

Poetry Series

Bryan Riley
- poems -

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Bryan Riley(September 2,1966)

I have lived on the North Shore of Massachusetts all my life. I began writing poetry at around age 14. I hope to enhance people's perspectives through my poetry. My books are available through (search word: Bryan P.T. Riley)
Through my writing, I am attempting to leave my mark on the world, however small that mark key be, and to leave something behind for future generations to enjoy.

3 A.M. Ramblings

At the eye of the storm there is no life,
save a sort of deathless silence

-it rages all around

The horizon is white and blue

That impassionate

>

sometimes

<

infuriating

she...

How many of us spend our days
chained to mediocrity?

A whisper of silence

-a whispered rush

-a feathered touch

-the whisper of traffic

in the still distance

Whispered voices

in the darkness

-hmmmm:

I love you

Strange majick

electric pulse

Neon: flashing

life, death, rebirth

Skirting the wastelands

-the dead time

Sickening white in the

pale of a candle's light

Silvered disc pulsates

with a borrowed fire

Stolen sequence

frozen kisses

Masterful cadence
shadow of self-
a fold in time

Here and gone.
Time to pray

Finally, silence

The beating of her heart-
my hand upon her breast.
The pulse at her throat
makes me want to drink...

Bryan Riley

A Fleeting Encounter

And there she was: pretty,
pushing a baby in a
stroller. Sensible skirt,
blouse, sensible flats-
faint scent of her
perfume on the light
breeze. Tattooed calf,
top of left foot, and
I thought, 'What if we
made eye contact? '
Fell in love? Suddenly,
inexplicably, inextricably
smitten-
Would we abandon our
separate lives, throw it
all away to join our
paths together, forsaking
all others? Would she
later realize it was all
a huge mistake and
walk away, just as she is
doing now? not having
glanced in my direction,
me completely in love
with the moment, left
with just the memory of
a tattooed calf, sensible
skirt, and the fading
scent of her perfume.

Bryan Riley

A Little Twist Of Perversion

Wrapped within a soft white
cotton blanket of denial
the child within the man
becoming less significant
and harder to engage

The dangerous scent
of her desire- I want her,
but I can't express my fear
at not being good enough
without sounding trite
or self-possessed

Passion-
the way Spanish men cry
'mami' to both their mothers
and their mistresses is its
own little twist of perversion
-the same way that the
blanket is really a
polyester blend

Bryan Riley

A Paradox

In her absence
I cried out for her-
while she was
gone I
couldn't go on

When she left
my heart
left with her

While she was
with me
I forgot to
tell her so.

Bryan Riley

A Subtle Insanity

Sound the gong;
strike the
funeral drum
In the casting
of stones and
the rattling of
bones, fences
are broken and
futures are sold

People will want a
piece of you for
whatever reasons
they conjure

'Let the death-man pass'

Tortured genius:
Madness is but a
hair's breadth away
Pain arrives in
crimson bands
Bright electric pulses
dim the vision

Crazy, but not so
anyone would notice

The procession winds
down, the mourners
take their leave
The drum resounds-
one last time
: it echoes across
the empty field
The stones are cast again
Still, nothing.
Just the labored
sound of breathing- soon

it, too, fades away...

Bryan Riley

Absolution

I told you before
about cities that
gleam and
machines that
dream
They dream well
but
have no conscience
If you wish
to be absolved,
you must
cry unclean

Wicked boys
and
dirty girls

You can live
your life in
a vacuum,
hoping nothing
ever changes,
but it does,
and the world
moves on,
and you wake up
one day to find
the world has
moved on,
and you're
left behind

-You're only as sick
as your secrets-

In the space
of a breath
In the flick
of a wrist

Vertical-
Horizontal-
You are
absolved.
Go forth.

Bryan Riley

Absolution (2)

No more pining for
tomorrows that dance,
always, just out of reach
at the corner of your mind.

No more sorrows for
the yesterdays that are
dead and gone,
faded into memory

You may sleep well,
knowing that the dead
still dance in paradise,
to the rhythm of the song
that holds your world in place.

I gave birth to the universe
with a heavy sigh, and tears
of joy to wash over you like
a sweet libation- these became
the rains that washed you clean

You may put aside your heavy
chains- leave them there,
there in the shadows.

My heavy fist, which once
bore destruction, is now
poised open above your
ailing brow- and so I shall
heal your soul with a
soft caress

Another whispered prayer
to lead you home...
You may rest easy upon
the words you have waited
all your life to hear:

I have come to
grant you
absolution

Bryan Riley

Accusations

Child's laughter
fills a narrow
strip of white
paper
while I look on
with mock
interest
making small
sounds of
approval and
commenting:
'That's wonderful! '
which is so far
from the truth
as to seem
almost ludicrous
in its proportion
except to
the mind of
a child, who
accepts with tender
heart even the
accusations of
his elders

Bryan Riley

Aftermath Of An Ice Storm

Peering, slit-eyed,
at the unwanted dawn.
The first touch is always
a startling revelation,
the second one generally
ignored as it, too, was
uncalled-for.

Singing like a velvet Elvis,
I spill my seed and
call it 'lovely'. Still,
I remain unfulfilled

Who can tell where the
machines have been?
When we can unwind,
twisting blind in the wind
The chimes ring softly
into the morning gray
A nuance or a catapult to
sling me forward into the day

Hide. Hush. Be still.
Something dread from the
cold distance approaches...

Bryan Riley

Airborne

We could have been anywhere,
not necessarily flying
from Boston to Charlotte;
the same scene i have viewed
a dozen times before....
I'm not convinced she
is a harlot- I guess we'll
find out soon enough
My seat just behind
the left-hand wing-
clouds motionless,
suspended in the sky like
insects in amber resin
sunlight glinting off
the left-hand wing

Below, the great press
of humankind- networks
of streets and structures
marring the landscape
And underneath it all
the earth lay naked
under the sun, the
roads and waterways
looking from up here
a lot like extensive
scarring that
criss-crossed
her breast.

Bryan Riley

An Artist(?)

I have NEVER been a painter.
I have never even attempted it.
I know, as surely as I know
my own name, that I
simply do NOT possess
that particular talent

Even now, my artist's mind
sees the vision, but my hand
can't duplicate with clever oils
the resentment the setting must
feel at my intrusion.

Not that I'm jealous-
(okay, maybe I'm a little jealous)
but I am also grateful that I can
at least SEE the beauty so many
others seem to miss.

So instead, with my pen and
several scraps of paper I'll create
a perfect haiku for your soul,
a symphony for your heart-
written in a minor key;
played lovingly, just for you,
in three-quarter time.

Bryan Riley

An Ending

The magic is gone
The song is done
I am as old as
the world is cold
and greyness and
shadow pursue me
wherever I go

All warmth has flown
The sun is down
I am not wooden,
nor made of stone
- a wounded animal,
flesh and bone;
and wrought of such,
I feel the pain of the
lance and the twist of
the blade once again

My life runs before me
and I, out of breath,
am trying to catch it
before it is spent

Too cold
 Too dark
 Too empty
 Too late...

