that abuse are most base
and rape us of our divinity...

Our most precious heirloom.

the evil eye is nothing but empathy
evolving our primal nature to, at first, do no harm

But the world, my dear, is still a carnivore
so, it is merciful to kill what you love
before it does!

John Tansey

Sweet Mother Theresa.....Where Are You, My Old Love!

Sweet Mother Theresa,
In your light cotton, summer dress,
Your olive skin legs,
And leather straps that bind your calfs.
With your Librium, your paint brush
And your two girls,
In a brief fling with the summer breeze...
You give me an excitable kiss.

Your sharp, manic-depressive wit,
Embracing every archetype you have ever known.
You have led a scripted life,
Which failed with every role you were cast.
Like Circe, pining on a Grecian Isle,
For a young lanky Irishman,
Who left you with two babies
So many years ago.
He is the same man you look for now,
In the face of every boyish lover
You have slept with since.
Theresa, the world has gone on without you;

John Tansey

Take Back My Free Will...

Take Back My Free Will□
God, please...

Take back this free will
which you so freely gave.
I no longer can handle it.
I decide without reason
and impulsively choose.

My decisions are deadlocked
and any choice I opt
is as a switch, pulled
that, thoughtlessly, kills
something, someone
somewhere in the world.

This life you gave me
to live, so repletely,
I have made so simply
a complete mess of.
Like some twister
touching down,

I have snapped the vows
of marriage, like its
very ring finger;
Yanked a father from
his children, wind-tossed
jobs as if they were cars;

Until, I, myself, was swept
right out of the house
and out of their lives.
Still, in the wake
of its wide swath,
I have left a trail

Of broken pinky swears
and truncated timbers.

A whole tree line
of long ago, gone friends
and debt, by the mounds
of dead, brown-balled leaves.

You see, such disasters
I have caused. Worst yet,
is the longing for my boys.
Please, God, I pray
take back my free will
which willed me astray□

To this lost isle of the soul.
And lead me, yourself,
to some calling, some
cause greater than myself?
Please, show me that which
is still here, but no longer see: □

This life, I hope, that still pulses within me...

John Tansey

Take Back This Free Will You Willed To Me...

Take Back My Free Will□
God, please...

Take back this free will
which you so freely gave.
I no longer can handle it.
I decide without reason
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is still here, but no longer see: □

This life, I hope, that still pulses within me...

John Tansey 7.7

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John Tansey

Tattooed Athena....

She has a tattooed bird with wings
upon her shoulder
and a glisten of sweat on her her neck, yet
oblivious to the steam grates on Park Avenue
billowing her linen dress to her thighs,

She walks the street with clogs
The clip clop of her soles
Sandal-shod and toned, olive golden legs,
Her calves wrapped in leather straps,

Seductively clothed in her Pagan beauty,
in a light summer dress,
And taugt straps that cut into her bronzed shoulders,
As if some one reached for her briefly, then the blood returned.

She struts through the Madison Ave crowd
Standing out with her peasant stock body
then, she glides in her environment
Like a feline who knows the streets

And like a falcon riding on a cross street thermal
To some pagan god in a cloud,
Her eyes behind dark sunglasses,

So as not to reveal the long plundered gems of greek statues.

John Thomas Tansey

John Tansey

Tears...The Fewer There Are, The Worse It Is

It's Just a Single Tear

It is just a single tear.
All that my manhood can muster.
One solitary, dew drop
forming in the corner of my eye;
The very condensation of my pain
that seeps down my cheek
like the melting of an ice age
cracking the granite rock of my face.
It could be of the self-same water
as Noah's great flood,
or a tiny earthquake,
the beginning of a rain,
an old man's baptism
or the first leak in the concrete
that brings down the dam:
My thick-skinned redoubt
that prevents you from getting in!
Look, at my children,
laughing and splashing
as they swim, happily, among it's bead,
like a water slide, streaming down my cheek.

Then, with the lap of a tongue,
the taste of salt in my mouth,
I dispute such proof, such evidence
that denies, once again,
my existence of such grief! □

JTB/27/07

John Tansey

Tetragrammaton...i Am Rushing These Poems Like A Bulb About To Blow

Tetragrammaton...יְהוָה

A light, so bright, that no man who sees its face may live

Thinking of an old, unutterable word for creation
It is, like the sound, trapped, in every sea-shell,
found along the shores.

A word I knew, once, as a child in kindergarten, because,
Wearing my father's shirt, I wrote it in finger-paint.

Or, once ordered to stand and write a thousand times
Or more, with white chalk on the blackboard, after school:

The Judaic word, unspoken, for pain of stoning, יְהוָה
The all empowering, creative name of God,
Never to be taken in vain...

