

Poetry Series

Robert J Meyer
- poems -

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Robert J Meyer(1957)

An English teacher in an alternative high school for former dropouts in inner-city Chicago for the last decade, he has worked in newspapers for several years prior to his current vocation. Meyer writes in both formal and informal verse on a variety of topics. He is a happy Chicagoan now.

A Spectacle

The blue bike
Framed around the proboscisian stump
Gives the hill a quizzical gaze,
A watch set upon the valley.
The rusted fenders,
Evidence of dog demarcations,
Curve bow-back
To loop into the side-burned grass.
As I approached,
I thought I saw a winking eye
In the spinning spokes.
And wanted to share the joke.
But I could not make the image stick
When I stopped beside it to catch my breath.

Robert J Meyer

A True Act Of Contrition

Words armored and armed
Sent forth to crush and cleave,
Reinforcements committed,
No reserves withheld,
Pugilistic annunciations
Meant to overwhelm;

And others more subtle,
Saboteurs and scouts
Sapping those they encounter,
Undermining, kindling havoc
By delicate deception,
Slithering in, under and around;

And misdirections,
False trails, bogus clues,
Errant maps intending to insinuate
Mislead and confuse,
Fabrications planted in the open,
Tainted breaths covered in clove –

These words sent to war,
My implements and tools
Misused in anger, fear and greed,
These sins I humbly submit
And ask absolution
That pure purposes I may pursue.

Robert J Meyer

Almost Was

I talked to she who almost was,
And every sound - sighs and chuckles
Question and comment - was freighted
With what could have been

We talked about old movies,
And how my love life was going,
And how hers was not,
And then there were the kids
Hers popping up - one, two, three
Mine is full of contradictions -
And we meandered through our lives apart
As I imagined otherwise.

There are moments on the phone
When we are transported
To another universe where
Possibilities have fragrant blooms.

Robert J Meyer

And Now

The antecedent was respect.
Admiration came before.
There was a precedent of desire.
Previously, curiosity.
Hopefulness was a forerunner.
Attentiveness, a priori.
Formerly, engagement.

And now....

And now.

Robert J Meyer

Ashes

The smoke rises from my cigarette
Sitting in the ashtray
Surrounded by the detritus of earlier musings,
I shuffle through scraps of paper
Scribbled with ghosts of thoughts,
Ashes of earlier efforts to find just the right word,
Hoping an ember still smolders
That can be blown into flame
To illuminate my current mood.

Robert J Meyer

Audacious

Gi' me d' ball gi' me d' ball gi' me d' ball
Over here over here
That'z it that'z it

You can't touch me
I own you
I'm gonna score on you punk

Watch the ball
Here I go
Three points

Take that sucker

Robert J Meyer

Beach Party

It's been fun, exhausting.

The mellow bunch singing lazily around the bonfire –

Sparks spinning upward, reflected in the lake.

They begin to move toward tents and sleeping bags,

But their boom boxes still send thumping rhythms over the water,

Bass reverberating off the soft susurrations of the waves.

Wood smoke, charred brats, stale beer and bubbling marshmallows thicken the air –

Overstuffed and lazy, fighting the urge to sweep off into sleep

Only to awaken past twilight – sunburned by the fading sun –

You stand.

Now, you want no company.

Surveying the lace of waves tracing their way across the water,

You amble away from the crumbling remains of the party,

Taking in the pink, amber, violet sundown,

You turn to watch the shimmering mirage of your friends

Shorten and fade with the light.

With each step, the pulsing of the music subsumes

Slowly extinguished by the interplay of waves and wind.

Your damp swimsuit slowly drying beneath your cutoffs and T

Raises the gooseflesh across your skin as the air cools.

Invigorated, your toes send up a rooster tail of sand

Picked up by the breeze and twisted away.

For a moment, fear flashes through you,

You turn, and trudge back to camp.

Robert J Meyer

Before The Lines

Can there be any doubt?
You have overcome me.
No other stands before you.
This is consuming me.
Here is where I will stand.
I am before you,
A poor supplicant.

Restore me to myself
Or I will be lost in you.
Such is my plight -
Annihilation in your eyes,
The sweet little death we shared -
Inevitable and wonderful.

Robert J Meyer

Before, During And After

I don't know what is sweeter:
The anticipation,
The kiss, or the reflection.

Before, I watched her eyes shimmer
And saw her lips quiver -
She glows.

Then, as our tongues speak silently to each other.
I feel her pressed to me as a lover.
We glow.

After, I await the slowing of the world
As my mind returns from where it has been hurled.
I glow.

Robert J Meyer

Bug Hunting

He stood before me,
Barefoot,
Toes dirty from running in the yard,
With tears tracing through the grime on his face.

And I asked why he was crying.
He said, 'The grasshopper got away.'
So we went in search of replacement,
And I never had a better day.