And as the last light
fades from my eyes
and my time on this
earth is all but done...
I cry out to you from
the depths of my soul
but you hear me not,
for the magic is gone

Ancient

</>All the darkness
in the world
in icy bands
around my soul

Too old to
launch protests
Too tired to fight
-No wars to
wage when
raging against
nothing seems
a waste of time

Still, there's enough
 (anger)
left over (for me)
to choke the
life
out of (you)

Bryan Riley

Angel (Iii) : Fallen

Fallen angel at my feet
To what purpose have
you brought me here?
To look at this with
nothing more to fear
than your own shadow
dancing on the
winter sky
Try to remember the
time before the killing
wind lay waste this
barren shore

Before you run away
in shame, remember
why I've brought you
here- to hear the
chiming of the bell
which leads you solemn
to the fire
To hear these sermons
I would speak of
strong and virile,
soft and weak
Your spirit trembles at
my touch to find you are
beholden thus-
No tainted word lest
I retreat and find you
fallen at my feet.

Bryan Riley

Argentina

So what if the sky looks like
the ocean from here?
So what if I've never
been to New Orleans?

If the clouds want to fill
up the sky like revelers
filling up a party room,
I say let them come.
If they want to come late
to the party, let them come.

Maybe I DO want to
float through the air
like a feather lost from
the tail of a bird....

Maybe I'd like to sense a
change on the wind so
I can know which way
I'm supposed to run.

So what if I've never
been to Argentina?
Maybe I'd like to
go to Argentina.
I really think I'd
REALLY like to
go to Argentina....

Bryan Riley

Artists- 3 Different Kinds

1)

Change the circles
into squares, thus-
fitting the square peg
into the round hole
Trying desperately to
be obscure and
losing all meaning
until even the workings
of the inner mind
become a mystery.
Poisoning the lives of
others with INSANITY

2)

Crystal-clear as a dew-drop
Melodies freeing the
primest parts of existence
freeing thoughts to travel to
primordial soup! (isolation)
chamber/ becoming as
a protoplasm
Returning with lightning speed
to higher form. Hear the
perfect mingling of the
chimes with the winds
which caress them
Beauty, in all its forms, existing
-So!

3)

Sometimes I forget that
I have two hands, trying
to steer this ship with the
one, while completely
forsaking the other until,
tossed up on the shoals,
I look down, startled-
Oh! there it is...

Don't count me out,
for I'm no better, or
worse off, than you.

Bryan Riley

As Yet Untitled

</>Early rising, not with but just after the sun
Comfort of pleasure at the scent of coffee
cooking in the pot
pondering the man with fifty thousand poems-
Fifty Thousand!
When I was eighteen I thought thirty-five might
be the span of my years- Now ten years past,
I've got serious work to do. Fifty Thousand! and ten
years younger than me.
Counting up the little pills: fifty-one left, so there,
I did take one this morning
wondering how something so tiny can
save my life; but they do.... twice a day

Bryan Riley

Awake Without Coffee

I never knew before
how a thing could
be so painful yet
wrapped in so many
layers of cotton batting

(My head's gone numb)

as quitting sleep
cold turkey
without the
methadone of
caffeine

Bryan Riley

Belfast (3 From Maine)

In and
out of the
artists' shops
ships at
rest in
the sleepy
northern bay

Rhythm of footsteps
muted on the
summer streets

Sudden cool
in the
bookshop- the
musty scent of
a rare find-

cooling our heels
at the water's edge,
we count our
trinkets and
treasures before
moving on

Bryan Riley

Blades

There- a universe:
Don't blink.
You'll miss it.
A blade of grass that
contains a monument;
here and now,
and the tree of life again
Go ahead.
Take a bite.
Don't be afraid.
It is your own world
which you have made

On beds of roses
she was laid.
The dead looked on
in solemnity
She could not feel
their enmity.
She lived in that
other world, the
monumental, (the)
here and now

You and I-
Blade of grass

Bryan Riley

Cast-Off

</>Discarded,
like an ugly
piece of furniture
collecting cobwebs
in an attic room

Do anyone's
wishes echo
my desires?

The right to
use my voice,
to speak my
heart, my mind

Or to simply
collect dust, as
should also
be my right

Draw energy
to myself
find my voice,
and the courage
to speak my heart

Bryan Riley

Censure

Solitude:

To be solitary,
though not
necessarily alone,
in one's 'oneness'
That was how
she found me;
warm and glowing
like a candle.

And she knew
which parts of me
to feed, and they
were 'well-fed'
And bleeding out
all the bad, so
that my demons
were properly
exorcised.

And then,
trivializing every
word I had
ever heard,
so hard I had to
close my mind.

And she, like an
idea I once had
which, once spoken
aloud, ceased
to exist...

Bryan Riley

Charade

Charade
Masquerade
Parade about in
Nylon-stockinged
stillness
Fill/
this empty space
Chase/
the early morning light
Fight/
to find you
Unwind this
eggshell-thin philosophy
Prophecy. Heresy.
Snap back to reality
spirit-world sodality
a hornet's nest
There's a forest
of fishnet growing
in my shower stall
Call out to/
the dying sun
The night has won
the daily battle
Asleep by the sound
of the stars
whispering:
to the darkened moon
Awake to venture
to the task.
Put on a mask and
play charade
Now/
come and dance
the masquerade

Bryan Riley

Circumvention

I don't feel badly
about losing-
I've lost to you before
So don't feel as though
you have to even
up the score

You won't believe where
I just found myself-
up on a shelf, but
hardly seen. I'd sort of
gotten wedged between
your camera and your
lipstick case, but now
I've come back to erase
that look of triumph
from your face

Now-
Trace a shadow
upon the earth
Give birth to several
'good' ideas. In tears
return to conception point;
with herbs and oils I'll anoint

Your body and your temperament
The foolish charge
which you invent.
And spent, lie down
atop the trash
to burn into a piece of ash
I beg to wish for you to stay,
but am left to
watch you drift away.

Bryan Riley

City Scene

Slow-moving
traffic winds
through fetid
trash-lined
streets

Sodium arc
lamps pale
down on
slick
sidewalk tar

A shadow or
imagined
breathing of
a figure
drawing near

A sharp quick
staccato-
the footsteps
of fear

Bryan Riley

Conveyor Of Souls

Conveyor of
souls
Purveyor of
truths
: casts no
shadow
-Come gather
'round to hear
the tale:
Undaunted
youth knows
no boundaries

: Beauty, captured
under glass to
fight for breath;
to die a
fluttering death

...To cast no
shadow in
the full of
the moon...

Bryan Riley

Corner Cafe

One age dies, while
another gives in.
Our home is a
movie paradise-
a garden of sin

A fairytale of old
we live, while the
new ones are
yet unborn

In the little cafe
where the
writers meet.
We gather there
and call ourselves
dispossessed.

