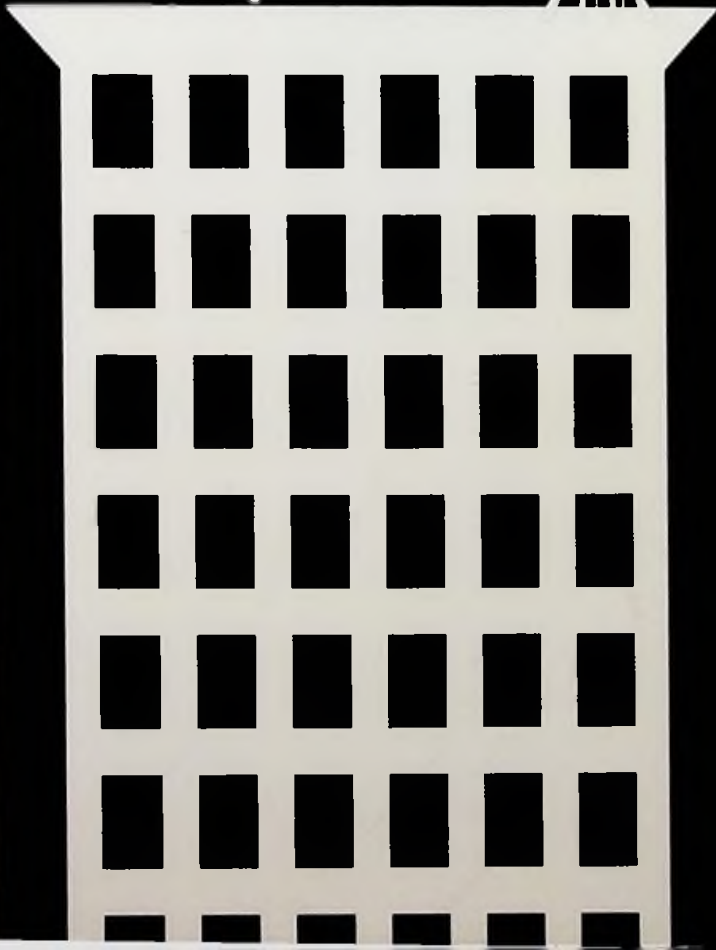


# NEW YORK

a haibun journey

Marc  
Awodey





NEW YORK



# NEW YORK

*a haibun journey*

WPC-Minimal Press  
Warner, New Hampshire

NEW YORK: a haibun journey  
by Marc Awodey

ISBN 1-930149-15-8

copyright © 2003 by Marc Awodey

All rights reserved. To reprint, reproduce, or transmit electronically, or by recording all or part of *New York: a haibun journey*, beyond brief excerpts for reviews or educational purposes please send a written request to the publisher at -

W. P. C. — Minimal Press  
PO Box 114  
Warner, NH 03278

*Cover design and production assistance  
by Michael Nedell and Brad Marion*

Printed in the United States of America  
on partially recycled paper.

First edition, first printing

# Forward

by Roy Morrison

From the first, *New York: A Haibun Journey* is filled with Marc Awodey's startling poetic inventiveness as he sees New York City with new eyes:

nearing the met's steps  
feathers      frozen breath  
ascend-  
i think of Cezanne

But it is also a poetic a voyage into a harrowing artistic and spiritual nether world. What Awodey evokes is the kind of pathos and desperate insight of the Consul found in Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*. As the Consul's friend Mon. Laurelle watches a drunk rider hanging precariously from his saddle by holding onto the pommel he realizes "that too is the Consul." The same may be said of Awodey's poetic incarnation, David. As the diabetic poet, artist, and professional art critic David sits drinking and smoking, writing haiku in a DUMBO bar ("Down Under Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridge Overpass") he decides with a frightening clarity:

needle  
in the trash  
diabetics should not drink-  
let's call this      eating

and then remember  
boston after the reading  
let's call that  
talking

Many academics could hate this book. Awodey has reinvented and redefined the haibun form- traditionally a mixture of narrative combined with a concluding haiku. Awodey's sections begin with haiku, and are followed by prose narratives that morph back and forth into poetry.

He looked between buildings  
and saw no end  
to the burnished corridors  
vaulted by an onyx afterglow  
where the bums of summer  
once slept  
beside moldy trash cans,  
    broken brown glass,  
and the bent frames  
of stolen Greenwich Village  
bicycles.

Then the tense shifts as Awodey describes David's interior world:

i declined my friends  
before an o.k. rat hole  
bitter beer- four  
bucks...

As David's descent continues, he adds:

drinking six hours now  
broken all the haiku rules-  
chain smoked ten hours  
  
say it in one breath-  
so much can be said that way  
and so much more lost



Awoodey, a National Poetry Slam haiku champion breaks and rewrites most -if not all- of the haiku and haibun rules. However, *New York : A Haibun Journey* is more than a technical achievement or chronicle of dipsomania and self-destruction. Its rhythm and pacing are consciously symphonic. It is a personal journey that in a strange, sad, and ultimately redemptive way foreshadows the destruction and reverberations of Sept. 11. It's Awoodey's *Howl*. It's poetry for our 21st century times.

Roy Morrison  
Warner, N.H.

January 2002

## Table of Contents

FLIGHT	11
DISEMBARKED	14
UNDERGROUND	18
THE SORROWFUL CITY	21
COFFEE, SILVER	24
CHANCE	27
THE OLD MASTERS	29
THE SECOND SUBWAY	33
DESCENT INTO DUMBO	39
RED	43
INTERMEZZO	47
NUMB FLESH	49
TWILIGHT	58
A SOUNDLESS SEA	65
METROPOLIS ON ICE	70
FLAKES OF FIRE	74
THE EAST RIVER	85
FORGERIES	89
ABSOLUTE ZERO	92
ANTIPODES	96
NOURISHMENT	98
Afterward: selected writings 2001-2002	103

## Act 1

### The Museum

*The characters*

Waskow	an art collector
Eric	a Graduate Student
Abigail	wife of David
David	a critic and haikuist

## FLIGHT

our snow was vicious  
burying, unburying  
fragile beige  
pear leaves

*From the furrowed elbows of frozen trees,  
and wisps of subzero first light mist-  
Venetian glass icicles bloomed  
as civilized men arrived at his door  
in the thump of a local newspaper.  
He was sick of seeing their faces.*

*Under his sunken, unread eyes  
drained watery coffee, nostril vapor,  
the magenta languor of sunrise.  
He kissed his wife as she shuffled awake,  
said good morning and went to bed  
without editorials or advertisements.*

*On blasts of remembrance and January,  
David celebrated melancholia.  
Always examining insignificant things-  
what is that under the street lamp?  
When will the snow quit falling?  
His face- the pallor of a clouded moon  
His memory- dissolved beyond focus.  
His hands were as cold as the season.*

*Thorns and thistles pricked the flesh  
more deeply every passing year-  
he staggered into wilderness.  
Snow clouds gilt the frozen moon,  
sometimes northern lights flickered-  
the night is often beautiful.*

*Yet when he attempted to summon the Muse  
her effervescent ambulance never slowed-  
it swerved on an arc of celestial skids  
to avoid colliding with his fingertips.*

*Waskow thought a weekend in New York City would  
suit David very well.*

*You, of all people should want to go...  
Footprints had not pressed the snow  
past David's stoop in several days,  
and so Abigail agreed-*

*New York will be good for you.*

*She was becoming concerned.  
His psyche seemed to be constantly tilting,  
and as she watched him weigh each word  
she knew he was balancing more than words.*