Robert J Meyer

Camping Near A Waterfall

One need not pin one's hopes on gravity.
Physics' magic may confirm the cataract
Booked by a gnarled elm and shredded pine
Midway up the mountain path.
The torrent rings with nature's passion -
Keyed to my own musings as I pass.

I tuck my scarf more tightly against the mist -
The cloth now spangled with diamond dew.
While no pen contains the rush,
The sun commands my march
As camp-ward I proceed.
And though I play the rake,
The waterfall is a showier gallant.

Robert J Meyer

Coming Home

And as she stood
A hot breath
Like warm, scented oil
Blossomed behind her ear
And traveled down her elegant neck
To the juncture of her shoulder
To be punctuated with the flutter of a kiss.

Just a dream -
A reverie to swirl the day's thoughts away
As she dropped her purse,
Kicked off her shoes,
And turned on the light.

Robert J Meyer

Cynthia

She enveloped my senses on her arrival -
Midnight tresses, the mark of her Olympian precursor
Reflecting the hour of our meeting -
Beauty born of wisdom,
Eyes irides from amber to bronze to veridian,
Lips soon found to be as soft, as amiable, as they are warm....
A woman.
No nymph playing at feminine similitude.
A woman full and powerful,
Yet velvet under my tentative touch.
A strength innate yet yielding.
She.
Her manner faintly kissed with the air of Messina
Conducted my gaze again and again to the depths of her eyes.
Inviting.
Mesmerizing.

I imagine myself,
Head safely nestling in her lap,
That raven curtain falling around her shoulders,
And I protected by her lunar gaze,
In some cypress bower.
This sweet Citherion setting aside her bow and quiver,
And we, both unarmed, entangling arms in amative questing
And taking nourishment from each other's lips.
I long to drink once more from that font
More deeply
To discover if this thirst may ever be quenched.
Goddess,
Artemis,
Diana,
Phoebe,
By all these names - Cynthia

Robert J Meyer

Cynthia II

Her dark beauty, fragile, defies gravity.
She has left behind silken splendor
To wander the world
And offer her tender graces
Unspoiled by the subtle cage she has escaped.
Rather, she has braved captivity to emerge enhanced.

And now, as evening approaches,
I raise my lantern in vain hope
That she will approach.
I come baring no net.
No killing jar awaits - no pins.
I only hope that Cynthia will spread her wings for me.

Robert J Meyer

December, Mid-Day

On this day that has lost its mindfulness
Of blossom and aromatic fecundity
Of casual life, splurging its vitality
On birdsong and squirrelish chatter,
I am waiting for a break in the clouds.

This day has long since lost
A fresh blanket of snow to the
Skirlling tires and plodding pedestrians
Huddled in down and Dacron
As they battle the Chicago chill.

The streets resemble the bottom
Of a Pickwickian gruel bowl, grey
And slimy - none to appetizing -
Warmth drained (though every mouth
Smokes out exhausted air) .

I am left staring at the sky,
Hoping the ubiquitous dinge
Is just fleeting, despite the memories
Of similar Decembers unnumbered.
We are left to cower in the slush.

Robert J Meyer

Even When You Lose, You Win

'I can't.'

'Why not? '

'I never could.'

'When last did you try? '

'That's not the point.'

'A bet! '

'What? '

'Try.'

'And? '

'Succeed, I win.'

'Yes.'

'Fail, you win.'

'Wait! '

'Yes? '

'I lose the bet.'

'Yes? '

'I succeed.'

'Yes.'

'I lose...'

'You win.'

Robert J Meyer

Family Christmas

The Christmas when my marriage died and nothing came out right
I'd flown into Nebraska, but Althea missed that flight.
My parents had her gifts around the Christmas tree alight,
But since she was St. Louis bound, it was a silent night.

The year my little brother's schizoid fantasies did bite
The family photo ended with the threat of a knife fight.
But he had grabbed a butter knife so no blood spilled, no fright,
So handcuffs and the looney bin, it was a silent night.

And then the year my dad felt pain. His face had gone dead white.
He thought his heart was acting up. My mother was a sight.
She sent us to the hospital to see if he was right.
But indigestion was the cause, another silent night.

So Christmas in my family will never come aright
Unless it ends with misery or a cop and big searchlight.
So when I get a Christmas card I never know just quite
What to think or what to feel about that silent night.

Robert J Meyer

Friendship

I came to her in tears.
No need for prologue,
She knew.
I cried and babbled incoherently
While her arms cradled my head,
And she offered comfort,
Kind words,
But mainly, her attention
Until my sobs subsided.
Then she made no promises
Of quick recovery –
No false salve for my wound.
But time she gave
And compassion.
She was a friend.

Robert J Meyer

Fugedaboutit

So I was goin', see, ta meet wid dis guy.
An' all of a sudden, I forgot wha' I was doin'.
So's I stop right there.
An' whadaya know,
I sees my pal Frankie.