We sip our cappuccinos
with our quarters and
pennies lovingly spread
out on the table-
At least,
the world loves us,
and we are free?

Bryan Riley

Diamond Dance

We used to dance
the power dance
but now we play
political games.
And love, o love
where hast thou
gone?
Drifted away
upon the waves.
Not a chance
had romance
Now we spin
the hunger dance.
I rise like a specter
from the ocean floor
to watch the moonlight
dance upon the waves-
then cast up softly,
'pon the shore.
We used to dance
the song of love-
a ballad which
we sing no more:
and cast up gently
'pon the shore.
I'm grasping diamonds
in my hand
for one brief instant
before they are turned
into grains of sand...
We used to dance
the diamond dance

Bryan Riley

Discerning Dogs

Short roadtrip into town-
After a long, dry winter;
got to purchase fuel
for the engines
(you'll know what I mean)

The new bookstore-
crisp, fresh; not musty
like Belfast; found a
treasure. Uncovered
the fuel. It's always done
by digging.

Leaving after a fashion,
we came across a
couple walking a very
large herding dog; a
Cornish Giganticus Humongus,
or something like that
My wife commented:
'You could see this one
coming from a distance'
(meaning the dog)

The woman laughed
and said: 'This is one
of his (the dog's)
favorite stores'
(the book store)
I remember thinking:
'That's funny. I didn't know
dogs were discerning'

Bryan Riley

Dog Lost In A Wood

We took Charlie for a
hike in the woods.
The trail was well-marked
so we let him off his leash.
There was no one around
to talk us out of it...

It all went well until
halfway through when
Charlie suddenly
disappeared.

We whistled and called,
whistled and called,
always fearing the worst.

He was found a short time
later, in the company of
an aging hippie couple and
their children- he was smoking a
long cigarette in a plastic holder,
listening to the Grateful Dead,
possibly smelling faintly of
marijuana.

Bryan Riley

Eclipse

Once I had
the healing warmth
of the moon
but it was blocked
out by the
shadow of the
sun

Tried once for a
piece of pride
but lost it when
the rabbit died

Once upon a time
I wanted to find
my peace of mind,
but never got
around to it

Had a lifeline
to hold onto,
but mouse
chewed
through it.

Bryan Riley

Excerpt From 'The Long Continuum'

Living in the halls of the dead;
mouth and eyes filling with sand-
Cries and pleas for help go unheard
as birds of night with razored talons
rip through my being with
meticulous precision

Seeing and unseen.
Being and unacknowledged.
Referred to briefly, then disavowed.
Entering through silent passageways.
Slipping into un-peopled pathways:
Ever alone and silent she creeps.
Filtering, persistently,
down through the mind

A footfall, a shadow,
a fleeting moment are
all she needs
to gain entrance.
And when she's in,
she's in the thick:

Lower they sink-
she can't be shaken.
Slower they fall/
Awaken demons,
darkness, all-
Everything fey and fallow
belongs to her-
She says:

Aqui esta
mi corazon-
Tomalo!

Bryan Riley

Faceless Garden

Faceless garden
needs the sun
Nameless widow's
come undone
Eyeless stranger
at the door
Shameless
winter-breeding
whore
Heedless boy who
walks alone in
empty fields are
fraught with stone
Tactless warrior
will win
Tasteless lover
show you in
Endless winter
time to run
Dying garden
needs the sun

Bryan Riley

Feast Of Fools

I need some salt
to fill my wounds
In tune with every-
thing I've seen
Machine-like
rattle pitch and roll
Some of the parts
make up a wholly
different whole
Take a number
Feel the shame
A teacup filled
with drops of rain
To stop to try
to get across
An endless waste
in which to die
In winding down,
to swim or drown
This sleepy
artificial town
Weave a color
Stand in line
A feast of fools
'pon which they dine

Bryan Riley

Fields

Fields of
stars
Fields of
green
The moon
reflects
the light
of the sun

There is
no one there
no man
the moon
hangs vacant as
a broken spoon

The shiny
black obelisk
points at
the night
like a long,
accusing
finger

Bryan Riley

Flags

So what if I stole your thought?
It's not like its never been
done before; it's not like you
can't think up another one
'Borrow' is a better term; I
prefer that to the notion that
I may just have taken your
last-ever synapse

That's what we do- stealing
little pieces of each other
melding this, discarding that-
seeking to become one perfect
creature through our symbiosis

A flag of distress, or whatever you said-
But I will ride forth in a proverbial
blaze of glory, their blood still
drying on my hands, bearing a
flag not of triumph, or symbiosis,
or surrender,
but of annihilation

Bryan Riley

Flight Of Angels

Stillness and untroubled sleep
lend comfort to this dreaming face
An angel's warm unearthly sigh
would intercede my fall from grace
And chasing spirits from the room
with artificial torch held high
where shadows live within the depths
of sorrow in her pain-filled eye

Devils come to intervene and
give away the time I bide
His wicked mistress runs away
as he attempts to rest beside
The gentle rain would wash away
the memory she left behind
If angels came to comfort him,
what other evils would they find?
And shadows flow and spirits shriek
where demons dare not tread at night
To chase all of this blue away or
cover them with sheets of white

His sorrow lurks in corners, taking
up the vagrant shadows' flight
and brightened with a blinding glow:
the shattered sacrificial light

Bryan Riley

For God And Country

It was all he wanted, all he dreamt of,
since he was a little boy-
the chance to serve, to give back
to the country he loved so much.
It made his mother proud; her only
child, her son, walking his
destined path.

(a host of angels to light your path)

They discovered he had a
physical 'condition'- this could
not be allowed. Only perfect
machines may go and die
in far-off fields.
So he was sent away- back to
a world that held no place for him.

(it was all he ever wanted)

(just to serve, that's all)

He wandered, lost, as best
he could, cursing the body that
had betrayed him; unable to
happened?)
escape the prison of his tortured
thoughts. It was all he ever wanted-
for God and Country.
Without it he was just a
hollow shell, and finally THAT
was just too much to bear.

(all he wanted)

(where was God when all this

(I was. I am, beside you always)

(just to serve)

Today a mother numb,
uncomprehending,
struggles with a
thousand 'Why's'

(why have you abandoned me?)

Yesterday,
a marine died of
a broken heart.

(I am with you always)

(for God and Country)

April 15th,2015

Bryan Riley

Fountain Of Youth

The Fountain of Youth
was never a thing-
it was an idea;
the idea that
our deeds would
be remembered
long after
our passing

so that even we,
princes of the
peasant class,
could achieve
(at least)
SOME small
measure of
immortality

Bryan Riley

God Hiccaped

God hiccuped, and
a universe was born.

When i was just a
boy, I was already
as old as autumn;
my laughter disguised
the sorrow I bore
at the state of the
world's affairs.