*Art versus crematorium.  
He agreed, he disagreed.  
work versus inactivity.*

*The Boston reading had not gone well.  
David drank too much there.  
Travel is often too painful...  
David becomes an idiot too easily.*

*Yet the Brooklyn bridge is an exquisite object.  
There will be statues in the Museum.  
There will be paintings, bookstores, subway maps-*

*and Waskow will be an excellent guide.*

\*\*\*

*Waskow wheeled  
southward  
six hours on the interstate  
as I tried to sleep-*

audis, saabs  
a flock of geese  
truck chains dangle  
over connecticut

distant  
gothic masonry  
cirrus clouds  
drift to frame  
the brooklyn bridge-

sacred  
brooklyn bridge  
slung out over east river-  
sooty piers eclipsed

your midwife-  
Whitman  
brooklyn bridge  
now your feet bear me  
beyond vermont

court street  
hardware store  
carroll gardens men  
stack plastic sacks  
of rock salt

all doors  
have two  
locks-  
spider skylight  
catches sun  
we creak up four flights

## DISEMBARKED

today- a good drive  
Waskow is a maniac  
i feel  
well enough

*It doesn't matter where you begin  
and it doesn't matter when you give up.  
The East river glimmered grayly under shards  
of flowing ice. Arboreal power lines,  
black sinews  
crisscrossed the afternoon.  
Every shade of human thought  
was being transmitted from New York -  
conversations, Afro-pop, pornography  
and politics, Shakespearean sonnets,  
football scores, weather reports, psychiatry,  
espionage, astronomy, a Babel of petty religions-  
every note, every passage, opinion, and prayer  
-a meringue of browned electrons.*

*Ten million inhales of ancient air.  
ten million exhales onto the sea.*

*Odometers don't measure  
David's preferred latitude.  
Rushing toward jumbled skyscrapers  
he knew no plot of variegated earth  
could fabricate the ephemeral distractions  
everyone seemed to want for him.*

*He already sensed this was a mistake.  
At least he would not be spending much money.  
The apartment belonged  
to Waskow's ex-girlfriend.*



\*\*\*

we speak of friday  
i'll go searching for  
Cezanne  
Waskow wants the new

Waskow goes to bed  
Fran is out of town-  
in france  
her couch their brooklyn

radiators tick  
callous winds consume  
the street  
neighbor ascends stairs

my first subway ride  
was in montreal-  
not here  
i don't speak east coast

last weekend- boston  
ginger brandy in my head  
-we all  
read poorly

why do you leave home  
my beard?  
let the young dogs bark-  
let the actors act

last weekend-  
boston  
bitter as the wind can get  
still feeling a chill

antidepressants  
chain  
smoking  
before i sleep  
a flat aria

wake up  
confused  
startled lids  
crack in a dream  
a face-  
no damage  
done

spit up art  
madness  
cover your  
mouth when you  
cough  
swallow your  
disease

ashes fall on leaves  
incandescent  
traveling  
damned-  
infernally  
trains

our morning hisses  
wheeze  
droning  
steam pipe  
music-  
sore esophagus

tramp down damp court street  
    delivery men  
argue  
like winter  
    starlings

i hear  
the old God  
push  
his elegant volume  
    folks say-  
        *leaves of grass?*

crumbs-  
but no bagel  
i still search  
    for something  
sweet-

something  
    off  
the page

## UNDERGROUND

soft steel drums echo  
slipping seams  
of silver speed  
-mine the underground

*Chewing gum  
spotted the platform scum of Brooklyn.  
Spittle, cigarette butts, speech-  
everything descends at the same speed  
tumbling  
from the lips like jets from the clouds.  
Everything finds its own patch of concrete  
sooner or later, depending on when it's tossed.*

*No one really knows  
why trains don't collide more often.  
Subways are the worst kind of train.  
Each car is a catacomb stacked with strangers.  
Each crowd is a box of brittle love letters.*

*David closed his eyes and imagined he was blind.  
Riders urgently straddled appointments.  
Air breaks moaned.  
Everything was subservient to swiftness.*

*He suggested visiting the Metropolitan Museum  
before seeing contemporary galleries and studios.  
It seemed to be a rational plan.  
Waskow, a rational man, agreed.  
David explained that the museum would provide  
context.  
Perhaps by examining historic works they would  
have a better understanding of what  
contemporary art  
is influenced by- and the paint quality*

*of historic work is always better.*

*Again, Waskow agreed.*

Too much is influenced by conceptual art...

*David said,*                      Painters and poets sweat over  
   trivialities. Painters and poets lose sight  
   of    the    meat.

*Waskow agreed again and added-*

   Your perspective on this matter is  
absolutely true. That's why I thought you'd like  
this trip. You'll find interesting things to write  
about, or perhaps to sketch. And you'll enjoy  
seeing the fresh art of  
New York.

*David confessed he was glad to have decided to  
go.*

*This confession was an honorable lie.*

*He thanked Waskow for insisting he go.*

*David and Waskow  
would be meeting a mutual acquaintance  
at the museum- Eric, a graduate student  
who studied visual art in New York.*

\*\*\*

   subterraneans  
don't worry about  
weather-  
   i sense two cities

public service ads-  
   lady Liberty shivers  
needs cashmere  
and    booze

doors    slide  
   unicyclist  
in a lime    helmet

wheels through-  
just in time.

the bored drawl  
mumbles  
electronic instructions  
judicious lights  
flash

we fold newspapers  
sew daydreams into  
next  
stop

BLKER  
station  
stop-

all rise to retreat  
uptown,  
downtown,  
underground  
slip out  
to the street

move quick  
off their train  
it's damp under manhattan  
dripping  
from on high

a mourning dove  
preens-  
brooklyn bridge to  
86th  
costs  
fourteen  
minutes

## THE SORROWFUL CITY

blind  
roman portrait busts  
weep salt tears  
as they yearn for  
lost umber soil

*It was a windy morning and a mackerel sky  
was finding form over the Museum's facade.  
Waskow set a brisk pace through Manhattan.  
Hardly a trace of greenery blessed the landscape.*

*David recognized nothing  
then noticed they were approaching Central Park.*

*The squalid sidewalk trees were caged,  
but heartier trees shivered in the park.  
Exotic scents were palpable. A whiff of perfume  
hitchhiked between sideslipping snowflakes.*

*Monoxide exhaust crawled up from the gutter.  
Cigar tobacco brushed the fibers of his pea coat.  
Sometimes sauerkraut and steam mocked  
his ridiculously light breakfast- the egg cream was not  
so spectacular.*

*City sounds were equally startling.*

*An American flag flying into tatters  
tried to escape its fat gray pole. The pole  
chimed high half resonant irregular notes.  
Outlandish accents bred by staccato whispers  
and songs in foreign languages galloped  
out of ruddy faces-*

*he hadn't been to New York  
in several years.*

*A black BMW  
bleated  
as they crossed 5th avenue.*

\*\*\*

arrogant Boranzino  
was a creamy youth  
now dead    centuries

flesh loose on my bones  
naked before piety-  
flayed by  
El Greco

slabs of Giotto  
fresco angles flit  
i curse  
a nameless chisel

rococo deluge  
profuse glories  
all    putti  
are not true angels

unfinished Virgin  
why should the saints  
trace your skin-  
yet not  
poor    joseph?

in a golden field  
whispers taste body and soul  
Breugal's peasants  
scythed

Rothko's suicide  
Franz Marc nailed  
in world war one  
Jackson Pollack  
drunk