'Frankie, ' I sez. 'Where ya goin'? '
'I gots ta go see my goil.'
'Janice? ' Frankie's been hangin' wid her foreva.
'Naw, ' he sez. 'We broke up.'
'Ya don' say. Tough break.'
'It's wha' I should'a done, the hoewa.'

'She play ya? ' I sez.
'Yeah, wid Tommy Shanks.'
'They still togetha'? ' I sez.
'Naw. He's a real playa.'
'Nice ta see ya, Frankie.' I sez.
So I drive over ta Janice' pad.
Ba-da-boom!

Robert J Meyer

Fuzzing Out

I love those moments when everything goes fuzzy,
My Self steps out for a walk next to me as it gazes
Through my eyes, borrowed and so newly seeing.
The familiar takes on a foreign sheen,
Like a newly discovered country spread before my Self
And new understandings eclipse the same old same old.

That woman with her leashed pup running so desperately
As is she, to catch the fleeting teen from her past quickly fading.
The waiter winding out the awning over the corner café
Has a trace of stage blush just below his jawline, fugitive hopes.
Yesterday's tears revealed in the long and narrow scab
Tracing along the pigtailed child's calf as she stretches for the sky.

Then, click, I am myself again and street noise blurs the vision
Back to a flatter world, less intense and colorful, more prosaic.
Those fuzzy moments are unbidden gifts not to be retrieved at will.
They leave me dizzy and disoriented while popping my perceptions.
And sometimes I wonder which life is more real.
Am I myself or my Self?

Robert J Meyer

Haze

There is no need to obfuscate...

Haze settles over the city.

Heat.

The frothy air,

A soup of asphalt, car exhaust, and human sweat,

Churns like the strangled sounds of the traffic

Dodging potholes and traffic cones.

It is not fit for life.

We squeeze ourselves within these confines,

Choosing abodes alien to nature

To gather closer to each other

Studiously ignoring our kindred as we pass

Rabbiting our way to work.

We evolved for different climes.

A grassland species are we,

Those of us who curse the greenery poking through

Concrete heaved by passing seasons

That we ignore in our chuffing cocoons

Cooled by kilowatts extracted from ancient bones burned.

No panther threatens us here

In this magician's hat metropolis,

Though our glands secrete their warnings

As predators prowl each boulevard crossing

With rumbling roars and snarling squeals of wheels

Immune to any clovis point.

Five million human beings,

Thirty million rats,

Roaches unnumbered

Attack each other,

Both like on like and unlike

As cameras catch the action at each traffic light.

Robert J Meyer

Her Eyes

Her eyes

Bespeak the emeralds of Phoenicia
And Grecian gold well weathered.
A trace of Spain's Moorish amber
Finds itself within the flecks.

Her eyes

Reflect her ancestors' home -
Catania and Ragusa, home of Archimedes.
His genius shines through
Those shifting tones.

Her eyes

Are boundless.
Hours I've spent in her eyes,
And hours more if there be grace
As proved by her eyes.

Robert J Meyer

Inhuman

What dreams are befouled behind that face –
Wind burned and cramped,
Smeared with dirt and spittle,
Eyes – not vacant – alert to another reality,
Lips posing questions or prayers – I don't know
Because we crossed the street.

“He's dirty, ” you said, “and probably mad.
Who knows how long he's gone since last he bathed.
The air is fetid all around him.”

No doubt all that was true,
As was his desperate grasp on humanity,
And your refusal to let him keep it
For fear of assaulting that pert little nose
That cost more than he would see in a year – years.

But I let you pull me off course,
And at the time, I said nothing –
Just kept my irritation to myself
For fear of – for fear of what?
Of losing a good night kiss?
Of showing my disgust –
With you –
With him –
With me?

Robert J Meyer

Insomnolence

Despite the rage and rawness twitching at my left eye
And the constrictions coursing through my forearms
I sit
Professing sleep to the imp ratcheting at my brain.
Tintinitis blares mercilessly
Sending the blood pounding through temples punished by pressures –
Real and imagined.

Everyone asserts insomnia.
But do they really know that aching hour
When dread escalates to frenzy
And the knife seems a plausible deliverer?

But I am not Shakespeare's Dane.
My troubles are slight – no match for that haunting.
My tragedies are of a more human scale.
No kingdoms hang in the balance except my internal domain;
The only challengers to sovereignty is Melatonin –
And the nagging worries of a regular life –
And ringing ears –
And fidgeting arms –
And aching head –
And itchy eyes –

Oh, peace!
Please, peace!
What crime inhabits my glands and organs
To deny me surcease?
Biology has sinned against me.
I seek a high priest of Narcopolis –
A vestal to lead me to the River of Dreams –
Or maybe an engineer to tear at the firmament beneath the enzymes and
proteins,
Carpenters and masons to cobble together structures of somnolence.

A pact!
Some bargain may be struck,
If not Faustian
Perhaps Freudian.