Now, stepping
towards the
threshold of the
true autumn of
my life, I am
merely satisfied
to scratch my
mark upon the
cave wall for
anyone to find-

When God paused
to take a breath, the
universe imploded

Bryan Riley

Gone As-

Before we were sunset,
what were we then?
Do the shadows really
exist before the dawn?
Before we were demons,
did we have a host of
angels to light our paths?
Either hell's a prison or
a fool's paradise

Another midnight
come and gone-
So farewell blue sky;
another lover is
calling me home

Fix'd upon a golden circle
The light burns the darkness
from his sleep. In the final
blackness before the dawn,
when icy fingers of fear wrap
a slipknot around the heart,
clinging to the sorrow;
grasping at the tattered
shreds of a fading dream;

Hastening toward one
or the other when
either would do
just as well.

Bryan Riley

Green In High Summer

'There's a storm coming, ' he said.
'Just a passing front, ' I replied.
'Nothing to it. Shouldn't last long.'
'Anything, ' he chuckled, 'to keep the
lawn before it burns out.'

I knew what he meant.
We spoke in a common tongue;
the language of our ancestors,
the language of earth-
the same dirt from which we
were both sprung, from which we
drew our commonality.

I knew EXACTLY what he meant-
death is inevitable.
It doesn't matter if you
burn out or fade away, and
only the wealthy can afford
green in high summer.

Bryan Riley

Heaven Knows

One eye open
fixed upon the dawn
It is not for me to
say when I would
like the night to
unleash the day
or when I would
wish the sun to
break free of the
clouds, to send
glorious beams and
angels down, and
fetch me a stairway,
that I may find my
way to heaven

Somebody lied-
you cannot buy
your way in-
It's paid for with
pain and trial and
miles of painted
smiles
Temptation has
always been
easy for me...
I'm searching for
heaven, but heaven
knows the road is
long, and I fear
the devil is putting
up detour signs

The sun breaks through
and his rays warm me
here, where I fear
I have fallen- again
and fetch me a ladder,
so that I may climb

up to heaven...

Bryan Riley

Hence Goes The Impaler

I followed you for
a million years;
a pursuit that began
long before the gods
even walked the earth

It was always the
rumors- the destruction
and the bodies piled high
that led me ever to the
places you had only
just departed....
sometimes a mere
instant too late-

Then, after millenia,
I finally caught up and
then I saw you-
dragging your light through
the sullen sky
the madness of your laughter
echoed through the trees as
you rushed past, raging into
the silence of oblivion

Bryan Riley

Hero

A comic-book existence
Your life. All
hard lines and
vibrant colors

Skillfully drawn,
brilliantly executed.
No muted, pastel offerings
for you- you are:
fully three-dimensional

Colors so bright it hurts
the back of the eyes
to look upon them.

You applied for the job of
Saving Our Lives-
and why not?
Just look at you:
supremely perfect in
every way.

Unfortunately, I'm afraid
that just won't do-
no, not at all- not here.

You see, around here we
prefer our superheroes-

-flawed.

Bryan Riley

Hey Oblivion

Hey, tranquility-
I haven't seen you
around here
for awhile

Hey conformity-
I have to admit it's
really good to
see you smile

Hey there, unity-
I have to think
another drink would
make me love you more

Hey, ignominy-
I guess you know I
have to show you how to
even up the score

Hey there, suicide-
Just like the last, we're
just like ghosts from the past-
just twisting in the wind

Hey, transparency-
I didn't see you come in-
I've been busy out
looking for a friend

Hello, addiction-
come closer- let me feel you
sliding sweetly through my
veins and into my brain

-Hey, oblivion...

Bryan Riley

His Story

Love your mother
the earth!
She's the only one
who's ever truly
loved you, brother,
since your birth

'While others leave or
simply fade away,
if you ask me well
your friend until the
end of time I'll stay'

'Give us your
first-born child'

: The wild-eyed
virgin pleads +
cries, misunderstanding;
asking questions w/
her eyes

History repeats itself,
on much larger scales

Ask no questions

Seek no answers

Ignorance is
far better than
baleful truth

Execution-camp
Junkie
line up for
the slaughter

Who's next?

'Come here, boy.
Watcher lookin' at? '
(to the others-)
'Throw him in
the lions' den'

(scream fades away)

Bryan Riley

Holding My Breath At 5 Am

</>Holding my breath,
I put the cream
in my coffee...
drop by drop so
I can watch it swirl
into the shapes
which call me from
my half-baked reverie

The wind through the trees
tells a tale, like the
clacking of bones in a
pouch made of
animal skin

In the early morning hours,
the time of no shadows,
I'm awake before the dawn,
worrying about essential oils
and their possible contribution
to my well-being:
I mean, are they? Really?

-Not intrepid enough to
try on new flavors
: I'm still waiting for
the next exhale...

Bryan Riley

Horse Crossing

Look out
the horse crossing-
Damn!
an accident.
3 cars
2 horses
and their riders

Call an ambulance.
(Too late)
Call a coroner
or a vet

The fool by the
side of the road
saw the thing:
Ask him questions.

Bryan Riley

House On Fire

House on fire
Flames filling
every room,
painting windows
with dancing
images of demons

Woman trapped
helpless, caught
within the blaze
She can't be saved

Her blackened corpse
will be shown in
films to warn
children against
the dangers of
playing with
matches

....Shock Therapy

Bryan Riley

Limeade And Beergrass (A Surreal Poem)

There's nothing like a good
punch in the head or a swift
kick in the backside to
help you understand where
you're not wanted

Sipping limeade and beergrass,
i watched your head explode
as you tried to absorb the concept

Pestilence overtakes vanity as
eyeballs blistering against
the unforgiving sun

Mouth-jockeys jockeying for
the sacred position

She's a big fan of
the coffin freezer

Bryan Riley

Limestone Defeat (A Surreal Poem)

Breathe songs of apparition
into the ears of cave-dwelling
rodentia; nothing fierce as
neanderthal mouse

Hard as the diamond that
broke the heart of glass.
We play in the citrus hollow;
the limestone defeat

Snakes will come up and
eat you slowly as you gnaw
on the soft marrow-bone of
wisdom is the key to ultimate
closure of censorship

Carnal desires take the
place of windswept fantasy
and the bees that wander
through the violation of flowers
sleep well through the long
dark winter

Bryan Riley

Loss Of Faith

A man without a purpose
is like a quest without an end
-useless.

Like the lion at the
gate of the palace,
I've lost my courage.

Can faith be restored
once it's gone?

it's- hopeless...

The squeaking of the wheel
is driving me mad.

Slow descent into-
what?
Obscurity is the
greatest darkness;
walking anonymous through
the world, never knowing
your fellows, or they you

Trapped-
like an ant under a
mean kid's magnifying glass

I want so much to get away,
but I'm afraid I can
no longer feel my legs...

Bryan Riley

Love The Machine

Observe the motion
of the machine
feel the liquid
church fold itself
around you
As a child in the
placental fluid
warm comfort/
a cleansing
contrition

Feel the motion
of the machine
rhythm pulsing
through the veins
drains the mind
of conscious thought
plunges into the
realm of dreams
and
who will love
the machine?

