

Essay

try (trī) vt. tried, trying
. . . essay connotes a tentative
experimenting to test the feasi-
bility of something difficult

A selection of poems and new drawings

by *Michael Myshack*

The present publication of this material is the result of youthful impatience and insecurity, a need of the author to show that he has done something.

The drawings are only brief sketches meant to be a pleasant disruption to the monotony of the written word. The poems herein constitute one third of those extant intended for Laughing Water, a project expected to have 100-150 poems and 50 erotic drawings - a concept which became resolute in the spring of 1983. These poems span from the adolescently nebulous period of the autumn of 1979 to the most recent, of March, 1984.

(No French lessons have been taken, so mistakes are to be expected.)

April 2, 1984

Michael

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Artist born July 18, 1957 Duluth

approximate dimensions: 6'-5" x 200 lbs

verdict: ate too many potatoes



The Friend

Confusion surrounds me,
the only escape seems to be sleep.

Sleep is an old friend
protecting me in comfort,
a pillow for my sanity
buffering me from too much world.

Death in the Red Shoes

Hold me tight, my love,
Hold me tight.
Cradle my head
in your languorous arms
and make them hold me tight.
Let their strength conquer my fear,
their caring embrace bypass my pain.
Press me to your heaving breasts
that I may hear your life's beating-
speak not a word,
not even a whisper -
your heart says what I need to hear.
Hold me near.
Hold me tight,
until I am comforted.
Closer, draw me closer
to your bosom
that I may feel your warmth.
And, before you go,
before you say good night,
kiss me once;
not as you should
but kiss me as you feel.
And, before you take your leave,
dry the moist trails from my cheeks.

In the Wall

I hear your soft voice.
I hear a whisper.
You moan softly,
your sound is for me.
So quietly you speak to me
at the closing of summer,
so delicately you whisper,
so innocently you tempt me;
the setting sun urges you to speak.
I hear!
I'm listening . . .
Day after day I hear your gentle sound,
your sultry groans of invitation,
your whisper.
I know your gentle voice is speaking
in a tone I need to hear.
Won't you please leave your dark chasm -
your insulated, buffered world -
that I may hear you more clearly?
All I hear is untouchable.

Breakdown

Repetition
wearies my mind,
making life tiresome.

Reenactment
of a stagnant scene
leads me from you.

Redundancy
in daily motions
is forcing me away.

Tedious -
it's what we've become,
all that's left between us.
For whom do we continue
this exhausting façade?

Philosophy

Soft, fluttering whispers of madness
spiral through the canals
of my eager ears -
twisting, reverberating,
entering the dark vortex.
Transcription
to a comprehensive abstraction
occurs within.

A nauseating condensation
of repulsive mucus potential
clings
to the upper arch of the cranium,
dripping stertorously to my brain.
Convulsions of miscreant desires
and contorted intellectualizings
put forth,
create,
concede to a new philosophy
in attempted expungement . . .
to demystify the inexplicable
with even more obscuring shrouds
of symbolic verbal garbage
(abstruse rationale, excuse me).

Winter

Where is my will?

Where is my strength?

In the farthest reaches

of this stale winter

I seem to falter,

losing heart to brittle ice,

curling into a fetal ball

of unconsumate languor,

dying in dreams,

leaving all trace of youth.

Fear

Evellyn sits . . .
snow collects on the other side.
At night, snow can be seen,
wind apparent,
with sheer panes keeping it outside.
Don't come to close
or to try to touch it,
don't try to feel the cold.

Dark Myth

Something from Sumatra
opened the door.
A black swelter;
pungent dankness seeps through
for my imagination to grasp.
An idea?
A dream, perhaps?
The dark rustle of foreign leaves
and flowers
crawling with alien insects . . .
I don't think it's a person.
Maybe it's someone else's memory?

The more I look,
there's dark.
Dark shapings of allure.
Black locks . . .
out of the tenebrous confusion
gleam near-amber eyes . . .
a glimpse of resolution.
And pale, almost livid skin;
a sumptuous form,
a voluptuous form
one can find
and hold onto in the night.