John Tansey יְהוָה.10.8

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John Tansey

The "runt Of The Litter"...To My Son, Dylan

The doctor's say it is his heart's murmur
that keeps him small
like a doll
he carries with him throughout the day.

But I know, that like a great fish
in a small tank,
though his dorsal fin will curl,
he will outgrow it,
this limiting, childhood of his;

And, being grown, discard his little pond;
And surface up, somewhere, in the Atlantic...
Having escaped the crossfire□
between his parents:
Two warring Continents that ravaged his world
before his eyes!

I know he fears the open spaces
between us,
like a Battlefield, a "No Mans' Land".
And the occasional but tenuous cease fires

I know, no, I believe in his tale
because, wounded, his hearts' murmur,
Whispers it, as so...

John Tansey

The Abyss Of The Poem....

With hand unsteady,
I stop
at the first line's edge of a jagged poem,
looking down□
its precipice.

My foot slips,
over the period's pause□
the grim rim of its ledge,

And without hesitation,
like a dangling participle,
inhaling a breath,
I grab a vowel,
and a bird,

Tie a rock to my foot,
growl
and in an arc, discarding all I know
leap from the cliff.

Measuring madness by meter,

I plumb the vacuous page
crashing ruled lines
and fine edges,
□
In cursive circles□
of tear-splattered rage, □

To where I land, □
Once, having hit bottom,
seeing the skin pared, □
and the soul,
splayed open,

In the uneasy silence at the end
of the poem's reading,

Flirting with its fear, the crowd
shift in their chairs, coughing, □
their pensive eyes dart □
like cows before the slaughter.

Then, amid the applause, □
I dance, like shiva, before the flames
And amid a crowd of upheld hands,
I enter the abyss that draws us here, □
sitting around □

This axial loneliness the world turns upon.

John Tansey

The Artist...

The Artist
For Robinson Jeffers

In renunciation
of such anointment as poem
or any other spire less art form,
because every shape it takes, be it
word, paint, clay or by stone, play, ballet or song
defines itself by what venue it has chosen
and, thereby, can be nothing else...

So I proceed, expressionless,
without words
and in the first person, singularly,
through such expressive poetry

as a life, lived, simply for the moment...

John Tansey □ undated

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John Tansey

The Ashen Fallen Of Pompeii.....

I called you again, this morning

So that I might rise, hopeful,
as the sun, splashing,

Onto the tinted towns
and the bright vows of cities,

White-washed for new Fall semesters.

It is this anticipation;

This concusion of air;
a draft that draws us close

that says something good is approaching,
allowing me to jump, headlong, into the foam

and, coming up with a fish in my mouth,

Toss it back into the night, no the falling ash...

That seeps, like syrup, into our mouths,
smothering our moaning, limb-locked lust

and buries the world where it lay,
like the ashen falen of Pompeii

Who, in all one can ask,
~~Was~~ in the exhultation of life as they died...

John Tansey 8/24/04

John Tansey

The Buoyancy Of Hope...

When you are lost a sea, in its vast blueness.
No food, water or other help,
Hope is all that remains;
In assuming the shape of some sunken ship's lumber:

A rotted, buoyant timber,
That comes floating toward you upon the waves:
A monotonous, unending sameness,
Its mundane but dangerous salt-sea water,

It is in the shape of a ship's mast, this cross;
Like the lingering iron beams from the towers.

This crucifix that you cling onto,
Heave yourself over,
Wrap your arms around
And praying, like Noah,
That it take you to land

Or some such safe Harbor...

(9.9.7)

John Tansey

The Darkness About You

Darkness surrounds you

as spirals of smoke

wrapping you in myth

and the delineated danger

of the world.

But your proud defiance

breaks through with gestures

and chiseled features

in a dalliance with the heavy air.

Tilting your head

out of shadow in to the scant light

you flirt with a foreboding

a newport in your hand

you speak in a trepid voice

of your own mortality.

such a crumbling beauty

leaning forward in a red skirt

wisps of black tendrils shade your eyes

your frailty in your sensuality

but you are still the motherly moon

scared but proud

to hold up a starless sky

John Tansey

The Death Knell: I Love You...

The Death Knell: I love you

I

Splashing in the pool,
Sidling up to you,

Foolishly,
I say 'I love you';

The death knell.

I love you for what
you cannot love within yourself.

A saving grace you are unable to see in the mirror
I see there within you;

And, that which, I always want to be with;
You, mistaking compassion for weakness,

Laugh, 'I want to be the hunter,
And you are too easy prey.'

II

Then, with a splash of your eyes,
And a fleet foot, turning
You disappear
In a stirring swirl,
With your pooled reflection, just an Afterimage

As you swim away,
Your one true love drowning in its wake

of the backwash....