Bryan Riley

Man Inside

There's a
demon lives
inside my
head that
wants to
come and
shake you
down

There's a
little man
inside of me-
He'd like
to come
out and
say hello

Say
hello....

Bryan Riley

Melancholia

Cry
the keening cry
and weeping woman
weep
The time has not
yet come for
sleep
Hung, as the
moon is hung upon
the pale blue sky
Wander the world to
desecrate the ancient
places with laughter
and games. (A handful
of friends drift away)
As the sands within
these earthen hands
is loosed back down
upon the ground
The only sound-
the distant boom of
thunder over, underneath
that space of peace
In time will find
to call my own
or someplace else
which I call 'home'
In visions when
I dream alone

Bryan Riley

Melancholy Baby

I've no need to write it down.
no record of our thoughts or deeds;
no need to speak, to share my
thoughts, feelings, perceptions

Summer's almost here, on the other side of
this lingering winter we thought would
hold us into her forever; the returning of
the cold that almost killed the flowers, and
spring ought to be a
shorter season than usual.

No color or warmth to hold you near.
Feeling that life is pouring down on me,
filling me up and drowning my sensibility.

I can't breathe- I don't want to think,
and I CERTAINLY don't want to
talk about it.

This is the last notebook
my mother gave me.

Sleep- it's both too early and too late.
The sun invades every corner of
my dwelling- sleep just won't come, not now.

My soul is weary. I breathe in the silence,
then breathe out more of the same.
Nothing exists now except the warmth of
the sunlight caressing my face, the
strains of 'Melancholy Baby' repeating
softly inside my head

Bryan Riley

Minor Progressions

The sonata in
its truest form-
moonlight

Minor progressions
mirror
certain periods
in our lives:

Depression
Regression

Trying to hide
the pain of
loss inside:

We hide
instead
within the
music we
love

Bryan Riley

Mommy Said

Mommy said to
cut you into
little tiny pieces
She said I'd
better find
your weakness

I open my mouth
to criticize
but there's a
certain sadness
in your eyes

I guess I'd
better apologize....

Bryan Riley

Mother Nature Took A Break

The goddess
let her guard
down for
just a moment.

The world
breathed a
deep sigh
of relief,

but THEN....

Bryan Riley

Mouse Chewed Through It (Follow-Up To 'Eclipse')

Mouse chewed through
my Swiss-cheese mind
another tale there
to unwind
The gentle ticking
of my heart
and cold enough to
make a start
Running still,
for short of breath
Turn down to trace
untimely death

Spinning like a
cyclone, fall
and weak enough
to scrape and crawl
The worldly cause
A worthy pause
A moment's grace
before I fall

Ten years gone...
You're still the one.
Drunken stumbling
question to which
I have no answer

-whassamattah?

Cat got yer tongue

Bryan Riley

Murder Scene

Implements of a Murder:

The smoking gun,
the silken rope, and
other cliches

Watching a play
in which murder is
the motive for
carrying on w/
all manner of
bad behavior

A dinner party
where red wine is
served in crystal
glasses- light
caught within the
reddened spheres,
Casting the color
of the wine in
wide ovals
on the floor

The wine appearing
later in the part of
Bloodstains on the Carpet:
justifying its existence as
'Incriminating Evidence'

Bryan Riley

My Cousin (?) The Lobster

After I had contemplated
all the possible delights
of the internet garden,
searching for things I would
have no later use for, I
reflected for awhile on the
strangeness of the
previous night's events-

In my dream it was the
lobster, hunched on the
beach, singing a haunting
song about his homeland,
waving his already-manacled
claws in three-quarter time
at the incoming tide- He was
turning red; perhaps from
the sun, perhaps from an instinctive
memory of the thousands of his
brethren marching into thousands
of pots of boiling water before
him- maybe it was anger

It is believed, according to
some, that lobsters can feel
pain- that lobster biology is
similar to human biology.
But can they feel angst?
The pining quality of the lobster's
song would seem to suggest it.

And so the lobster, perhaps
yearning back toward the
cretaceous, that time long
before the boiling pots, is
just a smaller version of
myself, my own shackled hands
hovering just above the
empty page, preparing to

write a sonnet the
world will never hear.

Bryan Riley

My Face In The Mirror

Most days, it's just a cursory glance
-face covered in shaving cream-
the morning routine; a quick check to
make sure I didn't miss a spot- the press
of the day urging me forward- no time for
reflection, as it were.

The person inside feels the same as ever,
frozen back in the past at some indeterminate
age (maybe 18 or 20) certainly NOT
this present one.

Today, as I looked at my face,
really studied it, in the mirror,
I could see how the years had piled up.
As I looked closer I could see, in the reflected eyes,
the person inside, looking back at me with
the same level of bewilderment I was feeling-

just before we asked each other:

'Who the hell are YOU? '

Bryan Riley

My Sorrow

I buried it there, in the soft sand
by the front stairway. The sugar ants
should have been angry, but they
didn't seem to mind. The digging
was the hardest part, but it wasn't
so difficult that it couldn't be
managed with a little bit of industry.

And once it was well-placed, I
pushed it down with my thumb, the
way a giant might push down a
mountain to create a fertile valley-
and then I covered it up, and the earth
above and around it looked much the
same as it had before, except a little
darker than its immediate surroundings.

I wondered, as I looked upon its
resting place, if it would take root and
grow, filling my front walk, and eventually
my life, with its towering shadow. But no-
gone is gone, and buried is forever. Maybe
it will break down and change, giving
sustenance to other creatures, which in
turn will change and grow into things of
incomprehensible beauty. That is my hope-
that this thing I have buried will bring some
good back into the world- this thing I have
put aside- this thing I no longer need-
my sorrow.

Bryan Riley

New Born

Shoot
Shoot from the hip
The kickoff
The big finish
Can't miss
this time
Pantomime
One black glove
closing 'round
the throat of
humanity-
Insanity,
pretenders all,
we fall
from grace
our faces scarred
and
newly torn
Newly born,
we cry
like infants,
misunderstanding
everything

Bryan Riley

No Road Home

Just as the moon
caressed the sky-
Just as, just
before the dawn
I heard your song,
and for want of
joining in I found
myself, instead,
weeping at
your bedside.
If it doesn't rain
by sundown, I'm
going to have to
water the
cemetery flowers.
And God, what have
we done with the
space in-between?
-touching just enough
lives to prolong our
slide into obscurity-
I assure you,
while I remain, you
will not be forgotten.

Our hope exists
within the words,
and the means to
give them form.
When all else
takes flight, I will
be there....
Try to move toward
the light, but the
light tells lies by
casting strange
shadows across
the land-
never knowing

whom to trust; it's
impossible to
let go when you
can't even
trust yourself.
Try to mourn, but
all is emptiness
and no solace-
no road home.