The ego may be compelled to obey the ancient id.
Sleep.
The lizard brain demands it.
The cerebellum bellows war,
Sets barricades against it,
Sends scouts in bioelectrical disguise
Pricking at nerves,
Bathing tendrils in adrenalin.
Saboteurs.

The battle is lost.
The sun rises.
My head whirls.
I stand
Dazed.

Robert J Meyer

It May Not Be Love

It may not be love that replays that instance
Slowly, and with richer detail -
That moment when I felt the cocoon burst,
And the winged dance of abandon within me

When, as I recall, butter lips melting into mine
Merging with me, speaking for me - to me - through me -
My prepositions mingle in my memory.
I yearn for newly minted words for each recalling.

It may not be love that draws me back -
Makes three syllables ring like cherubic cantatas.
My tongue tastes the meaning but cannot speak it.
My very skin rises at the thought.

My days are now of amber, gleaming and warm.
They are but half lived while back I go to then
With brushes filled with summer hues to add,
To blur and perfect that wonderous when it was.

It may not be love, but so it might become.
And I will play the film again, restaged
With all the magic memory is subject to
And mold it and bend it and nurse it and mend it.

Robert J Meyer

Jocylyn

Just because she holds my heart,
Only because I can't help myself,
Could she make this life complete?
Yes. She is the one I need.
Let the world know her wonder.
Yes. She is the one I need.
No other can raise me as high.

Robert J Meyer

Linked Haiku

If paper shattered
Like my defenses near you
Love notes would snow down

These verbal snowflakes
Redolent with my longing
Prosper by your grace

Syracuse gave you
Golden eyes and sable hair
So I may wonder

Each single kiss shared
Too dear to leave unnumbered
Relived in my sleep

This paper can't say
Nor pen convey my ardor
Let the snow begin

Robert J Meyer

Medicine

And she revives me.
When work has left me indolent,
She offered me a chance to be
Freshened, seemingly brilliant
In her eyes.

And that's the prize.
She makes me more than I am,
More are we together. I apprise
Her of my discovery. 'Madam,
You amplify me.'

Robert J Meyer

Misunderstanding

Her face crumbled and pinkened.
Anger, confusion and hurt etched across her features
As she tried to decode what I said.
Was THAT what I meant?
Or perhaps she read me wrong.
Words and demeanor seemed to be at war.
Tranquility was the casualty
As I tried to explain.

Robert J Meyer

Moving Day

'Is that all there is? ' he asked
As he stooped to collect the final box.

Her gaze swept the room empty of all but litter left for the broom.
No photos, no cushions, no candles on the mantel –
No love left –
Where were the remnants of the 'us'?

And she nodded while turning and swiping a tear
As she wondered, 'Is that all there is? '

Robert J Meyer

No!

Interjection, interdiction,
It's negation and restriction
'Yond which one can never parry.
Never but to the contrary.

It is next to all that's null;
Leaves one feeling rather dull.
Such it is within it's bounds.
So much said with fewest sounds.

Not affirming,
Leaves you squirming,
Life denying,
Always sighing -

Ending,
Rending,
Stopping,
Cropping...

No!

Robert J Meyer

On Reading Graham Greene's 'The Quiet American'

Pyle and Fowler
So civilized
Fighting over Phoung
And Vietnam
So quietly

Pyle offers her his world
White picket fence
Baseball games and picnics
He'd hide the grime and mayhem
He used to win her

Fowler is honest in his need
Naked loneliness is all he has
No wedding ring
No London Bridge nor Westminster
Just his ache and desire

Phoung was one taxi dance
From whoring more openly
She sold herself for safety
Her youth disguised her wantonness
Fowler knew but Pyle didn't

That was Greene's vision
But what if she were another –
Fatima rather than Phoung
And a desert rose, not an orchid –
Just fifty years later

Robert J Meyer

Original Sin

Once, I was a brute,
That once, when I was young.
Once a girl was there
And I said things -
Awful things -
And still I hear myself
And blush.

Nearly thirty years ago
And still I revile myself
Over what I said
That once.

Robert J Meyer

Painting

He watched fretfully
As she, with paint brush far too large for her preschool hands,
Splashed liquid sage aggressively against the wall
While she swung her head around to smile,
And wild tangles of wheat straw hair
Swept through the gloppy new patch.

Robert J Meyer

Picnic

Yes, it sizzles...

That's the sound of summer,
Beef doing it's thing on the grill,
A hearty gulp from a cool can,
And giggles and screeches of kids.

Perspiration can be a good thing
When the rich drippings surrender
Their bubbly aromas to the cook
And a sip can quench the heat.

Before too long, an audience forms,
Buns at the ready on plates
Already crowded by potato salad,
And slaw, and melon, and chips.

As the sun retires slowly
And little shirts and blouses show stains
Littered with melon seeds and mustard,
Plans evolve for an encore.