Waskow found  
Eric-  
they trotted off  
to chelsea,  
abandoned  
  
the met

## COFFEE, SILVER

*His alienation ascended  
to suck air into the top of its head.  
Rather than join the other two men-  
David fled under the weight of the foam  
of his usual alibis.  
He dove deeper to escape  
from the truthful light  
for a few hours.*

sold out by  
art history-  
shackled seraphs leapt  
from burning windows

*Eric, Waskow, David  
would meet again in the Met's magnificent lobby  
at 1pm, then visit a few well appointed studios.  
Eric would introduce everyone.*

*The museum was once beautiful.  
David had fallen beyond knowing beauty.  
The cafeteria was sanitary and shiny  
but he couldn't find inexpensive coffee.  
The Met discourages loitering,  
so David identified a convenient exit.  
A giggling elementary school class  
tied together like mountaineers  
entered the first floor of the museum  
just as David was rushing  
out of the basement and onto the street.*

broken by the met  
smothered in its symmetry  
crossed to  
the Stanhope



the Stanhope  
pray you don't vomit  
-desk bell  
hails up  
a bell boy-  
some big clock  
strikes noon

*any diet coke? i ask*  
why am i still here-  
Abigail  
would know

hope  
in the Stanhope  
new york can't last forever  
too far from  
vermont

*David dug into his wallet  
to pay the Stanhope coffee bill.  
He squinted to keep smoke out of his eyes.  
He patted pockets to make sure the vials  
and syringe for his evening shot of insulin  
were also in  
his pea coat.*

## CHANCE

atlantic city?  
we just don't have time  
for it  
Abigail and i

*David had been saying he was unwell  
since New Year's Eve. But which disease?  
Abigail didn't seem to be bothered by the fact  
that David's calling was unique.  
Perhaps if she had known in advance  
that he was going to lose his mind,  
she might not have married him.  
It seemed academic now- and maybe  
he thinks he is worse off  
than he really is?*

*They often traveled separately-  
or one would travel and the other not.  
Abigail would be driving down to New York  
later on in the weekend.  
First she would visit friends in the Bronx.  
These friends were still quietly recovering  
from an unspeakable tragedy,  
and so it is good of Abigail to visit them.*

*Another friend lived in New Jersey.  
He was called Lonely John.  
He seemed to be the oldest man in the world.  
On Sunday,  
David would take a subway to the Bronx,  
and then they'd make the interstate journey  
to go see Lonely John together.  
He lived in an old folk's home  
near a barren field  
outside of Lakehurst.*

\*\*\*

we'll meet on sunday-  
i'll come from  
brooklyn  
she'll be with friends  
in the bronx

then see lonely john  
-he's quite ancient  
a great guy  
knew  
meyer lansky

at saratoga-  
we had car trouble  
he helped  
so we've stayed in touch

a helpful old man-  
he invented  
the tea bag  
no one knows him now

he put out a contract  
on sir thomas lipton  
- *the son of a bitch*

grand fatherly john-  
i will never live that long  
but Abigail will

visit lonely john  
no one else seems to see him  
-we honor  
gamblers

## THE OLD MASTERS

*Perhaps he should have gotten a pastry before  
trying to enter the Museum again?*

pigeons  
portico  
sunlight on 5th avenue  
down to two luckies-

*History should not be frightening.  
Existence will grant everyone a time to bloom  
wretchedly- and to become completely useless.  
Only a few genuine sociopaths fail to remain  
harmlessly anonymous. Every man of vanitas  
will become an entombed extravagance-*

*his people will stop sending flowers.*

*But the larynx need not always preach,  
and its hands don't have to curl into fists-  
offer them a few moments to sketch,  
or to scribble haiku into the inevitable  
notebook palm and fingers might fidget with.*

*Allow your eyes to rest on the mute swan,  
the foil kite, the litter clustered around a summer  
park bench. Study the aristocratic blond  
with cat hair on her ebony sweater who  
cheerlessly clutters an empty coffee shop-*

*Penguin classic in one hand, a metal spoon  
in the other. Look squarely at the fall,  
the winter surrounding us,  
surrounding you.*

*David would try to forget he is deeply troubled  
by something beyond his reach.*

*He intends to forget-  
to let the quattrocento and her painted sisters*



*calm the steaming leviathan  
that had suddenly  
innocently breached  
beyond control. All in the spirit of beauty-  
and beauty in the name of beauty  
and of eternity and of whatever seems real.*

*Of going for the sake of going-  
collective memories are never as traumatic  
as personal ones, and of going into museums  
and in museums it is always best to see  
without seeing the untidy.*

*David could remember seeing the paintings  
he once thought he knew as dear friends,  
but not where they were at this moment  
and not why he once thought he wanted to see  
any thing or any painting ever again.*

\*\*\*

nearing the met's steps  
feathers  
frozen breath  
ascend  
i think of Cezanne

car horns  
counterpoint  
italian  
conversations  
not too cold outside

ashes on my pea coat-  
these colors are just  
fine  
why go back inside?



iridescent necks  
bob to examine pebbles-  
    rose footed seekers

wind rustles my leaves  
maybe i'll write haiku while  
    searching for Cezanne?

dented gold necklaces  
    glitter beside  
cracked jade  
    funereal urns

cagey unarmed  
guards  
    watch me write-  
my steps echo  
circles for Cezanne

bronze helmet gone  
green  
    once knew troy  
        intimately-  
my hands  
are so cold

thin museum guard  
    smiling bastard,  
royal blue-  
i could ask-  
    Cezanne?

seduced by  
tudor  
    decorative arts-  
lacquered persian  
    miniatures

the moment  
lost  
and  
weak within  
a colonnade  
i wait  
for Waskow

Cezanne  
is misplaced  
in  
metropolitan  
morgue  
muddle-  
headedness

## THE SECOND SUBWAY

subway fluorescence-  
washes  
heaps of winter coat  
we sway like puffs

*When his traveling companions reappeared  
at the designated time  
they hurried to the 86th street station.  
There were hundreds of traveling people,  
all going in different directions.  
No one seemed to know anyone  
beyond the clicking turnstile.*

*David envisioned Gilgamesh,  
Lucifer,  
Osiris.*

*Descend he said under his breath-  
a favorite word from Paradise Lost.  
But like a different Hell, The Earth is a layer of  
overlapping circles- while some human thoughts sing in  
perpetual unison,  
others chant to recall magnificent hallucinations  
unique and meaningless to anyone  
on the other side of their own unholy  
tenement of clay.  
David collected sacred words and shibboleths  
like an entomologist collecting moths.  
Other people's heads  
held different kinds of collections.*

*Descend.*

*But he never  
really got through  
the entire book.*

i'm dreaming  
of an unremembered  
universe  
    one with fewer  
stars

*Eric and Waskow had no such concerns.  
Their conversation flew past David;  
wonderfully facile  
    humanely imprecise.*

*David picked up bits of other public dialogue  
    discarded narratives  
that seemed to flutter around in the train  
    but it all seemed like the same conversation-*

*people like to tell stories  
about what they have eaten,  
and where they have been.*