Bryan Riley

October Fires

Gazing out upon the world
that is my kingdom
Leaves turning;
colors- springing up like
little fires here, there

A riot of color
a forest of gemstones
Ruby, garnet, topaz
mingle with the
emerald backdrop
of evergreens

A beautiful Indian Summer day-
or is it Native American or
Indigenous People's Summer?
Damn Columbus! Why did he
have to be so dead-wrong?

The mist steals in to
shroud the spectacle

Falling asleep for
just a moment- then waking
to find the world has gone
brown and grey and
October's fires have
given over to
November rain

Bryan Riley

Of Empires

In wisdom alone
is there room
for infinite
understanding.
Our ears are
blocked
our eyes are
veiled
our minds
prisons

Listen, I
should have
told you
of empires
and everything
we've lost.

Now look...
The entire universe
is stretched out
at our feet
and we don't even
have the sense
to negotiate
its passage

Bryan Riley

Of Things

Endless days-
the touch of your hand
the sweetness of your kiss
the sound of laughter
behind every word
you said
My empty bed;
the reaching out
the bitterness of my cup
as I try to wash the
memory of you from
my aching head
Moonlit nights-
your warm embrace
the softness of your skin
that gleam in your eye
as you spoke to me
'of things'
My frozen heart
the tears all spent
Trying to heal the wounds
I've given to both of us
Remembering the last
words you said to me...
DO you think of me often?

Bryan Riley

Once

Once a part of me
now gone
For once the
will to carry on
Once for nothing
left to do is
once too much...
this one's for you

Twice for once
would then suffice
for once to melt
this heart of ice
Two times then
for heart of stone
and three to build
a love alone

Three times once
is only three
for once is all
you'll ever be
For twice
the wind that
stops to sigh
and once for
every time I die

Not once for
all you've
put me through
is once too much...
for even you.

Bryan Riley

Other Dreams

I had them all-
the dreams.
the same ones
everyone has...

The pristine meadow
transformed into
something sinister

the Chase- being
pursued by something
that could cause
sudden blindness just by
turning around and
looking upon its face.

my Fears, manifest-
I understand how it works

Then there was the other-
the dream we shared,
steeped in reality;
so beautiful it made me cry

Changed forever
for the worse made grotesque and too
terrible to ponder
on the day you
turned into something
less than human

Bryan Riley

Picnic In The Rain

Two friends in a van

not a van full of friends

The rained-out

cookout

Who will feed

all these people?

Let them feast
on dreams
though it seems
I've called you
on the telephone

It rang until

there was no answer

and I choked on

all the things I

was going to say:

All my friends
have gone away.

Bryan Riley

Pressing On

...Heavy thoughts
a leaden sky;
fires burn bright across
the wasted land
Tears are wasted
on the dead.
Our grief should be
poured out upon
the living

The sorrows we've shared;
the losses we've endured
together enough to stop us
dead in our tracks for fear
and yet, we stoop to
pick up the small, glittering
fragments of all that we've
called 'good' and 'sacred'

In the absence of malice
exist these fervent wishes:
striving for that freedom
from the chains with which
we bind ourselves. Placing
faith in our dreams, not quite
so willing to lose for the
sake of having given an
honest effort

-Where the shadows speak
of a deeper darkness, angels
and demons both striving to
gain possession of what is
left of our souls-
Salvation seem as though it's
light years away... no solace
found in the paling of the sky,
knowing the full light of day
will find you, still, standing

in the shadows

Bryan Riley

Pueblo

Sun-bleached
adobe town
Spanish balconies:
Una palabra
en otra lengua

a girl, there,
at the fountain
lifts her skirts
dancing, madness
splashing in the
tepid water

Sun heat
cuts through
like a razor
we lounge in
the shadows

Night falls a
velvet kiss
drink tequila, eat
the mescaline worm

The men have their
ways with the
sun-ripened women
We light our fires and
draw our pistols uneasily-
camp on the border
of dark pueblo

Bryan Riley

Random Thoughts

Toss me out into the universe
Slingshot back- watch out:
There's black ice on the road
I need to bring clean underwear
a bathing suit, pajamas.
Or was it dog food, leftover
eggnog and an old banana?
-slightly too far north for
winter moths

Road Trip!

Pondering quietly the little deaths
Reciting the verse that made
mother freak out/ playing
nasty violins that make babies
cry and cats sing like
miniature Pavarottis

I haven't killed anyone yet today
but I'm thinking of starting with you

-Funny that you can say 'freak out'
but you can't say 'that which' or
'such as' without getting into trouble.
The dead don't dance- they twitch

Do people- stop- even send
telegrams- stop- anymore- stop.

Screaming back through the atmosphere
burning up- bright orange and blue

Remember the time you thought I was
poor, and so you gave me your shirt?

-yeah, that was fun

Rat Race

In an instant-
gone!
pulsing, beating
bleeding
crushing the air
out of the
lungs
Frantic, rushing
toward
No Particular
Destination-
screeching to
an unexpected
halt
confused:
cold
tired
AFRAID

-all crashing in!

Sto-p (hush)
-Breathe...

Bryan Riley

Regarding August 7th

I had just started writing when she finally came home.
The day started back up where she had left it to brood, awaiting her arrival.
The silence, like an icicle in a windstorm, clinging desperately
to the roof's edge, fell to the floor and shattered there.
Horrified, I tried to pick it up and put it back together, but it was gone...
all of this last existing only in my mind, as it
hadn't actually happened yet.

Laughter in the high places, chaos and squalor
in the low. That is why I told you to take the other road.

The rattle of the machine
the soft hiss of the dying man's breath
a shadow perched at the corner of the eye,
disappearing on full sight-
everything coursing toward its
predestined end.

The subtle difference in the air, just underneath
the summer heat, signaling the change
that's coming soon

They warned us there would be high wind today-
heedless, we took to our little boats and tried
our best to navigate the river. Tossed about, we
fashioned our clothing into sails, and we sailed-
with renewed purpose, into the eye of the sun.

: Well, of course we were naked.....

Bryan Riley

Resurrection Day

Floating through the
universe on a whim
Vanquishing the pale,
quivering- the pre-dawn
shades

Follow the path of the
heron up through the
stars to the center
of the sky

The sun-dappled glades
where Eros dwells in
Sanctuary, or the
underwater groves where
the turtles play

Spark the ceremonial lamp-
by its light then
find the sanctity that
existed there all the while,
now merely revealed as it
stands, as it always stands

This is how I love it best-
the river which runs through
the center of my world;
calm, serene- its power
resting below the surface

Sudden burst of speed in
the homeward turning-
A dogless stick floats by as
the world, too, is untended

The sun makes dazzling
patterns on the lake
A pause; a deep breath as
the icy fingers of death are
loosed from the throat

and fall away, impotent

In this vanquishing of the
inner darkness, am released
and truly free- in the healing
light, understanding that in
this alone we shall live again

Bryan Riley

Revelation

Cartoon faces
peering out of
stained-glass
roses
Pretending and
assuming
diffident poses
Silver shot rings
through the smoke
They shudder and
choke and stoke
the flames
Wavering, though
still alive
to stand and
watch you as
you drive
The winter
landscape
pale and stark
I don't know
what you look like
but I'll love you
in the dark

Bryan Riley

Richard (And A Self-Portrait)

-And he sits-
-all alone-
-in the dark-
What the hell is
he waiting for?