Robert J Meyer

Pinay

As the sun rises
Sparkling
From the Cebu Straits,
An orchid,
Golden diwata child swathed in pink,
Emerges from the foam.

She glistens,
Beads shimmering on her mango breasts
Luscious and sweet,
Taut and inviting,
Laboring against their lavender confines.

And as the water cascades
From the silken, ebony curtain of her hair,
I gasp at this vision
Of the granddaughter of Lapu-Lapu.
She conquers me as surely as Magellan fell.
I bend to her beauty
And pray she will bend to me.

Manag-uyab,
Grant me license to explore your shores,
To find safe harbor in your arms.
Blow safe winds and loving words
From the soft warmth of your lips.
Envelop me in your womanhood.
Let me feel your rising tides
As nourishing Pacific waters
Offer sweet susurrations.

Robert J Meyer

Reading Neruda To My Lover

We stood in an old book store
That telescoped from room to room,
And in a corner, I found a book.
Listen, I said -

'I do not love you except because I love you;
I go from loving to not loving you,
From waiting to not waiting for you
My heart moves from cold to fire.'

She took my arm and squeezed.
I caught my breath and gazed
Into those fiery pools, copper and gold,
That left me stunned -

'I love you only because it's you the one I love;
I hate you deeply, and hating you
Bend to you, and the measure of my changing love for you
Is that I do not see you but love you blindly.'

A gasp from one of us,
I could not tell you who.
She leaned into me.
I stole a kiss -

'Maybe January light will consume
My heart with its cruel
Ray, stealing my key to true calm.

'In this part of the story I am the one who
Dies, the only one, and I will die of love because I love you,
Because I love you, Love, in fire and blood.'

We became entangled in the words
And in each others' arms.
I felt her pulse beneath my lips.

We emerged from between the shelves
'We'll buy this, ' I said.

I closed the book -

Robert J Meyer

Reunion

You fumbled and I tangled my hand in your hair
And both of us showed our novice tendencies in our urgency
But that seemed no reason to balk at the precipice
Of our adolescent ardor in full potency.

And so we danced the dance of life and love
In the back of a '64 Impala on Homecoming night
But neither of us really knew what we were doing
And it left us both embarrassed and ashamed.

Thirty-five years later, as we flipped through our feelings
While paging through our yearbook in a crowded Elks Hall
Amid the ghosts of our classmates peering from vaguely familiar faces,
Warmth and understanding colored our memories of that night.

We met at the hotel bar later, tensely taciturn again,
Fearing a replay of what was but a callow, youth-filled moment.
But the scotch melted both our ice and our tempers,
And we parted again with tender smiles for two lost teens.

Robert J Meyer

Romeo And Juliet (Condensed)

He spied.
She sighed,
Then cried.
She lied.
They died.

Robert J Meyer

Sated

And afterward...

What is there to say?
The blush and aroma,
Each sigh can still convey
Lazitude. Satiated like tired puppies,
Curled around each other,
Your chin finds comfort and ease
On my thigh. My hand
Resting upon your calf -
I graze your inner knee.
You try to suppress a laugh.
I kiss your ankle.
You stretch and breath deep,
So I twist around head-to-head,
Spooning you, and we sleep.

Robert J Meyer

She

She said...

I hope you feel -
I hope you -
I hope -
Hope.

She thought...

I pray you see -
I see you -
You see -
See.

She was...

I am with you -
I am you -
With you -
You.

She said	hope
She thought	see
She was	you

Robert J Meyer

Simple Pleasures

Breathe.

A tingle in my nose

As crisp air swells my lungs.

Invigorating.

I look around.

No haughty splash of autumn crimson and gold,

No fecund abundance of spring,

No ripening summer hues;

White grey and black -

A winter palate -

As I relax

Into a day simplified by nature.

Exhale

A warm steam erupts

As exhausted air passes my lips.

Satisfying.

Robert J Meyer

Sleepless

She tickles the edge of my dreams
No pacific moment
As I lay staring into the night
Looking for her

I imagine her hand upon my chest
My hand on her cheek
Her eyes my eyes her eyes reflect
As do our hearts

So close beyond reach
Both she and sleep
For one prevents the other
And she is the longing

And I am sending these words
Where I wish I were
With her
As I lay amid the sheets

Robert J Meyer

Slightly Used

I've found what's used to be of greater value.
The wear shows utility in function.
Tools that have stood the test of time
Are valued by the careful carpenter.

And so, I offer you me, well used and broken in.
These lines show the wisdom I have earned
And the cares that I have worn over time.
I have some value yet to give.

I make this offer after witnessing
The care you take with the well worn.
I have years yet to offer, though they are fewer
Than before time had knocked off my sharp corners.

I know I am not shiny and new -
Some of my joints complain -
But I am tested and true,
And a bargain to boot.