\*\*\*

moving platform slides-  
we have dodged the yellow line  
two trains are aligned

a hall of girders  
recedes into rattiness  
    eastbound      void  
westbound

tight as teeth,  
riders read books  
adjust their headphones  
tittle-tattle  
flirt

grimy sleepwalk-  
cellophane  
on a railroad tie  
scuttles like a rat

Waskow and Eric discuss  
chelsea- speak  
of art wish i'd  
loosen up



## Act 2

## Dumbo





## DESCENT INTO DUMBO

i tried to join them-  
Waskow and Eric  
touring  
stylish studios

*Polished leather boots clip-clopped  
and red velvet ribbons wrapped blinders  
around lipstick smiles sipping on travel mugs  
greedily munching white sugar cubes  
snatched from Starbuck's- snatched  
from Ishmael and David whispered  
foaled in some peaceful valley of Vermont,  
a poor scrivener approaching the center  
of the world christened  
by flukes of fellowship- a friend  
to brutal Ahab himself.*

*Waskow was glowing over his destination.  
David was generating and regenerating  
dozens of haiku an hour.*

*Some phrases were useless-  
We become toddlers  
and we fear our dreams... Idiocy  
distilled into- how many syllables?*

*From the Dumbo stop, into oblivion-  
down under the Manhattan Brooklyn bridge  
overpass all of humanity seemed compressed,  
by tidal forces, brief cases, wrist watches and love.  
Waskow and Eric did not seem to notice.  
As generous men they strode into this quarter  
as naturally as nudes into Eden. David  
was innocent of expectation as they scrambled  
up the station steps to pound their soles against*

*slabs of shell laced sidewalk.*

*He counted more than twelve steps.*

*Naples yellow*

*stained the radiating whiskers of a petrified  
fan brush frozen onto the inner edge of a curb.*

*A few strands of Belgian linen somersaulted  
over polluted cracks maybe twenty paces  
further down the Dumbo hill. Friday's sun  
was a floating smudge obscured by plaster dust clinging  
to the ribs of snow clouds.*

*and yes- We become lovers  
we fear our loves.*

*Under the overpass, construction debris  
concealed a disintegrating Reader's Digest*

*he dreamt- We become workers,  
we fear our incompetence.*

*Not much winter had gathered beneath  
the gangsta's graffiti blossoms. Trekking past  
a chain link fence, David deliberately chewed  
on a softened cigarette filter  
while another ash fell past his buttons.*

*It drifted by the cuff of a pant leg  
swirled in a tiny vortex behind the heel,  
and settled to be dispersed like mummy dust.  
York Street narrowed,  
the sidewalk became slate.*

*We become older  
we fear introspection.*

*David didn't want to see anything resembling art.  
anymore that Friday. Art is too easily made  
into an instrument of torture.*

\*\*\*

our first rendezvous-  
meet jenn  
the minimalist  
hundred bucks  
a stroke  
*got my first big*  
*gallery*  
*while still seventeen*  
jenn chirps- *i'm self taught!*

Giotto's angels  
are deconsecrated  
by her  
flip attitude  
d u m b o  
acronym  
for THIS PLACE IS ALL BULL SHIT-

i x-rayed her spine

when i'd seen enough  
we split up-  
they with  
jenn  
i walked  
down  
york street

beneath a dumpster  
a warped canvas  
cupped gray snow  
-totally useless  
no place for shelter-  
can only smoke in a bar  
and so i am doomed

this grim cabaret-  
tucked under steel and concrete  
it should know  
no art

but it's not the art-  
it's that new york city  
schmooze  
hustling  
those paintings

sketch 400 ears-

shake out  
manhattan's earwigs  
hear  
the shamisen

calluses attend!  
you've been painting twenty years  
cease writing  
nonsense-

basketball on  
t.v. dreamt i'd seen  
Cezanne

could touch  
and taste  
the pears

## RED

*David would observe faces, eat pretzels,  
and eavesdrop for the remainder of the evening.*

more cases wheeled in  
it's early friday evening  
york street is tepid

*Every cool sip was a sip of poison,  
malignancy permeated the air.*

*Wars began and ended that day,  
storms swept over the sea, prophets  
were conceived,  
scientific breakthroughs were published  
in safe and warm peer reviewed journals.  
Every stinking bearded exhale begot  
another wasted inhale.*

*It was a hot room for January,  
but David didn't take off his pea coat.  
He was afraid of misplacing it later in the night when he  
was sure to be fully sloshed.*

*Every epiphany- a mixed epiphany.  
Every thought- a mundane thought.*

*Works of art were being born,  
others were mutilated and murdered.  
Poems were destroyed, paintings changed hands,  
letters composed, photographs torn up  
and how about a quick gin to warm the heart?*

\*\*\*

Janice Joplin sings  
take it  
joey knows music  
i buy cigarettes

joey makes a call  
trying to track down jimmy-  
    mario says hi  
    hard people survive  
the bricks of new york city-  
not all are artists

dumbo stinks like oil  
it reeks of graduate school  
    -looks like a  
    hobby  
more artists arrive  
girl with a portfolio  
lad with a sketch book

i should spy on them-  
what do the kids  
need to say-  
are their paintings words?  
    i was one of them  
cherry jawed  
    displacing gravel-  
back in          detroit  
    i commemorate  
slamming out gritty haiku-  
    waiting  
for Waskow

it's good  
    that i'm broke  
Waskow lent me twenty bucks  
more- i'd be more broke  
    strike a Stanhope match  
    release a mushroom cloud  
sneeze- write  
    of the moment:

*with elegant wrists  
they palaver and magpie  
while i drift down stream*

i want to shake them!  
chase them out  
                    of the temple  
but it's their dumbo  
the stranger is i

joey  
    ups the stakes  
turns on the dumb  
            glitter ball  
Tito Fuentes gleams  
one guinness-  
    maybe two more  
    smooth down the edges

shall apologies  
be needed later tonight?  
i disgorge haiku  
            boston-  
such a crime  
    new york city- seeping in  
    vermont might save me

digging deeper now-  
just a few crumpled bills left  
    light snow on york street  
another  
hand truck  
wolf of winter  
    blasts the door  
    i dream of sunday



obsessive verses  
no other way  
to get out of new york city  
were i alone  
in town  
here at dumbo,  
at this point-

i'd uproot my eyes

sunday- leave brooklyn  
meet Abigail in the bronx  
visit lonely john

i can  
only wait-

Eric and Waskow  
absent  
so seek  
sovereign

truth



## INTERMEZZO

longing for heaven  
i rubbed sand in my hair  
and leapt  
at the clouds

*Dried flies from summer  
still dotted the window sill, legs in air,  
smiling on their grotesque backs.  
Tiny black  
snow men were silhouetted  
against the inside contours  
of an amber light fixture.*

*Abigail seemed so devoted,  
yet David always feared the mutability  
of her patience. He wished she were here  
to guide him. Their first apartment  
had three rooms.  
He scavenged the sawed off top of a tree  
for Christmas. Now they own  
a seven room house. He and their son  
buy seven foot Christmas trees.*

*Dead flies look the same in New York,  
Detroit, Montreal, Boston.  
A table surrounded by hipsters rattled  
under a burst of laughter a few yards away.  
Denizens of Dumbo- as animated  
as the revelers of Christ's Entry into Brussels -  
skull in a top hat, an African lady squeezed  
into a tight sapphire dress,  
there's the clownish band leader,  
and a pale kissing couple.  
Vive la social! Vive la social!*

*Not all women are more stable than men,  
but a man is the one most frequently stunned  
by matters beyond his control.*

\*\*\*

we met in grad school  
married to other people  
we both traded up  
i've deteriorated  
banged my face into  
brick walls  
till i bled

she is saint Dymphna  
i slowly slide at dumbo  
gnash my teeth at art-  
her smile now holds me  
a glass bird  
i chase in dreams  
running  
from dumbo  
you suffer  
by my crafting  
self inflicted  
wounds through  
a winter's night-

i'll pay off Waskow  
scrawl across  
one of your checks  
on my knees  
i will  
i can't know what it is  
but it's not just  
neediness-  
i'm haunted  
here