Dying and still wondering,
Could you have ever been the one

I searched so long for...

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John Tansey

The Ellipse Of The Year Has Turned...Part 4 Of 4

THE GALACTIC SPIRALS OF DEAD LEAVES □

IV

THE ELLIPSE OF THE YEAR HAS TURNED

It is Winter,

The ellipse of the year has turned, □
planets are on their way back□

The sun, having arced, spirals back
from its solstice,

Like a rubber band, snapped.

All balls fall back down to their gloves.

And the return of the Sun
Gives birth to a dozen religions.□

But here, at the convergence,
The center of it all, □

Where the red shift of stars, turning blue,
rush in upon us, □

With an asphyxiation: □

Like distant children in the park, □
their shouts, muffled by the wind,

Rising up as clouds, to rain back upon them, □

While mother's call them from the distance.

All sounds are swallowed up in the black holes□
of our mouths,

Where even Sunlight cannot escape, □
And Newton's mechanics in clocks breaks down.

Storm clouds, queue, to a funeral procession, □
Suddenly,
It grows dark, overcast and silent,

And with the last drawn in breath of twilight,
the universe contracts,

Like a collapsed lung
inhaling the last light of stars,

As an old man in a rented room, □□
expires alone.□

The present becomes past;
everything goes back, returning

To nature's defense of seashells, fennel seeds, □
and the fetal pose of embryos.

This time the effect precedes the cause,

As the slow condensation of space
bounds back into the big bang

Like the taut skin of a water bead.

And in the swirling eddy's of dead leaves□
the primeval shapes of circles, meanders and spirals,

I see the essential elements of stars,

The nut of all things

Go suddenly, silent,

As the world, like an acorn drops□
into the palm of a child....□

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John Tansey

The Galactic Spirals Of Dead Leaves....Ii Of Iv□

All the trees lay bare now;

□

Their limbs, haunched as old men,
huddled against the cold.

Watching flocks of geese, fleeing south,
receding through the seasons,

I see all things reverse direction.

The nebulous torpor of clouds,
swirling as galaxies, their spiral arms closing in

Around nothing,

Winter crouches in hibernation.

Wind, tide the moon and my mood, turning
through light years of reflection,
are like eddy's of water in the southern sphere,

Circling, backward, through the crowds,
to where loneliness becomes spatial.

And as the vacuum between strangers,

A child's spilled sack of marbles,
spreading across the floor,

Scatters us, like solitary constellations
into there spots of least potential...

John Tansey

The Galactic Spirals Of Dead Leaves...I Of Iv□

October is a gregarious month;
all things seeking shelter.□

Watching the tidal ebb of twilight□
drawing its last breath of birds,

I know winter is approaching; □

Reversing the spin of planets□
like baseballs, having arced since spring,

Gravity is returning, condensing, □
like clouds in my eyes.□

Twilight leaves the extremities□
as fingers, cold to the touch.

Mothers walk, clenching the air
children's voices cannot rise up over

Then, like a snow-globe shaken, □

The elements of summer are preserved, like Amber
in the crystal flakes of the first frost, falling....

John Tansey

The Galactic Spirals Of Dead Leaves...Part I

THE GALACTIC SPIRALS OF DEAD LEAVES □

□ I

OCTOBER IS A GREGARIOUS MONTH

October is a gregarious month;

all things seeking shelter.□

Watching the tidal ebb of twilight□
drawing its last breath of birds,

I know winter is approaching; □

Reversing the spin of planets□
like baseballs, having arced since spring,

Gravity is returning, condensing, □
like clouds in my eyes.□

Twilight leaves the extremities...□
fingers, cold to the touch.

Mothers walk, clenching the air
children's voices cannot rise over.

Then, like a snow-globe shaken, □

The elements of summer are preserved, like Amber
in the crystal flakes of the first frost, falling....

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The Gift...

A Gift for the Romantic 12

It is in the subtlety
And not the blunt insult,
The threat and not the onslaught;

The implied and not the explicit.

It is in the first gleaning,
remembered scents of Spring
And not the direct,

Overhead heat of Summer.

The autumnal dread
And not the dead of Winter;
The sweet dream of sleep

And not the bleak morning after.

When somewhere between the gift,
And it's crumpled paper wrapping,
Lie an infinity

Of finite things to be chosen:

But of a thousand choices
if I must choose one,
I would settle, instead,

For the choice and forego the choosing...

John Tansey 1.25 07

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John Tansey

The Gleaning Of The Romantic...

The Gleaning of the Romantic

It is in the subtlety
And not the blunt insult.
The threat and not the onslaught.
The implied and not the explicit.