Robert J Meyer

Spring

The memory of wet shoes and grimy windshields and grey days
Melts as the first fecund aromas permeate the air,
And I sit dumbstruck by the sudden dissolve of the winter haze
And the first buds and birds that take the dare
And join in this exuberance of newness
Made concrete by the coming of the light,
And I know this is the year's sudden redress
Of the angst and ennui that December, January and February bring to the fight.

Spring -
A gift self revealing,
No ribbons to release,
No paper to tear,
It's just there.

Robert J Meyer

Spring Break

All the kids are gone.
Locker doors hang open.
Old worksheets and pages torn from spiral notebooks
Trodden into grimy gray litter
Peek out of corners and lay in random islands scattered across the floor.
Hanging on a hook here is a woe begotten jacket.
There, an empty book bag.
A class change bell echoes unattended through the darkened hall.

The spring break happiness of children
Leaves the lonely building silent
Anticipating the joy of their return.

Robert J Meyer

Summer

Some might say...

It's past that time of first blush -
First leaves and petals -
When hope is the byword.
The sun seems more merciless now
Pressing the brow and shoulders
With rays that have crossed the abyss.

The air has thickened.
A dampening of spirits
Accompanies each step
Across the city cement
As I drag to my destination -
For what - I have forgotten.

The solstice calls down its magic -
A darkness within the intense sun
Sublimating souls with the steam
Rising from the concrete.
Another word comes to mind
As I walk and melt.

Robert J Meyer

Sunrise In Chicago River West

Showering down an arc of meteors as it clacks across an off-kilter joint,
The 'L' grumbles above Lake Street,
Smearing early morning as the Kosher butchers trundle their loads up ramps into
the hungering maw of road behemoths snoring in anticipation.

The sky moves from bruised to blue.
There's chocolate in the air at the corner of Halsted
Inviting me to cross the backward flow of home's river rushing toward the glacial
scar the city embraces.

The spider web of streets converge at Grand Avenue
As diesel-spewing buses, empty for a few more hours, huff
And a bowler-hatted Buddha smiles and invites all comers in for patchouli and
jasmine tea at a bistro down the block.

Taxis chuff quietly in queues as do their Babel of drivers at Finkel's Deli at North
Branch.
No fares to collect until the third edition wheels out of the Tribune's presses just
up the road
Even though the bulldog is already scattered and tattered in the parking lot.

Teeter tottering above the canal as a mast makes its way past at road level,
An exclamation point slowly passing while the bridge stands at attention,
The roadway rumbles as the steel slowly lowers to kiss the further shore.

Such is the greeting Sol gets each Chicago morning as I saunter through the core
And it climbs from floor to floor up the gaudy Hancock with its pronged crown.
Sinatra said its all razzmatazz, but I know it really rumbles at dawn.

Robert J Meyer

Telephone

You are there -
In my reverie but beyond touch
At this moment, after our conversation
Carried by electrons, stripped of the true warmth of your voice
And offering only the vestige of your smile,
The melody of your laughter.
I ask the night what constellation you gaze upon
So I might share its atomies,
A sliver of it's spectrum might act as another conduit
Carrying my ardor at the speed of light -
Too slow.
I yearn to have the arch of your neck below my lips
Knowing that those silent murmurs may just,
Through the alchemy of passion,
Unclothe my hunger,
Revealing who I am and what you are to me,
What even I have been unable to conceive in its entirety.
Oh, to have a way to burrow into your synapses
To open my soul directly to your mind.
Instead, I dial once more,
If only to have that shadow of you here once more.

Robert J Meyer

Telephone Call

When she calls
I stop -
And between the ring and the moment I answer
Her face appears in all it's moods and colors,
Each registering a memory.

That small infinity
Between inhalation and hello
Is too short,
Yet too long before I hear her voice.

Robert J Meyer

The Argument

There was anger
And all the tempestuous excesses of our confrontation
And she said –
And I said –
And everyone said too much.

There were tears
And the agony of being unable to breath
For what she said –
And what I said –
And for the images scarring our memories.

There was ennui
And life had turned to gray sterile dust
Thinking of what she said –
And thinking of what I said –
And we were trapped in our isolation.

There was redemption
And we found our way through to a new balance
But what she said –
And what I said –
Is now enmeshed in the life we have yet to live.

Robert J Meyer

The Artist

Sparkling like Columbia's living jewels
Just below the froth of the current
Beyond reach,
Her eyes bespeak an ancient Bering crossing –
Some trace of Asia made native by eons.
They are at home and a home.
Those eyes warmed by Pacific rays.
I am drawn to those eyes.

They sparkle and fly
Beneath that rich umber curtain
That flashes fire in the sun.
Oh that silken hair – I long to comb it with my fingers.

She glows as she stares at the canvas
(And I at her, unnoticed
As she eyes a verdigris streak lately brushed) .
She dabs and dobs,
But even her wondrous talent
Can never match God's creation that is she.

How I long to come up behind her
And wrap my arms about her
And have her lean back into me,
Forgetting her labors as her eyes close
And her smile spreads languorously
While I nuzzle her neck and nibble her ear
And feel the gentle swell of her bottom
Against my growing urgency....