## NUMB FLESH

virgins stalk dumbo  
dressed in black like Ezra Pound  
before his capture

*Talented, abused people.  
His eyes could not meet  
any other eyes. David muttered  
dull                    obscenities  
upon seeing a few exposed boards  
of hardwood floor smothered  
under green linoleum.  
There are many talented people.  
Pickled eggs  
in a gallon jar. A table cloth.  
A greasy vinyl table cloth.  
A scab of dried ketchup    reddish brown  
and cracked rots on a greasy vinyl table cloth.  
Rhymes like raw colors danced  
an odd little jig behind his eyes. Moor.  
Door. Whore. Deplore. Ignore.  
Semaphore- he grinned  
over Semaphore. It reminded him of boats  
in distress, and that he was still wearing his coat.  
He had once watched a gutted cabin cruiser  
get hauled onto a hill of slime-  
a renounced plaything stabbed in the back  
at the city dump by a guy in Oakley sunglasses,  
acting like he was nervous  
about disposing of a boat that way.*

*The dump in high summer  
has an indescribable fetor. An unwashable  
stench. It just needs to wear off  
over time.*

\*\*\*

Jim Morrison yowls  
don't you love her madly  
as the glitter ball  
turns

john Berryman  
growled at a wide-eyed  
sophomore class- you will never know  
the old navigator would soon hoist sail  
farewells to the wind  
fly for the edge  
to savor  
the syntax of obscurity's  
blank verse sonnet

toe  
nail  
in the night  
manumit these  
manuscripts  
let me be-  
dismissed

dumbo, dumbo, drum  
in and out the artists go  
waxed before they wane  
frayed sheaf of vanities  
my advantage  
sabotaged  
wait  
for Waskow-  
*maybe you should move!*  
the artists carp  
of cold lofts  
i've survived  
on ice

twisting through gutters  
dumbo- my mind  
    paris green  
soon- erasure marks

i wish haiku were fiction  
i'd give a  
    kidney  
for it to be so

it's an evil journey-  
    no eurydice- why go?  
without beatrice  
    i'm lost  
dumbo  
    limbo-  
cock - fights  
don't you love her  
    madly  
joey heaves  
pantoums

let's call it haibun  
shoot my insulin- weaving  
    men's room  
    no Stanhope

needle  
in the trash  
diabetics should not drink-  
let's call this eating  
    and then  
remember  
boston after the reading-  
let's call that  
    talking

where has Waskow gone?  
him and grad school Eric  
prance  
dumbo studios-  
two hours this dive  
stuck- a pinned down frog  
on york street  
spinning haiku tops

wrinkled leaves  
besiege-  
kid artists- jabber walking  
hearts quick, hearts tranquil  
on the rocks  
good friday  
york street lights  
glow redder  
dumbo grows fatter

o k  
stranded here-  
got no keys  
into brooklyn  
can't read subway maps

fatalistic plan  
it's like playing  
a tabla  
how my fingers tap  
squeezing new york ticks  
maybe we'll see something  
once  
we escape the lips  
my harmonica  
it's back home- snow entombs  
vermont  
i play it here

dumbo- lofty met-  
rip the F from MFA  
i should warn Eric  
i should  
cast this out-  
a message in a coke can  
drifts down  
lake champlain

dumbo dumb  
foul play  
disgust marauds  
my griegut no-  
this ain't haiku  
Kerouac  
i think  
seeing Issa-  
hallucinated his haiku

now joey goes home  
my crisscrossed vision cannot  
quite make out my home  
love fear loss  
home sea  
nyc brooklyn boston  
vermont met dumbo

some ulla-lulla-  
borrowed blanket  
for guinness  
all down the  
granite

everyday- i guess poorly  
place, win,  
or show?



dumbo chum    dumber-  
how come  
  you don't teach?  
  i only know  
cigarettes  
    confer cigarettes  
Ulysses- green puffs  
sailing through my spectacles  
blindly    wandering

dumbo- you hammer  
thanks for showing me  
this grin  
    a fine evening  
thanks  
york street- thanks  
this helmet fits just fine  
  -makes    the welkin  
ring

*snow*  
*on his beat boots*  
    *luckies became marlboros*  
        *while night*  
*slaughtered him*

twenty bucks-  
water  
greek town,  
brooklyn,  
boston,  
    new york  
has a thousand eyes  
i only see lines  
  -bottles in lines  
  -rest room lines  
can't unencrypt them



where is Cezanne?  
where are the pigeons  
i didn't feed at the met?  
the kids double up  
to shade couple, and  
connect dots with soft  
pencils  
five marlboros-  
Giotto's angels roll  
into purgatory  
new artists appear  
*-sir, can i have this seat?*  
i say-

*help yourself*  
he smiles, nods his head  
thinks it's a figure of speech-  
i near psychosis  
poems all amplified  
the long grin- the figures  
of speech

budweiser is swill  
one blue match  
from the Stanhope  
game shows from  
hades

ramble  
foreign tongue-  
*de paroles vacante*  
*et ce corps*  
*alourdi*

symbolists grope-  
drunken bastards- hash eaters  
stillborn in a jar  
misshapen haiku  
this poem will only fail  
when it is published

get me  
out of  
here  
dumbo- acronyms  
abound like no  
don't say it  
it's getting too tight  
17 gaunt syllables

the butcher

splatters

and our roman heads!  
weeping for red tuscany  
what could i have done?

Eric- you must smoke!  
what good is grad school if you don't  
yes- smoke like a ham  
blitter dall gumbo  
my fear and dear vermont  
i will tumble there

salons of boston!

i will come and read to you  
of paris  
green bronze  
where the fuck  
Waskow?

-how can i illuminate  
chained to a damned stone?  
artists leave  
artists arrive  
from frozen york street-

they crave the warm seats  
i lust haiku truth  
how few books you really sold  
how few oil paintings  
how few marlboros  
is that box really crush proof  
is budweiser gall  
must gold be so foul

is *alle kunst ist lokal*  
for real? if so why?  
why bother going?  
to new york city ever?  
shun Cezanne? haiku?

Dante! Orpheus!  
guide my ambergris to light  
Ulysses- your bow

where in hell  
Waskow-  
i can dig no deeper here  
it beats  
it's still warm  
is this not enough?  
must i throw it on the bar  
drag it

through the snow?