It is in the first gleaning scent of Spring
And not the direct overhead heat of Summer.
The autumnal dread and not the dead of Winter.
The sweet dream of sleep and not the bleak mourning after.

It is in the thought and not the action;
And the moments between these extremes:
That you can alter your life, redeem your soul,
When somewhere between the gift,

And it's crumpled paper wrapping,
Lie an infinity of finite things that can be chosen:
But of a thousand ends if I must choose one,
I would settle for the choice, alone, and forego the choosing...

John Tansey Early in 08

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John Tansey

The Last Glimmer Of Twilight.....

Under the arc of a gull, echoing nothing,
I walk the park, □
watching the gathering squalls of starlings
as they flee toward the mouth of the sun.□
With the last glimmering twilight□
receding,
like the outgoing tide, □
Winter approaches, like a foreboding

Drawing the sweeping undertow of black birds
toward its encroaching darkness.□

Summer is folded away like clothes,
husks of insects fall from the sills, □
and every pause
fills with nervous chatter□
as people turn to whisper,

Of all things seeking closure.□
Gravity, returns□
with the weight of silence upon the tongue□
We pull at the cloak of winter□
and as barflies, lured by neon□

Swarm into taverns□
lighting wicks to burn wax, drink spirits□
and, fingering shadows on the walls,

Warm our hands over another's heart.

With a few well worn words, as tindersticks, □
we stoke the flames of conversation, □
into the warm art of intercourse, □
fondling, tenderly,
the discourse
of intimate thoughts with a private stranger.

Finally, snuffing words with a thumb at wicks end,
we whisper good night,

and, as plumes of smoke, billowing □
from our mouths□
We open the door and rise into the cold□

John Tansey

The Moon Mirrors Her.....

When the days action is done,
Right or wrong and evening,
Like a friend, comes lying next to me;
In corporeal form;
A much longed for lover
I am still lovelorn for.

In everyman's subconscious wish
Of being the held, swaddled
In bath towels, I embrace my limbs
Wrist bone to cheek;
It is I who pretends to belong to another
As I snugly pull the covers over.

As water seeks its own level along
The tide pools of a dry riverbed,
It is you the moon reflects, as a nude
I make visceral love to, then smiling

Sweetly delude myself to sleep.

John Tansey

The Organ Donor...

The Organ Donor

How do you pick yourself up and move on
After an intense, passionate love affair.

After you cut open your belly and
Pull pull the organs out, the entrails

And all that bleed. Yes, for you I was
An organ donor. And I placed them

In a Coptic urn at the foot of you and said,
"Look, this is all that I am, embrace it,

love it or despise it." And if it be despised,
the affair, doomed, how do you

scoop it up and sew it all back together again,
re-animate one's life like "Mary Shelley's"

lovelorn monster, for, after all, it iwas purely
by accident that we ever come together at all!

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John Tansey

The Paradox Of Poetry....The Inherent Limitations Of Words

Words,

smithed, with an inherent
inability
as tools, in their blunt edge,
kill with an intent
to punctuate
the shapeless thing
segregated,
to a towering babble of
words.

Words,

spoken, in a foreign broken
tongue,
tie language
in image, thriving
as islands
in a space of pauses
between,
the watered down phrases of
words.

Words,

without some incantation of image,
or mnemonics
of upwelled longing,
pronounce dead,
the ghost in the body of the poem
sieved,
through the white sheeted
cold clinical facts of
words.

Words,

which claim, with appendage,
the treasures of things

buried,
beneath the measure of a name,
denotes through their usage:
the paradox of poetry
posed with
such preconceived prejudices of
words.

John Tansey

The Secret...

For the poet, the philosopher
And the poor, tortured soul,
Seeking some answer
Long buried in the abandoned sand boxes
Of our forgotten childhood:
The plight of the "Human Dilemma".

The quest, as expressed in all Myths
To explain suffering:
The most profound ponderence
Into the deepest of despair,
Of the long, terrible silence of God;

Where found, the answer
In the lightest, most buoyant of levity
Of the fool and his laughter,

And the smile of the child, burying with his pale
The secret...

(9.29.7)

John Tansey

The Stillborn Poet Or What Never Was...

What would it suffer;

One more poet, more or less,
one more poem written, never read,
spoken, but never heard.

Whose daily existence would be affected?
by the persistence of one
to presume his own words, be heard as scripture,

And what it be for?

The temporal vanity of one;
That we can be something other
than what our parents always said
we would amount to?

What if a prolific, prophet or poet,
nearing the end of his life,
and having preserved, every word
on paper, deed or our lost oral lineage,
decided, to destroy it all....

Just to be an anonymous man in an ordinary grave,
whose spirit, like a big wind
loosed upon the world, to be inhaled by others;
when he becomes a mound of mindless ash.