She takes up another brush
And I remain a silent spy
Seeing her as she is and as I dream her
In my arms accepting my passion.

She is a Cascadian mystery
And one day, I hope to explore her.
Perhaps I ask too much;
Another amorous imperialist

Guilty of wanting what is not his....

Robert J Meyer

The Ultimate Incurable Disease

We live in hope, or so we say,
As we pass through each dawning day.
And yet we shake our heads and curse
When obstacles make us reverse.

We try our hands against the world
We raise our bets until we fold.
Occasionally our toes are curled
When we win a pot before we're old.

But in the end we'll never win
When death we face, the final sin.
So hope is viral and finally fatal
Until another human life is natal.

Robert J Meyer

The Widow

She closes the door and drops her purse on the table.
She removes the veil.
She looks one more time at the photo on the wall by the lamp
Of the one she had just returned from burying
And visibly wilts.

Forty-three years....
How does one move on?
When will she stop straining to hear the squeaking third step as she prepares
lunch,
And the scraping back of the chair at the head of the table,
And the same old rumbling clearing of a throat?

Robert J Meyer

This Thing

There are other things -
Objects that hold no mythic grasp
Upon the heart of the owner -
But this is not one.

This is a totem
Representative of a primordial me,
The me struggling to escape the indoctrination
Of well-meaning nuns and teachers
Who warped me as they tried to weave me
Whole, but distorted.

This is an amulet
Containing powers released by that moment
When the me I am today first germinated,
Wobbly and still ill-formed,
Lacking subtlety and prior to new assaults
Visited by this new life.

This is a marker
Signifying an end and beginning,
The grave and the cradle,
The death of a child,
The birth of a man,
The essential now.

Such is this thing
I carry from one abode to another
In this resurrection
Which must have an ending.

Robert J Meyer

Time Poorly Spent

For whom does this passion end?
From what height does fall
This apathy to inertia
Smudged slowly
On over-scored sheets,
Concealing my essence
As I wash your touch away
Renouncing inconstant, wandering eyes
Of former love?
The peace of renunciation
Fades so quickly
As I absently doodle
Unthinking verse.

Robert J Meyer

Time Travel

It was evocative

Of the autumnal mulled wine of my youth
Cinnamon scented
Sweet and warm
Lush

Of the well-worn flannel saved from a thousand washings
Softened by time and use
Shapeless - yet fitting in more than one sense
Embracing

Of the crack and snap of many a campfire
Source of heat and light and nourishment
Many a day riverside
Comforting

A word misheard on a city street
One soggy Spring
Sent me to another place
When horns and sirens were unknown
And crickets and owls patrolled an October night

Robert J Meyer

To Alba - In Gratitude

Albatica,
Mujer bonita,
She who graces the forest in the clouds,
Mi quieracita –
Azteca goddess –
She, Coyolxauhqui,
Sister to Eva Luna
(Allende's Sheharazade)
Woman of moon and stars
Who took her matron to task.

She paints with stars
And speaks in moonbeams.
Let her lover approach with care
For she disarms with a glance.

Yet she wears an Arthurian emblem,
The Isle of Apples,
Albion,
Home to Merlin,
And she ensourcels.

It is a rich coast I sail
In pursuit of her siren song.
My anchorage awash
In her Spanish golden skin.
Her perfect amber eyes – gems –
And onyx tresses
Are treasure enough.

But the gods have given her a voice
That sings of heavenly wonders,
And hands
That craft a new reality with each stroke.

And so I am blessed
To have met this wondrous mélange
Of Nahuatl passion and Spanish grace
With a whiff of Gaelic mystery.

And now I hold a treasure from her hands,
Myself, reflected through her eyes.
I swoon.

Robert J Meyer

To Be Young Again

Oh, to be young again
When a firmer nature was assured
And my glance might be answered by curiosity and interest.

Oh, to be young again
When planning involved condoms and not Cialis
And the fear was how to disengage, not whether the pill would be wasted.

Youth was so inconsequential.
Sex was plentiful and under appreciated.
Now, I know how it binds -
Without cuffs and straps -
Sans latex and role playing.

It bound me to life.
It bound me to solidity.
It bound me to another.

I am not old, but I am fading from sight -
Barely a quiver -
No hardening of image -
Limping around the edges of the vital flow.

I never knew until now how the language of lust could translate
Into my disappearance.

Oh to be young again
So I could bend her to me
And let her know I am here.

Robert J Meyer

Topography

To traverse this beautiful vista
And not to shiver in wonder...

The summits, majestic.
Their gentle slopes invite attention.
Between their prominences
A man can find safety
Buffered from the storms of that rainy day.

That subtle plain, slightly undulating,
Quaking gently as I advance.
This is a mature landscape
Soft and giving with each stride
A well with delicate margins placed just here.