Mourning

When the door closed
behind my departing friend
it seemed forever.

I think of us making love,
and bottles breaking below.

Dying on #4

To die, bleeding on the highway . . .
eyes and mouth, gaping death-stare,
as automobiles endlessly pass.
Carcass left as a trap
for crows to eat -
crows will die too;
forming a pile of corpses of the highway
. . . skeletons imbedded in the shoulder.

Liquid

Crystal illusion -
beyond the first step,
beyond the last step
(you'll get it!
you'll get it!)
. . . just don't ask me why;
it's only how I feel
(which should be enough).

I caught that smile!
(felt good didn't it)
I like the way you smile.

Magnification by teardrop . . . sunlight -
I'm not crying for sadness
(or if I am, I'm glad):
the world looks good through water;
the world lives on water.

Heat

On a summer night
I don't wish for winter,
but the lack of bugs . . .
and I need silence;
no more crickets,
no more frogs . . .
and I think the heat makes noise -
slowly roaring into my ears.

Did

Did Vincent try to kill himself
like this? in a swelter?
Was he surrounded by steam
when he cut off his ear?

Breathing is difficult,
the air is a hot pool . . .
mosquitoes swim to me,
floating, forming a wake
that ripples across the room,
splashing against my books.

Awakening

Calculating,
realizing
that the sun
will soon be setting
due west
(the bales and I
going in circles
on a hay wagon);
I find an intimation
of death.

Heathens in the Trees

Birds without feather bleed the sky.
The ditch grows without frogs,
swelling amongst roots and rocks,
selling its algae to fishermen,
All along the road
heathen are nailed to trees,
their hair is long and dirty,
their robes are of black wool -
begging for fire.
Sap mingles with blood,
draining the ditches dry,
freeing the snakes.

The moon hums an innocuous melody
while priests cry under the street lamp
and nuns run in circles,
naked but for their habits and pastimes.
Telephone wires grow taught from stress.
The trees give rhythm to the moon's song,
singing, ignoring heathen pleadings below,
with a chorus of mad brahmins
hanging from branches by their toes.
Wires snap free!
dancing in worm's twists,
strangling the begging heathens -

nailed to the burning ash -
forcing vowels from their erratic mouths,
songs gracing their orifices . . .
until Sodomy, a king sixty feet tall,
dances over the hill ahead,
in the middle of the road,
his legs bowed, his eyes green and rolling.
On either side, a train of quadraplegics
being towed for his amusement . . .
A carpet of red and black laughter
spreads from under his magnificent feet,
covering the land, choking heretics,
giving life to whores
and their resplendent cunts,
and to gigolos gaining know-how.

A small beggar laughs
and only a puddle remains in the road,
water bugs crawling about his toes,
and telephone wires
protruding from his ears, dancing.

A Cold Nose

Leaves on the ground.
Leaves in drying puddles.
Dead leaves.

Evacuating color;
the bared trees;
a gravel road;
dying grass.
But the sky is luminous -
bright streaks of violets and oranges,
above a darkening blue -
reflected in the lake.

A still atmosphere,
cold and silent.

Again, indirection;
with no strong sense of purpose
my nose grows cold
and my feet shuffle in the gravel.

Henry Miller

In silence, his grave -
we won't see the man in there -
seeing dead flowers.

Dreaming in pain, homeless, poor,
just laughing from the bottom.



Scripture

Songs in the bathtub,
the divine voice, are bubbles
rising through water.

A Kiss

Folding double,
cranberry lips pucker
to touch the wind,
exuberantly;
someone not here
breathes quietly
in expectation.
Someone lying near
asks what was said,
wanting explanation.

Chrysanthemums

He speaks of chrysanthemums under the moon,
of their wet nocturnal fragrance,
of their pale hue.

(only one should hear of this,
in fluid tones, kind and mysterious;
again my heart will miss)

I wonder about being caught in the rain,
then consider myself blessed.