How do we know that it has not
already happened, that the world
is less due to someone's anonymity?

Or, that God intervened and prevented
some birth altogether, Saying,
'After my son, Jesus, you will not have at another! '

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John Tansey

The Trinity Of Past, Present & Future...Surreal□

I will remember forever, this image□
of you, me and brandon□
walking the park in winter,
snow crunching beneath our feet.

□

A crisp, cold morning,
sun glinting off the ice, □
the wing of a gull, hung
like a white sheet in the wind.

Our voices bouncing, like fine china,
off the pristine drifts□
came back, younger, like children□
with the cracked fragments of the past.□

As I looked into the sun, its trinity□
of past, present and future,
I saw three tenses of time, □
converged in the light.□

Drifting in and out of the snow□
blinded by its whiteness.□
time lost all chronology
to the metaphor of dream.

□

Squinting my eyes□
beneath the visor of cupped hands,
I watched the silhouette of my child,
pull a sled to the top of the hill, □

The sun directly behind, □
his red curls like solar flares
spiraling into the sky, □
eclipsing the sun with a face, □

□

Which I swore was mine up there□
thirty years ago,
I, my dad, my wife, the mother, □
he divorced himself from.

Later, the day ended, □
it's degrees of sun fading, □
as the time-elapsed years □
of my whole life unfolding before me, □

Thirty years passed in that evening, □
driving by the park, children gone, □
swings squeaking, ghosts came creeping in
with the earth's mist beneath a full moon.□

At thirty-three, I became you, my son, □
your mother and I, my parents-
slipping into history, the course of events□
as foreseen, could not be undone.

Thirty years passed in that evening, □
driving by the park, children gone, □
swings squeaking, ghosts came creeping in
with the earth's mist beneath a full moon.□

At thirty-three, I became you, my son, □
your mother and I, my parents-
slipping into history, the course of events□
as foreseen, could not be undone.

John Tansey

The Universal Entropy.....

All tends to disorder.

I adapt to the decaying
Squalor that surrounds me

The sun goes down,
A light bulb blows,
I learn to see in the dark.

The heat's been off for weeks;
The cold is intergalactic...

I simply wear more clothes

My phone is cut off
I learn to converse with myself,
enfolding myself within my arms

Caressing my children
More intimately with words

As if I could write a wall around them
From the nothing I see coming...

John Tansey

There Were Angels In Harrison...Restored To Original

I lived beneath my children,
For a brief but harried time.

Yet, I knew solace that winter,
Knowing my boys were above me.

Running up the stairs, after school,
I could hear them for hours, through the walls,

At night, their muffled angelic voices
Would chase my nightmares away.

And when I fell to my knees, hopeless
they would descend like Angels
□
With broad white wings, calming me,
faithfully, I slept to the whispering whir of a fan...

And the God I prayed to was a boy
Who had a little brother he shared a cloud with.

And I, a broken man, was their charge

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John Tansey

Time Can Be The Most Brutal Of Captors...

Time can be the most brutal of captors.
Especially when the mind holds the keys.

Keeping the faucet dripping way into the night
is one way of saying you have a whole lifetime to endure.

A millenia ago we did not even know of time
Now we have innumerable ways of recording it.

These single moments were never meant
to be scrutinized for all eternity

Stretching it out way past the boundaries
of its natural longetivity. Keeping it alive longer

Like an animal in a cage fed just enough
so we do not let out memories die a noble death.

I pity the longetivity
of the Unknown Soldier's captivity

The infinite sentence of the
Pharaoh's in their tombs

To the photos of our own moments locked away
in shoeboxes and stored up high in closets.

To the photos of our own happy and sad times
locked away in shoeboxes and stored in closets

I think some natives believe it is
photography that steals your soul

John

Last edited by tanseman@; Today at 02: 40 PM. Reason: I reworked it somewhat...

John Tansey

To A Debutante On Her Eightieth Birthday...

Now old, joints arthritic,
Skin callused and sagging
Like weathered eaves, dirty
Finger nails bitten and broken.

The loud parties are over,
But the wine stays with me
And the hangovers linger
Longer than the sweetened memories

A stroke has left my right side numb
The muscles spasms and involuntary shaking
these nerve ending earthquakes
shatter what's left of my body

From the classic, choreographed grace
Of a young society girl,
Her hand, enticing a younger man
To kiss me when I wore a prettier face

Now, shamelessly, wearing clothes
I am too old for.
Walking into the bathroom,
I face the mirror.

And what remains.
Fumbling with my makeup,
I pick up a razor, and, slicing
my finger, unaware,

apply its ruby red gloss to my lips.

John Tansey

To Be Salacious With A Saint...