And the motherland lies ahead,
Warm and inviting, I search its folds
For treasures for the tongue.
This font offers life and renewal
And a beautiful small death.

Four comely tributaries,
Each leading to five small streams
That dance at my touch.
And at the head of the land
The oracle of hope and beauty.

Such was the dark topography I explored.
This earth, this mother to life.

Robert J Meyer

Transitions

There is this...

When she was five
I was her daddy -
Maker of wonders,
Wielder of power,
Protector and keeper.

When she was twelve
I was dad -
Homework helper
Tear dryer
Night guard.

Now that she's grown
I'm father -
He,
Left
Out.

We should detach.
That is our job.
But, oh,
I miss making wonders
And drying tears.

Robert J Meyer

Two Friends In Crisis

There are wounded spirits surrounding me
As I take up my pen.
One in a far off land and one is close at hand
And all I have to offer are words.

These shadows lay within my heart
As the night muffles the glow of my lamp.
I cry for them and try to offer a poem
That might be a balm for their suffering.

Lost souls that glitter despite their pain,
They are my Ophelias this night.
I will not be their Hamlet as we know what that would beget.
I am the fool who speaks the truth and coaxes out a smile.

But these sprites are fragile folk,
And laughing off real afflictions goes only so far.
And my offer of aid is declined as soon as it's made.
So I feel guilty that my biggest worry is for their welfare.

Robert J Meyer

Untitled

Durable
Enduring
Lasting
Constant
Changeless
Immutable
Steadfast
Stable
Persistent
Invariable
Set
Not exciting maybe
But it is
My promise to you

Robert J Meyer

Untitled Iii

The cement mixer rumbles
Brick and mortar race upward
Ignoring the small children across the street
Watching with wonder eyes
And mouths open
Three O's framed on each face

Robert J Meyer

Untitled Iv

Something sacramental is stealing by
This night,
A night of quiet contemplation,
Of wonders often overlooked
Like breathing.

It isn't that we mean to live
A vacant kind of life,
Numb to the miracle of our own animation.
We just are -
Mostly,

Until that one instant when we realize
This is not forever.
One day the secret chemistry
That gives muscles an answer to will
Must reach entropy.

Then what?
Where does the essence go
When the flame has burned all fuel
And corruption sets in
To provide provender for protozoans?

Robert J Meyer

Vanishing Point

Like a vibrant blush in the far distance,
A touch, just visible, like a spark,
An intuition more than a preference
Simmers deep within, or an urge to embark
On a journey to a place idealized in dreams,
A vanishing point that's more than it seems.

Robert J Meyer

What Is Love

What is love?

Is it the pulsing passion of two bodies engorged with the heat of the moment?

Is it the deep emotional moment when two voices promise before friends assembled to love honor and obey?

Is it the moment when a new voice is added, squalling for air and reaching for the breast?

These moments disguise themselves as love.

Love may be buried behind more immediate emotions.

Love is there when anger flairs up over that discarded towel or missed oil change.

Love is there when tiredness and irritation causes an untoward word to launch a fresh pain.

Love is there in the day to day mundane.

Love is not being to imagine a life without the other.

Love is missing the small irritations when your partner is absent.

Love isn't happiness.

Love isn't pleasure in the moment.

Love isn't gifts given.

Love is a binding.

It's a chain.

True love is inescapable.

Robert J Meyer

Woman Of Poems

She is - mysterious
A calf, a thigh, a curve of the belly
The silken skin revealing
The chestnut hair concealing

Who is the lady?
She weaves through my dreams
Offering a tender foot for my caress
Or a dance that promises so much more
An invitation to dine on her passion
Or leaving her essence on my white dress shirt
Her wardrobe in another reverie

Her words knit fantasy to fantasy
But her mouth, her face, remains elusive
No lips to kiss
No eyes to reflect my devotion back to me
No cheek to lavish with kisses

She circles and reveals her arching back
Sweeping down to the gentle swell of her buttocks
A promise
She reclines, arms around a raised knee
Ankle teasingly guarding her fertility
Her gateway temptingly concealed

This woman of words, braider of erotic baubles

Anonymous

Robert J Meyer

Year's End

In a time of some reflection
Those who have gone before are called to mind.
The great and the forgotten,
The notorious, the angelic and the undistinguished -
All have left their traces on the human current,
Caused subtle shifts and bends, bubbles in the flow.

What is their legacy?
What do we owe them in memorial?

These questions are inevitably selfish.
In the end, how we regard them
Is how we wish to be regarded in our turn.
Karmic consequences confound us, though.
Whatever we conclude obliges no one else to follow.
If there is a god, she laughs.

Robert J Meyer

Yes, I'M A Niggling Little Thief

Chaucer did it
So did Dante
I will crib it
And I shan't pay

Steal a thought
Fake a statement
Maim a plot
Not too blatant

Shakespeare could
Why not me
Bet you would
For a fee

Robert J Meyer