## TWILIGHT

and Waskow prospered  
more loans, ok, cigarettes,  
Eric wowed  
dumbo

*Stations flashed white, apricot, turquoise,  
then fell away behind narrow tunnels.  
Subway stations of the Cross- every drunken artist recites  
the Stations of the Cross.  
The graduate student politely attempted  
to begin a meaningful conversation  
about contemporary trends in painting.*

*David's jaw was slackening.  
He wrestled with his tongue  
to slur, to hiss  
germane retorts. His  
actual speech became more impolite  
offensive beyond his control  
every reply- succulently dismissive.*

*David was annoyed  
that he couldn't smoke  
on the train.*

*At least the subway was no longer a curiosity. David had  
stumbled down toward  
the platform like an empty wheelbarrow  
determined to crash. He was an old hand  
at this world  
by now, resolute  
in a blur of indifference.*

*Their sparely populated tin tube surged*

*headlong into the underbelly of Bedlam.  
Sailing the breadth of Manhattan,  
not knowing where they were going,  
David thought this would be a nice place to live*

*if he had an infinite amount of money.  
He could live on peanuts and coffee.  
He could snooze tonight on the  
subway  
if no one talked to him  
or if he pretended not to hear.*

*Eric  
was talking  
about contemporary figurative painters.*

*Waskow was talking about  
a Duchamp catalog  
he was considering buying.*

*David envisioned crap- a hot spring day  
in a dusty town crushed by  
Tiberius. He tasted blood  
wine and oil paint on the ferrule of a bright hog  
bristle brush.*

*He always painted with brushes in his mouth and in his  
hands, going back and forth transfigured into both artist  
and art- maybe a... Tiresius, Hokusai, maybe Simon  
of Cyrene.*

*Then he free associated  
into Chinatown. He carried a dragon  
puppet past magic marker ideograms, drawn  
over shirt cardboard, propped up into sub shop windows.*

*He smelled the burnt gunpowder  
of Tet and heard the snappy reports of flowery  
fireworks and quietly chuckled  
over what the out-of-whack chemicals of his  
sub conscious had just enabled one small mind  
to do.*

*Eric and Waskow  
stopped chatting  
for a moment.*

\*\*\*

going- chinatown?  
possibly st. mark's  
bookstore-  
i just ride  
the night

verbal jabs  
ripple  
conversations erupting  
it's all ping  
pong to me

tokens quick loans  
brooklyn  
bridge  
station- transfers  
jingle  
sandwiched dimes

Guston is referenced-  
grad school Eric parrots  
words  
i smile,  
shake my head

*he couldn't paint crap*  
*he was too old*  
*to paint crap*

*you are*  
*pitiless*

it's not  
chinatown

i can't do a bookstore now-

dumbo  
all over





## Act 3

### St. Mark's



## A SOUNDLESS SEA

                  this unadorned scrap  
          written out  
      in milk  
                  is a paper cathedral-

*They chose to go to St. Mark's bookstore.  
He didn't know where the bookstore was  
but he knew he couldn't go into it quietly.*

*That was a place for people who wanted  
things to buy.*

*David only wanted to give everything away,  
or trade his earthly possessions  
for another drunken,  
gotterdammerung.*

*Literature, visual art,  
conversation-  
anything resembling an untroubled human  
interaction  
had become a loathsome occupation  
in David's dilated eyes.*

*Everyone carries around money like DNA.  
Fortunes are predetermined by greed and fate-  
unseen forces. Only results are seen.*

*He borrows money when too sick to earn it.  
He pays it back in full, then borrows more.  
He spends it on pencils and cigarettes.  
He whittles them into a nib, puffs them to the butt.  
He has yellow fingers, a cough,  
and crumpled papers everywhere.  
He has worn the same pair of shoes  
every day for three years regardless of weather.*

*Abigail bought him a new pair of shoes-  
David forgets  
to wear them.*

*He stayed a few paces back from the others.  
It seemed like a narrow street,  
but not as frigid as 5th avenue.  
Broken fragments of narration, requiems,  
poems, films fired almost at random  
to the beat of passing foot falls.*

*He looked across the street  
and saw three women  
weeping around a street lamp.*

*Waskow and Eric chatted and chatted  
like schoolboys. Their gloved hands gesticulated  
as frozen wreaths curled behind  
their wool wrapped necks.*

*David looked straight into the night sky  
and was surprised he could not see  
the tops of any skyscrapers.*

*He looked between buildings  
and saw no end  
to the burnished corridors  
vaulted by an onyx afterglow  
where the bums of summer  
once slept  
beside moldy trash cans,  
broken brown glass,  
and the bent frames  
of stolen Greenwich Village  
bicycles.*

i declined my friends  
 before an o.k. rat hole  
 bitter beer- four  
       bucks  
 with angst and camels  
 no books, paris green  
 now keen i scrape haiku  
       earth  
 a saxophonist  
 in a frayed blue jean coat  
       shows  
 up behind the bar

i tap syll ab les  
 like kama teasing kali  
 again courting fire-  
       i-

*Fernando Ray*

crown this pint a looking glass  
       cruel, holy, sick

dull determined street  
 somewhere near st. mark's  
       bookstore  
*...he lived like a rat*  
 yet vexed by sleek greeks  
 and blinded  
 i could have found  
       Cezanne's  
       lotus tears  
 st. mark's verses  
 dye oaken tables- melting  
 into surrealism  
       like Cocteau's  
 antiques;  
       elaborate horrors-

did they  
ever two-step  
in air  
    without limbs  
through unremembered  
chambers  
    gladly mortared  
shut?

far from chinatown  
tangled japanesque  
motifs  
stray beyond the east-  
    Waskow will buy books  
    Eric has a credit card  
    he too will buy books  
i buy passing time  
and sip it  
    *belle- do not*  
*watch me catch deer,*  
*it will sadden you*

it's about the words  
new york is visual art  
    boston-  
about words  
how they travel  
    concord jet, boxcar  
without touch  
and without the scent  
imagine finches  
unfed at the museum  
    a story begins...  
    -another city  
far from this new york city  
far from soundless sea

the moon  
tried to pluck  
          a rose  
beside her ocean  
      a thorn bayonet  
blooms  
across his palm  
in torpid  
      new york city  
far from chinatown  
far from pointless  
sea-

tattooed  
pictures  
brake my skin  
while smoothed eyes endure-  
      clumsily  
      exhumed  
      mourning  
on their pedestals...

young men are not cruel  
instinct  
      *belle* is understood-  
      we old ones  
          shatter  
and i-  
from blind to dark  
have wretchedly receded  
grace less  
      near  
st. mark's

## METROPOLIS ON ICE

fading into sand  
i am  
a hermit crab  
blind  
meticulous

*David imagined he had fallen  
into the snow, and was slowly freezing to death-  
He imagined he did productive work.  
Imagined things are always the most painful.*

*Drinking is productive work  
if it keeps you out of trouble.  
He tried to convince himself that certain assumptions  
were real, or unreal, depending  
on intangible omens.*

*Soothsayer, soothsayer he petitioned the ashtray  
by absently picking at crooked butts with a bent  
cardboard match.*

*The Pythia never cross-examined  
to test the trust or faith of a king.  
She hinted  
at the resolution of desires, but everyone heard  
what he wanted to hear.*

*David had desired nothing from New York  
nothing from Delphi, nothing from any one  
and he did not know why he was  
in this distant city.  
Slogging through sidewalk slush,  
subway loops,  
all for no reason of his own.  
A desire to write haiku-*



*each poem  
as devastating as any other.*

*A desire to squawk like a crow-  
to avoid daylight, to break bread  
break the soundless barrier,  
endlessly  
vengeful desire  
winging in and out of here and friday-*

*forlorn desire.  
Lustrous desire  
nil  
all hope for  
nil.*

\*\*\*

words  
just a bunch of words  
pay no mind what i've said  
forever,  
words

a wall has opened  
behind the bar- a false wall  
secret history

noodling clarinet-  
his was not  
a saxophone- music  
is forming

chain smoke till  
seasick  
should have avoided  
the met  
stayed around brooklyn

but something in this-  
my own raw calligraphy  
is Issa smiling?

i should Xerox it  
illegible as it is  
to share

just the ink  
i've seen ulysses  
seen cork-  
screwing angels  
spin  
wept with  
blind romans

rain would have been best  
but snow is not  
too bad warm  
rain is too easy

swimmers  
swimming in  
i don't comprehend  
from where?  
from spain?  
vague painful

where are the poets  
of new york city cloistered-  
absolved  
near st. mark's?  
the clarinetist  
mumbles to a friend  
the secret room  
softly glows

the bar remains  
dim-  
walnut stained  
nuances  
grow smoky,  
like the beer delusions  
became real  
my nonchalance  
dead now  
bitter as old poems

shot-  
a five buck pint  
frothing like a leopard skin  
thick in my mustache

strike last Stanhope match  
no silver coffee pots  
here knock on the  
veneer

musicians enter  
warmly greeted,  
hugs, laughing-  
throwing off  
wet  
scarves  
frost on window panes  
stars above manhattan twist

-good  
five dollar beer

## FLAKES OF FIRE

how would i answer?  
would i answer like  
an oak  
questioned by lightning?