Cold Rain

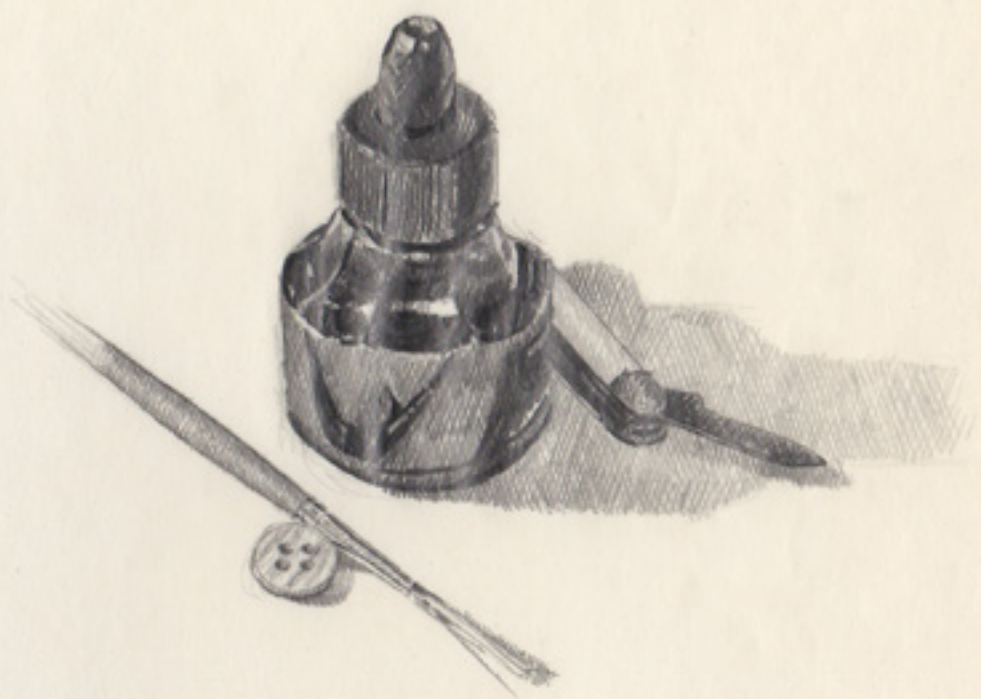
Slate waves roll in endless unison
through dancing skies, a slow movement
spiralling toward darkness' confusion
of delayed peace, silencing excitement;
softly, raindrops find a small beat,
with a rough counter-rhythm falling
from branches; days without heat,
African songs sleep with summer's stalling;
ignoble spirits descend from shrouds
in prosaic mime to a rain dirge,
shivering steps twisting behind clouds;
orange blade fading, the sun's last surge
dying with humility; falling into space,
it recedes, violet, ending without trace.

Memorial

Cold birds are hiding -
retarded grasses - new leaves
drag themselves from buds . . .
there has been no bright sunshine
through this life of moving clouds.

Standing

Drawing from dreams naked to confront
a mirror,
a fine erection lurching with embarrassment
from the somnolence of maturity, feeling
its own important strength begs only
selfishness
in a man, to have him press himself
undesired -
the same reflection, in light, its beauty
clearer
in the length and grandeur of its
excitement,
its softness known to receptive skin,
not seeing
pride or power apparent in stiff gentleness,
only its warm generosity is admired.



Old Men

Not in a plane crash,
nor in a war,
old men die,
each in his place,
at his moment,
almost silently . . .
being young, and dreaming,
I wonder what they lose.

Old men tell a thousand stories
as they see us with pride, with disgust,
through clouding eyes . . .
being young, and dreaming,
I wonder what they lose.

Grief

Every day, this is forgotten:
just too many sharp words,
and ignorant shrugs . . .
endless memories
gore into harshness with guilt,
now that it's too late . . .
yet, only for him, the humor man,
is it too late . . .
perhaps this inconsideration
is forever, always,
always making us hurt
to be together,
always making us turn
to some less demanding
. . . object.
We bear remorse unnecessarily,
as we stupidly create our guilt,
as we still mutter "if only".