He numbs his
senses with
alcohol while
his misery
hangs about him
like a pall

'Sad and lonely
sad and lonely-
Won't somebody
come and set
me free? '

Another
self-created
prodigal who
will NOT
be saved

We are the
fabricators of
our own distress,
then, for it only
stands to reason
that we can't be
made to feel
ANYTHING
without giving
consent...

And yet, what
do we do when
we have woven

our tapestry of
pain, and it has
grown too large
for any vessel
to contain?

We die a slow
death, mixing
poisons, hoping
that with one more
drop, we'll reach
that sacred space
where the
whispered voices
in our heads
simply
-stop-

Bryan Riley

Sad Goddess

Sad goddess sit
upon your
throne of night
Gaze into your
darkened crystal

See the ships
that touch the sun
the slice of life
the rape of beauty

Fair maiden watch
from on your
pedestal of
starlight

Fall the watchers
from dead waters
froth of madness
tear asunder

Old woman
die from
captive bondage
drink the stinking
waters foul
the poison

Dear lady
touched not once
in passion
coursing winding
down to silence

Starlit fire
shine on brightly
warm and
breathe the
drunken whisper

Sad goddess
sit high upon
your chair of
naught

While all the rest
is cursing
grinding
up to
violence

Bryan Riley

Sail

Church windows-
school bus smile

Witches' cathedral
twenty mile

Visitors only!
the placard cried:
All others will be
towed away

-Board the bus
for adventure

(Your) future
awaits

The journey
is now.

Sail.

Bryan Riley

Screeching Halts

In flight,
the figure loses
its form
The form loses
its shape
The shape loses
its substance

A blur of activity
a whirlwind
of sound
where screeching
halts are called

Time for reflection
in the murky
waters of
the mind

We reminisce
and call ourselves
blessed to have
come this far
without lifting a
finger or
really moving
forward
at all.

Bryan Riley

Sea Of Green

Sea of green!
sea of green
locked between
the earth
and sky
Decadent
prince of
afterthought
taught me all
I need to know
Soft and
low and
sweet and
slow and
lounging in
the afterglow
But that's not
as true as
the sky is blue
and everything
I seem to mean
is washed out
in a sea
of green

Bryan Riley

Shadow Puppet

I have given you everything:
you could say that I've
made you what you are today
I've built you up until now
I'm the simple one and you
are wearing all the colored
plumage of a peacock-
strutting about with my strength
which I lent you, and you
never gave it back

Now, you give me that look
of disdain whenever I dare
to mention my name and
say hey- remember me?
Well, remember this-
all that you've become is
all you wanted to be,
once upon a time

And where am I? Just a
shadow of myself left up
on the shelf to be taken
down whenever I'm needed
to perform tricks for
your amusement

Welcome to the puppet show
Tell me, what did you really
want from me, and have you
gotten it? Or is my soul
simply too hard to catch?

Bryan Riley

Skating

We went
round and round
the indoor rink
My hand cold
and damp with
the sweat of fear
So soft and
sweet she was
I knew I
had to hold her

Whirling,
 whirling,
The others became
less real and
faded away
as our hands
grew warmer
in each other

The music stopped-
I came undone.
I wanted to touch
her hair of fire,
but I couldn't find
the words to tell her
i was just a boy

Bryan Riley

Smoke/Ghost

Unchained
Unheeded
Warning
Mourning
Soldiers left
on the field
to die
Try to
cry out but
voiceless
whimper catch
fire on a
roof of thatch
Scratching-post
Ailing ghost-like
presence in the
upstairs hall
A wisp of smoke
drifts up,
unseen until
ceasing to
exist at all

Bryan Riley

Stallion

High canyon
holding up with
heavy granite arms
the sun,
the sky

Only when the
body breaks
does the
fury die

Though seeming
with golden tethers
it is held and
so deceased

The spirit
cannot be
shaken from
the beast

Bryan Riley

Strange Music

The surprised tone of
a frog's call as it is
taken unawares by a
serpent in the night

The rattling of bare
branches in a
sudden breeze,
like a windchime
made of bones

The wailing of a siren
as it demonstrates
the Doppler Effect while
fading off to nothing
in the distance

Or

The blade of a bone-handled
knife shrieking as it
scrapes its way
across a dinner plate

Bryan Riley

Swan Lake (3 From Maine)

In the field
where the
horses play,
in the meadow
where we lay
with the fireflies
under the
million
million stars

: The cries of
the loons that
sent shivers
down our spines:

Sitting by the
fire, the flames
casting lively
shadows on
the faces of
the ones whose
tales will be
told, but
not just yet...

Bryan Riley

Swanville (3 From Maine)

Cottages hunkered by
the edge of the lake,
awaiting the return
of summer laughter,
voices drifting
down from the bay

A perfect
summer getaway:
no contact,
no service here-
nothing to
dispel the quiet

except the
chirping of the
crickets, or the
droning of the
frogs as they
call to each other
through the still
evening air

Bryan Riley

Swiss-Cheese Man (A Surreal Poem)

On the third day, Jesus
came down to save us-
not that one; I'm
talking about Hay-soos

Thinking we should swim,
then sink, because drowning
is our only option

In my poems I call her 'Miss Laura'

Ovehearing all the juicy
conversations that only
being invisible will allow

Self-importance is underrated
like
flying monkey-men carrying
live chicken detectors and
tramping vicariously
through the holes in my
swiss-cheese brain

Bryan Riley

The Cities Of The Dead

With our eyes bent
toward the sky, we
search for the salvation
that must exist- somewhere?

With an ear to the
ground we listen intently
for the soft sound of
the dawn's approach

We leave hope by the
side of the road, the
shriveled hulk of its
demise testifying to
our repeated failed efforts
to gain a foothold in the
homeland of the gods

Let discerning dogs lie
in puddles of filth
then die well without
having to bear the burden
of useless emotion

Pierce the sun with
a dagger- pull the
darkness down around you
like a burgeoning thought

Warm yourself by the
dying fires of passion; lost
Remember only that all the
good in the world will
ever come through you

Wake the shadows with a
profound sense of purpose.
Hold your light aloft-
high as you can.

Dispel the spirits with
a whispered word, and
dwell forever in the
cities of the dead.

Bryan Riley

The 'Golfer'

She had taken some lessons,
and was practicing her swing.
I could tell from her stance
she had not learned a thing.

On her first try, she gouged
a big hole in the grass,
then spun 'round and
practically fell on her a**

Graceful display was not
hers for the taking;
I was laughing so hard,
I was practically shaking

In closing I will say
one thing without doubt-
the next time she swings,
she should yell,
'Worms, look out! '

Bryan Riley

This House

I woke up tired, and
the day was grey-
the clouds hung low in
the sky, pushing back
the sun, pushing
forward at the earth;
I wanted to take a walk,
but my shoes were too heavy
and my feet wouldn't move.