*Faces near St. Mark's  
were beginning to show their teeth.  
He stared at his notebook  
and wondered if anything he had written  
would be legible tomorrow.*

*Nothing is more unseemly  
than the mind  
of a middle aged man,  
alone in a bar far from home.  
He'll be lustful, suicidal, feeble-mindedly wistful.  
Kinship, legibility, empathy-  
as ancient as the caves we first painted in, as lost  
as the hunter's hand  
that was stenciled onto raw stone.*

*David pressed his palm against his forehead  
and smoothed back thinning curly hair.  
The scrawny cafe table seemed too tall  
to be stable. David speculated- maybe  
under the dome of Hell our stupid decisions  
must reverberate ad infinitum?*

*He had eaten three  
delicious rice balls  
late Thursday night, but almost nothing since  
Thursday night. Had he eaten better  
in the morning he would not be getting  
so hungry tonight. His electrolytes were  
probably unbalanced by now. Maybe he needed more  
electroconvulsive therapy  
or a few extra units of humulin?*

\*\*\*

drinking six hours now  
broken all the haiku rules-  
chain smoked ten hours

say it in one breath-  
so much can be said that way  
and so much more lost

where is Abigail?  
has she left vermont tonight  
how far from sunday

a little rose bush  
curls  
around our snowy fence  
only thorns  
remain

will i be redeemed  
if i confess on sunday  
eighty bucks in bars?

i am so harmless  
so far from the pale  
of blame  
such an innocent

such a lost promise  
young ambitions abandoned  
one to be pitied

so recalcitrant-  
dissolute, snide, unwholesome  
yes, a lewd shyster

the bane of her world  
the personification  
of everyone's wounded dream

a disgusting face  
foul mouthed, sour breathed  
malodorous  
20 miles of shit

why lead me back home?  
leave me entombed in this  
ice  
where is Abigail?

where is new england?  
through flakes of fiery  
winter poems  
parachute

i can barely see  
burn the goddamned  
bookstores down  
it's getting dim here  
my eyes plow sluggish  
verses- a bone yard's  
flagstones  
all the walls  
are false

to each their concerns  
worshiping dandelions  
running for congress  
embrace  
delirium  
let time pass  
as lives  
run into each other

one melts  
one freezes  
    frosted incisor shaped  
        aisles  
meet cat's paw  
transoms

i have nothing else-  
paintings, poems all  
    vanish  
before these green eyes  
i see  
    too much here

new york city rises-  
stretches infinitely  
high like  
    punchinello  
dancing in his lunacy

waiting for Waskow  
diminishing  
    coughing  
eighty dollars shy  
    mired in st. mark's  
        i fell  
in... perhaps a  
a bass fiddler  
    arrived?  
-accordionist  
flat iron mandolin-  
    woman with a violin-  
all speaking russian?  
    pulling strings to tune  
    -mixolydian etudes  
fill  
the secret room

each casually un-  
slings  
an awkward, marvelously worn  
instrument

to strum,  
pluck, blow, bow,  
wooded notes  
voices mingle

test

flight worthiness  
dusting silver frets

everyone catches  
a beat

on the  
smallest  
breath...

a storm  
of  
KLEZMER

pounces  
snatching at  
dules of doves  
as angels rip the roof  
off from  
brewskie's pub  
licorice shofar  
licks  
accordion psalms  
eighth notes



flash like the fiddler's  
pitch-black  
hair  
the trap set's  
high hat  
Chagall's  
stained glass  
shooting rays of blue  
and tremble  
secret  
room  
deliver up your musicians  
and i gray  
wall paper a jaded mudlark  
tumble  
to publicly  
weep.

A rivulet of tears  
i'm thunderstruck  
by the  
ancient  
chords-  
sounds  
dug up  
and unwashed  
regrets  
my  
cruelties  
the cruelties  
of dumbo-  
of drinking eight hours straight  
avoiding st. mark's  
bookstore  
leaving vermont  
leaning on Waskow  
lonely john

all  
i didn't do  
and  
Cezanne  
Jesus wept!  
for greeks, Berryman,  
haiku lunacy while  
never knowing  
assuming i knew-  
imposing on brooklyn  
missing dear  
Abigail  
having no career  
for nips of ginger  
brandy  
smoking like

a fauve

for all  
and for  
uncounted reasons

i weep  
beneath  
yaweh's  
mighty jazz

this  
music  
puts  
me  
to  
shame

i

despise

my

hand

this red

hunger

my

fulsome

sweet

lacerations

the

grim

god

forsaken

delusions.



## Act 4

## Soho



## THE EAST RIVER

besotted, cursing  
a heap of corduroy  
stains  
the polished curbstones

*By the time Waskow began to usher him back  
to Brooklyn, half of the subway stations  
were padlocked. Purple shadows  
encrusted pock marked snow beaten down  
by the treadmills, melodramas, and mysteries  
behind every dark window of New York.*

*They roamed the frozen East side guided  
by beckoning street lights and occasional cops,  
as they searched for an unstretched galvanized  
gate that would let them retreat under the River.  
David thought about both of his homes-  
Fran's placid plaid careworn couch,  
and the distant balloon framed house  
that he came from and would come back to  
through the deathly flurries of New England.*

*All of the stations of his life were unambiguous.  
Always pushed forward by circumstances.  
One step ahead of the tempest.  
One step away from rest. Perhaps that inevitable hunt  
for shelter  
is what enabled David to wake up  
almost clear headed rather than annihilated,  
after crimson dawn set fire to the brick facades  
of Brooklyn.*

*He was dreaming  
of playing the cello.  
A radio clicked on  
in the bedroom.*

\*\*\*

It was no surprise  
morning arrived  
in Brooklyn  
Waskow up early

A bright Saturday-  
I arose  
easily  
made some  
of Fran's  
coffee.  
It was good coffee,  
coffee from Indonesia  
I relaxed  
my  
boots.

We would meet Eric  
find breakfast somewhere  
uptown

seek  
visual  
art.