In Their Kiss

Young lovers in the dark,
their clothing dies of shock
from the heated symphonies
their skins construct -
raving hairs stand erect in revolt
to the desperation of their bodies
to merge;
holding so tightly to become one.
Sometimes I see them in love,
feeding the trees and warming rocks
on the shore, dry rocks on the shore -
monstrous waves sing with them
their love song -
I can see them, even miles apart,
their hands warmly touch,
never to be separated.
I give them a rose of the deepest red
because they have me suffering with
happiness.
Cuddled young lovers give the world
the tears it can live on.
Quiet lovers make the song
we can all slowly dance to.
Life grows in their kiss.

Silence

Pale, in even drifts,
the sky turns
behind a blind old cedar,
spinning in misty buds,
with dangling creepers,
with hanging arms
coldly wrapping silence
into a frozen breath,
squelching a warm hand
that would reach out
to guide the sun.

Artist

God laughs, just outside the window,
mocking the words I see with smiling love
with gouges and ripples in fresh snow,
laughing at the words I breathe
in a morbid desperation to grow
into a pariah of the moribund world.

Admitting Weakness

I've found your words dispersed
through the flowers and leaves
of lilac and apple, sounds reversed
in censure amongst the trees.
I have recalled love's old dream
crying in the woods of winter,
still asking for trust unseen,
and faith unknown: I remember.
And again, the humid moments
of pleasure, their distant reception
and growth, fade in dreary silence
as new snow buries all question -
the answers you should know
lay brittle beneath the snow.



Deception?

Love, that dangerous gift
in my eye's voice, will ask
nothing in your time.
Its days hide beneath your curve.
Its chamber will not empty.
But soon, you will walk
from my beguiling pledges
to see the gift's truth.

Behind the Eyes

Screams in the portico,
drama in my ears:
but I can't be that loud,
for the world to hear me -
this winter, it's almost flat,
and the snow is almost silent,
and I'm a voiceless growth
turning white and blue-grey
behind the eyes.

Christmas, okay?

It's something we're trying to remember
. . . inside, my body has turned brittle
(it's Christmas, okay?)
with eaten shards scraping through
every breath and mislocated belch.

Behind the eyes
colors stir peacefully;
you'll find heaven
in small shapes
and porcelain nightmares,
trapped somewhere
within a living cunt
in wet happiness,

willing to pour forth
in the moonlight -
snow lies gloriously buried
in moonlight,
blazing moonlight.

New Haze

Eyes, too blind
to see years of snow
falling into their tearless depth,
looking toward a sky of falling stars,
of dropping snow,
of starless haze,
of floating salvation -
snow drifting between limbs,
blowing into cold nostrils -
eyelashes flicker under feet of snow,
trying to communicate their fear
to a terrorless sky
just below thought . . .
just below the eyes,
a mouth that knows itself,
a mouth with security
and an avid tongue.

Snow

Fall with quiet ease -
snow glides to its waiting bed
for the empty night.

Rest

Voyez-moi, je reste passif
et vie glisse par-dessus me
sans une point d'interrogation.

I can look into a mirror,
I can see everything there
describes itself beautifully.
But I can search the sky,
a dull mirror to reflect the city,
and I'm happy to feel my loss;
in the sky I'm invisible;
in the clouds my hopes vanish;
I melt with the snow,
sometime tomorrow morning,
to feed the naked sumac,
I'll seep into their frozen roots.

Voyez-moi, je reste passif
et vie glisse par-dessus me
sans un mot de pensée.

Artist born July 18, 1957 Duluth

50

approximate dimensions: 1.95m x 90kg

verdict . . . still eats too many potatoes



The artist: a native of Duluth (Gnesen);
an only child until 1974 (or '71);
architectural drafting at DAVTI, one year
at UMD's School of Fine Arts - primarily
self-taught (juvenile influence by
Edgar Alan Poe and Jim Morrison);
exhibit of drawings at the Tweed Museum
of Art, February, 1983.