To be Salacious with a Saint...□

I want to be salacious with a saint.
Make love to an Ideal;

Consummate the idea with the flesh.

I want to be the body, in bed,
where a nun lies to sleep

and be the passion she embraces:

The orgasm of the celibate.□

The God she loves.

The faith she endures.

And to know the lust that her love permits.□

John T Tansey 4/07

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John Tansey

To Exist In Theory...

To Exist in Theory

To sense the "Human Dilemma" of Gandhi.□
To intuit the faithful resolve of Martyrs.□
To be humbled by the unshakable spirit of those,
Nursing the diseased and forgotten dying.□
To withstand the unbearable despair
Of Einstein, that though his theories could slow time,

They would not stop time from taking him,

But live to regret, the splitting of the atom, □
That gave birth to the death of millions.□

To feel the light, the ecstasy of Van Gogh, □
Before the Absinthe, the Mistral winds,

The ensuing dark night and mania that drove him mad.
To face the disillusion of Michelangelo, □
In his old age, to resolve that sculptures of God

Were better left, within the blocks □
Of unfinished marble that hid him, within

Or volunteer for the worlds' injury; □
dissuade a leaper from the ledge, □

If only, to prolong his agony,
Until the next ledge, it would be well intended.

John Tansey 4/22/07

□

John Tansey

To Suzy...

From morning unto night,
your day revolves around routine; □
Cycles, aspects of interaction.
Each phase, ascending
through different chores; □
You move, among
tight knit circles
of close friends, family and your sons.
Waxing and waning,
as the moon, herself,
in her orbit around the Earth, □
you show the same pleasant side
to everyone...

I, a lone meteor, a fading cinder,
streaking, in declining line, □
through the frictionless void.□
Can teach of the origin of stars; □
But am fated to travel straight: □
In the trajectory of an arrow through the dark□
from one end of space to the other
with everything to come already gone.
Look, over your shoulder,
just above the horizon:
For a brief, flirtatious moment,
I intrude into your life;
See the dark side of your face□
and am gone...

John Tansey

Universal Language

Speaking, gutturally, in the fractured
fragments of a foreign language,
a tongue unknown to her

She is come from another country.
Gesturing with her hands
between islands of broken English;

But in her hesitations are the silent
stutters of clarity;
using her body as language

I know what she is asking
between the atolls of words
are the oceans of sterling imagery.

John Tansey

Vanishing Point.....Down On Love

I

Everyone has a breaking point;
where you can no longer stem the tide
of emotion. And tears collide,
reluctantly, like condensation on glass
which you have to smash just to continue on...

If you can resign yourself to this sadness
that is your lifes' sentence:

That all life is longing
and hope is for the hopeless,
and reduce your expectations
to the mere sustenance of food and drink.

Then life turns a hollow defense
and you can, loveless, live alone...

II

But that revelation comes the moment after
the relief you thought you saw,
the probation you waited for,
that was nothing, but a momentary pleasure
of someone who has left you lonelier
than a barn owl, holed up, in a musty loft
some borrowed garret, a rented room
in a shoebox to sleep in...

John Tansey

Walking Away From You.....For Susan

In the black and blue
bruised bone of night
Its knob ends, gnawed at by stray dogs; fight
for the shank, and as a cane,
walk barefoot along the permafrost.

Illumined, by a full orange moon:
My torchlight in this dark pitch
Brightly discernible through the sticks.
The gravity of it, alone, pulls
every lonely soul toward it.

Millions of miles to go before the night
is over, will it be enough distance
to forget you, or the color of your hair?
Would time, alone, be enough to heal
my broken heart.

No, my broken body, since every living cell
is alive with the love of you...
and when the heart breaks,
break completely in two
like some delicate thing!

A solitary crow, a loner, just like I:
Both unsociable aberrations,
cawing in the arctic cold...

I must walk on,
Where all the millions of dead have walked
Following the moonlight
That white tunnel that all who came
back, said they saw;
But for me, it is a travelling back to the womb.

I come upon a creek and walk along its bank
Where the moon hangs out over the sea
holding water
And wading the night tide

Upto my waist, then my shoulders.
All along,
following the breast of the female mother moon.

Mother, do we ever reach our horizons?

The moon is a watery grave
I have gone under.
My body aches under the stress
I am under the abyss of the ocean floor.
The pressure per square inch is crushing
And if I let out my last breath,
the ocean will come into me
and like a baby, I will breathe water again!

Then I will grow gills, become a fish,
swimming in the primordial soup,
back, through the billions of years
into the stark, dark matter
which was the beginning of it all,
but dark matter is a carnivore,
consuming the universe and ourselves.

Billions of years later, the first Sun
would coalesce into the bright white light
of the first day and first night star of Bethlehem!