Now, I am sitting at the
table, writing my life story,
listening to the damnably
loud ticking of a clock,
feeling the silent weight
of oppression from the
house above me-
This house, that wants
to strangle me
to death inside
my bones

Bryan Riley

Three Things

A piece of steak, a blade of grass,
and a set of windchimes-
These are the three things from
which legends are made

The steak you can use to call
off the terrifying dog, allowing
you an easy path by which to
rescue the princess

The blade of grass you may hold
firmly between your thumbs- it
must be kept straight- you may
then blow your breath across it,
making a sound much like a
goose, and all the geese for
miles around will come down
from the sky to lay tributes
at your feet

And the chimes? Well, that's
quite another thing altogether:
You see, the chimes contain
within them all the music
of a lifetime.

Bryan Riley

Trace Evidence

I found my coffee cup amid
a wierd configuration of
knives on the kitchen counter
somebody was building a strange
pyramid I can't describe because
it has no name.

Later in the morning, I left an
abandoned banana peel alone
on the grassy edge of the beach.
It called to me to find it a home,
but I was too disgusted to touch it.

My sister has strange people
tromping through her house:
they were voices in the
background on the telephone.
My lake is really a river, but you
know that whatever you call a thing
becomes its name

Last night, I remember the drive
home being unusually quiet,
even for a Sunday
Earlier in the afternoon
(this was yesterday)
I stopped by the river
(not my lake, the other one)
I ate my burger and fries-
looking out at the water, I saw
a lone man in a kayak, just
bobbing up and down
like a living buoy
(that's a play on words)

I wiped my mouth, and left my
DNA on that napkin by the river
They might come looking for me,
but they won't ever find me-
They have no idea who I am.

Bryan Riley

Tracks

Which way is
the right way
So sorry you've
gone the wrong way
Maybe you should
take the hiway to
the corner of the sky

I'm so tired of
street signs
blowin' my mind
Can't get on track
I'm makin' tracks to
the other side of town

Goodbye Mr. Blue
I'm leavin' you

Bryan Riley

Unknown

Leaping out
falling
spiraling downward
finally free

Death awaits
jaws agape
the crowd goes wild
a nine-point-nine

Floating
soaring
flying
unmanned
the bread of life
the work of
human hands

The myth.
The legend.
Lives on.

Bryan Riley

Vertical Savior

Redemption Tower

Taste of
discourse
not given
freely, up

Yielding to:

lash and
backlash
whip- lash out

Microcosm

in the depth of
pain-filled eye
Cry: the crimson
taint hung
loosely about:
Vertical Savior

You first must
build your cross
before you may
hang upon it.

Bryan Riley

Walls

I want to sit down
and thank you for
keeping my seat warm
but no, the table
is no place to
rest your bones
or to wait for the
shock of love to
radiate your way
Sit on the floor
Indian-wise
and conjure up
your own space,
if it is space which
you must have
Build a stairway to
your heart so as to
climb up and peer
over the walls we've
built between us
Put on the necklace
I love and get out
Your wrecking ball
Remove the bricks
one by one...

Bryan Riley

Weapons

I have
weapons-
tons of
weapons.
Weapons
by the ton.
Boxes of
armament

I could
slay you-

Weapons-
enough to
start a war
 or
have a festival:

Fireworks

Bryan Riley

When The Song Is Done (Follow-Up To 'An Ending')

A patch of ground to lay me down
I am not the beast they think I am.
though more of the salt than of
the earth. In death's embrace
we find rebirth
From the ends of worlds
to the heart of the sun
we stumble and run and
we run and we...

Climb to the top for a clearer view
The mountains are shrouded
with mist today/ like a veil which is
pulled over the eye she cry and
she cry and she try to make sense

-A fence around your heart
A chin around your mind
Unkind the fire burns and rages-
like the man; the man with a
glass heart and eyes of stone
we enter and leave this world alone

From the dark of the moon
which eclipses the sun
the magic is gone when
the song is done

Bryan Riley

While You Were Sleeping

I might've set the house on fire.
I could have written the poem that
would change the world, or maybe
I filled an ocean with my tears.

You fell asleep in the middle of my discourse.

While you were sleeping, I pinched an angel
and made her sing.
I told the story of your life to a complete stranger.
I made your favorite dessert and
ate it alone.

You took a bathroom break in the
middle of my discourse-

during which time I set out across
the desert to find your heart; to
bring it back to you so
you could be made whole again.

I built monuments to my love for you.

I sang songs meant for your ears alone, then-

While you were sleeping, I slept beside you,
and I dreamt- only of you.
I swear to God I dreamt-
only of you.

Bryan Riley

White Room

Shrieking cell!
The halls ring out
with the music of
the ghosts of
the past

Cool- white-
filtered gas
Retreating from
the wishing well

Cry out-
Answer!
Answer!
Answer!

Expungent
echoing back
and back again

Silence wells up...

Confounded Dogma

Bryan Riley

Windswept

Slow night
walk through
streetlight
whispering
wind
moaning
wind whipping
whistling
whispering
through narrow
alley houses
crouched
together
against
the shivering
night wind
No stars
to see no
sound to hear
nothing to
mark the path
nothing but
the softly
whispering
ceaseless
wind

Bryan Riley

Windswept (Ii)

I leave a footprint
on the sand
for all or none
to follow me
I sit me down
upon the shoals
to hear the
keening of
the sea
When sorrow
beckons at
my door no
heart shall ever
comfort me
when cold reveries
should pause to
start I shake my
furry head to
set them free
When once alone
for those who come
I beg the wicked
wind to stay
She laughs and says
'None follow you'
and blows the
mark of my
passage away

Bryan Riley

Your Last Day On Earth

In the time to follow,
your aged, disease-riddled
form will bear nothing
but the memory of the
strength and cunning that was
and you will slide, softly, down.
That lifetime you knew
exists now through a veil
on the other side of the world-
your private Camelot; don't worry.
You are not alone.
They are all here to see you off-
The shadow-girls
The denizens
The stern-faced cyclops...
Like the big fish from the movie,
you will swim into legend,
and they will continue your
tall tale long after you
have left this world behind.

Bryan Riley

Your Song

I heard your song-
that simple melody you played,
the one that flowed with such sadness
down through your being;
through your fingers and
down onto the keys.

The haunting surprise of
the chord change-
the unexpected black key
that drove everything away
from the simplicity of the
opening notes; away from the
quaint angst to reveal the
glaring depth of your
profound sorrow.

Was that the soundtrack
of your shattered life?

I can still hear the first
four notes in the sequence,
but the middle has become
somewhat muddled in my mind
-Except for that one note that
changed everything- THAT one
will live with me forever now.

And so I'm sorry. At the risk of
causing you to re-experience
the pain that first brought the
music forth- I might just have to
ask you to play it again.

Bryan Riley