Yes, I have travelled far enough
and enough time has passed
to forget you...

John Tansey

John Tansey

Waltzing With The Past.....Part 1

Even when I was young, □
societies rising sun, □
waltzing the moon in ballrooms□
'til it's milk curdled under a yawning light.□

A terse firm tart, flirting curfews□
and groping life, I lusted to love□

with my most feminine feature ...□
the youthful smoothness of my fingers; □
long slender thimbles of nerve, □
upon which I spun a stable of men.□

Snapping my nails, they'd come
fumbling with lighters, cocktails

and shucked clamshells.□
Oh, with my blood red tips□
dipped in white gloves□
for the affairs of black tie, among others; □
I would stand, stroking□
the shaft of a champagne glass.□
Laughing amid clouds of smoke, big bands□
and tables of beef bones and banter.□

Hailing young suitors with a gesture, □
coily stroking my hair, I flirted with strangers□

and, as long-stemmed roses, soon□
rid my garden of such thorny lovers.□

John Tansey

Waltzing With The Past.....Pts 1&2

Even when I was young, □
societies rising sun,
□
waltzing the moon in ballrooms□
'til it's milk curdled under a yawning light.□
A terse firm tart, flirting curfews□
and groping life, I lusted to love
□
with my most feminine feature ...□
the youthful smoothness of my fingers; □
long slender thimbles of nerve, □
upon which I spun a stable of men.□
Snapping my nails, they'd come
fumbling with lighters, cocktails

and shucked clamshells.□
Oh, with my blood red tips□
dipped in white gloves□
for the affairs of black tie, among others; □
I would stand, stroking□
the shaft of a champagne glass.□
Laughing amid clouds of smoke, big bands□
and tables of beef bones and banter.
□
Hailing young suitors with a gesture, □
coily stroking my hair, I flirted with strangers□
and, as long-stemmed roses, soon□
rid my garden of such thorny lovers.
□

To a debutante on her eightieth birthday

II

Now old, joints arthritic,
Skin callused and sagging
Like weathered eaves, dirty
Finger nails bitten and broken.

The loud parties are over,
But the wine stays with me
And the hangovers linger
Longer than the sweetened memories

A stroke has left my right side numb
The muscles spasms and involuntary shaking
these nerve ending earthquakes
shatter what's left of my body

From the classic, choreographed grace
Of a young society girl,
Her hand, enticing a younger man
To kiss me when I wore a prettier face

Now, shamelessly, wearing clothes
I am too old for.
Walking into the bathroom,
I face the mirror.

And what remains,
fumbling with my makeup
I Pick up a razor, and slicing
my finger, unaware,

I apply its ruby red gloss to my lips

8/18/2002 John Thomas Tansey

John Tansey

Wanderer...

From room to room
with just toothbrush and picture frame,
like a traveling, door to door, salesman
who, in going everywhere,
belongs nowhere!

I, too, am homeless, a nomadic Bedouin
without hearth, child or woman's breast
to warm my heart by,
impart life's wounded wisdom to,
nor rest my weary head against...

John Tansey

Wasting Wishes On Stars...

When I think of us
Our once deep relationship;
It is as looking at a star'

Its bright light I see
Are but memories,
Billions of years into the past.

In truth,
I know not, if neither the stars
Nor we
Ever existed at all.

But still I gaze
Wondering if your wish upon a star
Was for another chance at our nebulous union,

Or just some quasi-quasar
Calamity of nature
To separate, and thus contribute
To the entropy of the dying heavens...

John Tansey

We Mythologize The Past...

We Mythologize the Past

We mythologize the past:

Fables spun from the onset of age
At its shrinking sphere of influence
And the changing, landscape since our youth;
The last time we looked or cared to.

Out of a longing, a nostalgia
To construe fact from failing memories,
And in the absence of any eyewitnesses;
Or sworn-in testimonies to the contrary.

I misconstrue and re-write my history as fiction;
Alter the facts of names, dates, places.
Romanticize the events,
Make mythic the mundane.

To tell a better story to our grandchildren.
After all, who can prove that it did not happen

in exactly the way that I choose to remember...

John Tansey 1979

John Tansey

Weddings And Funerals.....

Growing older, I abhor days
With names:

Saint Patty's day,
Valentines,
Or all Saints
And Birthdays

I don't want to remember
anymore
on the anniversaries
of Christmas
and New Years Day.

These are for the young
who have, yet,
to create their own memories;

But now, at my age, there are no more
Weddings to attend,
Just funerals...

John Tansey

When The Universe Collapses

One has lived long enough
when the world ends,
the universe collapses
and time, itself, reverses...
so that the past is all he wakes to each day

and the future is what he missed out on
yesterday.

John Tansey

Whittling Words...

Whittling Words□

Sitting, slumped in a chair,
On a wooden porch
Under the sun
That, moving slowly, like a brushfire
Across the hot afternoon,
Burns the underbrush, the dead leaves,
Of my depressive thoughts,
Leaving an open clearing.

With nothing done and nothing left to do!

I am absorbed by the moment
And open to each one trailing after: □
Echoes of the same one sound□
Come from the whittling of such words,
like a piece of wood;
Shavings, that fall to the ground
□
As so much crumpled pieces of paper.

It is in the shaping, the carving,
The very paring down of fat; □
That the sculpture, itself, disappears
And the essence of nothing is all that remains
In the palm of my red, raw, open hands:

This gift that I, humbly, give to you!

(06/10/07)

John Tansey

Words....And The Paradox Of Poetry

Words,
smithed, with an inherent
inability
as tools, in their blunt edge,
kill with an intent
to punctuate
the shapeless thing
segregated,
to a towering babble of
words.

Words,
spoken, in a foreign broken
tongue,
tie language
in image, thriving
as islands
in a space of pauses
between,
the watered down phrases of
words.

Words,
without some incantation of image,
or mnemonics
of upwelled longing,
pronounce dead,
the ghost in the body of the poem
sieved,
through the white sheeted
cold clinical facts of
words.

Words,
which claim, with appendage,
the treasures of things
buried,
beneath the measure of a name,
denotes through their usage:

the paradox of poetry
posed with
such preconceived prejudices of
words.

John Tansey

Writing For Closure...

Writing for Closure

Seeking closure
at the jotting down
of every open ended line,
Each poem I write
Defines the mood for the moment;
Read once, then tossed aside,
Like journal entries,
To be swept up and thrown out
With the Chinese takeout menus
And last week's Sales Circulars.

Much like the family photos
Taken, then pasted in albums
And shoved away
Into shoeboxes,
Out of reach top shelves,
Bottom junk drawers
Or the Black Hole of closets,
Where they are never to be seen, again...

9.24.81 John Tansey

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John Tansey

You Have Slept Too Long Through The Hour Of Your Youth...

You have slept too long through the hour
of your youth...

□

shake the cramp from your leg, □
the slump from your winter
and roll like that boy □
back through the years
over the damp morning grass.

Button up your collar,
go with a promise and a dollar
and breathe the aroma of memories
blown back from across the years...

its fresh cherub-cheeked flushness

And with a dream weaver,
sifting the remains of your life □
from the coming year.
greet the boy you were
with the man you, now, have become

John Tansey

Your Old Shirts.....

I have not, yet, recovered from the potent
Memories of family outings.

They peel like the anniversary
Of a loved one's departing.

On such occasions, it is the intimacy
Of other families

That defines the negative space
of our seperation.□

Living in the old neighborhood
I am haunted by ghosts.

And now that your gone, I
Wear your faults, I never forgave.

Like an old shirt of yours
Which warms me,

Still, with everything
I hated about you...

John Tansey

Zen, In Her Old Age...

Zen, In Her Old Age

For Mary

She gets up in the morning, like the sun, itself,
Her chores are many, her routine, the same. □
When she washes in the basin, she cares only for herself,
But the dogs go first, chasing birds,
As if to say, go away, we heard you, we are awake.

She puts on the coffee, though she has not drunk it in years.
□
She says hello to the neighbors, even when busy with others.
She phones to wake her daughter every
morning, though she is already awake, awaiting her call.
She checks in on her friends,
"They are getting to old to look after themselves", she says.
□
Arguing for the best price, she always thanks the saleslady twice.

Her eyes are a smile; Her mouth is a wink,
Her whole face is a revelation of what God most certainly thinks.
She has been intimate with heartbreak,
But has not spoken with happiness for years.
Her bedroom is filled with lace, picture framed portraits,

Afghans and the old, child school work from her daughters.

When day slips into dusk,
She slips into her robe, and relaxes
She turns on a lamplight as the sunsets and evening settles in next to her.
There is more ritual in evening than in day.
The subtle actions that praise the delineations of the day;

She watches a little too much T.V, but it's only on when she sleeps.

Alone with her memories. A family gathering
Of ghosts that get larger every year.
She seems hard, but it is this tough love

That attends more funerals than socials
However she can be overcome with melancholy

But even in tears, she is always a supreme lady.

She measures time by the season and life
By it's moments of misplaced tardy toe steps
laughing thru life. Her maternal wisdom is like the throne to a king
That has held mankind in her lap, forever.
From a pretty girl, tempting men throughout her youth,

To Now...Simply, Zen, in Her Old Age!

John Tansey