We set off discussing-  
the very cold, clear  
morning  
took the F train  
-not very crowded  
a prosaic ride

I didn't write  
about it



A delightful place-  
Eric showed us  
Mercer Street  
we found a cafe

The couple spoke French  
at the table next to ours,  
puffed French cigarettes  
ham and cheese  
    looked good  
my omelette oozed  
    morning sun  
first   rate  
espresso

Waskow called the Bronx  
Abigail was not there yet,  
they would keep in touch

My mood   was  
    not   bad,  
I would join Waskow, Eric  
see the Outsiders

A famous event-  
    OUTSIDER ART FAIR  
exhibition hall  
Houston street,  
    all the pin heads,  
    the criminally insane  
    imbeciles, lepers were handed  
brushes  
were told  
to express themselves  
    so that these quaint,  
        saliva stained

art works could be harvested  
hawked and guarded  
by armed guards  
tenderly  
admired  
offered for sale  
in soho  
so these  
connoisseurs  
drove down  
from europe  
in green turtle  
waxed  
jaguars and helicopters  
to write embossed checks  
to buy real outsider art  
make astute  
investments  
so it was as if i had been deaf last night despite  
coffee, rest  
sunshine  
ham and cheese omelette

outsider art fair-  
all of the art will be inside  
i'll walk down houston  
remain outside

## FORGERIES

walking past plate glass  
a ghost fills my navy coat  
its pockets- empty

*David had once been an art instructor  
for mentally retarded adults. He observed  
his students pushing around muddy tempera paint and  
listened to them laugh.*

*He saw them the way Rousseau envisioned savages.  
They were penultimately pure. Innocent artists without  
visions of success.*

*They couldn't read, or dress themselves,  
so they were free of aesthetic contagions,  
-the contamination of magazines, museums,  
academies,  
galleries.*

*David is too easily distracted  
by prejudices and suspicions.*

*He is too well educated.  
He would have preferred  
feeble-minded pleasures.*

\*\*\*

pale glare of new york-  
cafe faces pick  
and sift petrified forests  
this must be soho  
a cybercafe- latte  
lafayette and prince

el condor pasa-  
the ennui of acceptance  
white coffee  
flat scones

a man walked his  
dog  
he has a large apartment  
an absurd great dane

bodiless pigeons  
ascend from an  
iron grate  
feathers  
rich with mites

how fast klezmer  
fades  
day is merciless  
i am uncharitable

scattered  
newspapers  
and sniveling  
art blind critics  
ah! the village  
voice

*His mind flipped through a tattered album  
of unfinished letters and neglected poems.*

*Sometimes  
Abigail  
was awakened by a plaintive  
soliloquy as David  
asleep  
with open eyes  
chortled unintelligible pronouncements-  
in fluent dream gibberish.*

## ABSOLUTE ZERO

an artist  
who sold everything  
he'd ever hung-  
framed and hung  
himself

*Today  
had been a psychological  
Dresden.*

*David went back to the art fair,  
found his friends and was summarily dragged  
deeper into the icy wasteland  
of Soho.*

*This journey should have never been.  
Had he ever been  
on this hideous street corner before?  
He wondered about reincarnation  
as the muffled light of January  
crept across lower Manhattan.*

*He couldn't harbor the enthusiasm  
of Eric and Waskow.  
This passage had been a violent mess.  
David sifted his wreckage.*

*Everyone's necks were bent  
by verticality the aesthetic density  
of the little island- artist made books,  
thingamajigs, derivative diversions.*

*Soho is a sewer,  
an underground river  
where floating art works art worlds  
and art wounds are flushed through  
the trap of history.*

\*\*\*

parking lot guy- spits  
steam rises from pink nostrils  
cars are stacked two high

a grand white cocoon  
new york is an enigma  
slowly unraveled

we see galleries  
nancy hoffman's is quite nice  
Waskow sometimes buys

winter afternoon  
lilac between skyscrapers  
glancing far up town

cold wind through soho  
boots vigorously tramping  
reedy car horns call

shoals of people pass  
prattling of what they've seen  
-what they think they've seen

Eric and Waskow  
know about an opening  
someplace up broadway

vermilion beads  
daylight's end  
approached  
in gray, and indigo brocade-

big mucky muck worms-  
international artists  
huge space- full of crap

clean sound system- ska  
a Cindy Sherman photo  
slick, false, vapid, blonde

so many hairdos  
from bald to dreads  
green to peach  
glitter spikes brylcream

elites have a din  
unique to their class-  
like a threatened rookery

quips get boisterous  
hipsters start twitching  
the floor  
self-absorbed zombies

cheap wine in crystal-  
all parade full finery  
war paint  
headdresses

pity  
no smoking  
how they would balance ashes!  
were smoking allowed

nice aquarium-  
turquoise, real seaweed, waves  
their children and i watch

commune with washed stones  
tropical fish  
tanked  
tetras  
purple, neon, gold



Waskow and Eric  
have vanished into the crowd  
i also

vanish

## ANTIPODES

all these blank pages-  
give me 100 more years  
then  
I'll just give up

*David had crept beneath the limbs  
of an empire at its zenith.  
He was strangely unimpressed.  
Little swatches of cosmos could be seen  
above the city. All of the visible constellations remained  
in place.*

*He had tried  
to wrap his voice around  
a particular existential situation.  
But his reason for trying was to get out alive.  
There was no great idea.  
It was not about the times he actually lived in.  
It was probably not about loving or being loved.*

*Maybe David is a colorless thread-  
one of thousands of threads  
woven into a virtuoso pianist's cotton glove,  
or a stain on a piece of gauze  
wrapped around the purple stub  
of an amputated ear that heard too much  
or will someday hear too much.*

*David was sick of trying to explain.  
He was worn out by creative failures.*

*In the ashy orange of a low sodium street light  
the pitted cornerstone of an anonymous skyscraper  
became a block of unwashed  
gold.*

*This is Broadway, New York City, USA  
in the formative stages of a new epoch.  
Here, for now, is the center of the world.  
Here, for now, are more than seven wonders  
more than seven hills.*

*Without a word for that kind of power  
David tried to comprehend the face  
of New York City the way he wished  
he could have looked on Ur, Great Zimbabwe  
Angkor Thom, Cahokia, Cordoba,  
or Carthage  
before its fall.*

\*\*\*

sable sky, changeless city  
snow melts on my sleeve  
shadows cross the page

idle car horns sing-  
new yorkers pass, gossiping  
paper bags rustle

street steam, sidewalk chill  
yellow taxis harmonize  
basso fire trucks growl

laced flakes embracing cinders  
melt on iron slabs  
falling feet recede

car alarm, brine breeze  
subway rumble,  
japanese-  
this is broadway's air

## NOURISHMENT

this night  
has been very long  
i can write no more-  
sleep brings my wages

*David was cold, and his feet were wet.  
They found a neo-Kyoto style steak house  
serving international cuisine. His friends  
would be embarrassed if he put his head  
on the table and fell asleep, so he departed  
from his friends to sit at the bar-  
ignite another bending camel, trade black tea  
for rice wine. Two middle aged women  
were deep in conversation a few stools away.*

*Their voices added music to the background din.  
One of them, elbow on the bar, attired in a stylish  
scarlet sweater and lilac silk scarf, exhaled  
an aura of platinum smoke rings.  
The bartender wore a crisp white shirt.  
His chestnut beard was neatly trimmed.  
He worked quickly -like a sponge diver-  
rinsing pint glasses in a stainless steel sink.  
The Muzak was almost inaudible.*

*Not long after New York,  
David sent a businesslike scrap of email  
to younger writer. He tried to say something useful  
about the no man's land that separates irony  
from a genuine paradox, or a confession  
from a piece of art. She had no idea  
what he was trying to say.*

\*\*\*

they wanted a bite  
sushi for Eric, Waskow

-i don't eat raw fish  
asked for warm sake  
butter, warm  
restaurant bread  
my crumbs are moments

the sake is clear  
i taste a  
chicken skewer  
does snow swirl at home?

chopsticks-  
stork bills click

Waskow and Eric discuss  
how fine the meal is-

new york has some art  
if one cares to create it  
and remember it

boston is a poem  
the people there are poets-  
new york is  
new york

a visual world  
a place to find  
true klezmer

-there  
exists  
new york

my vermont is small  
inner rivers seek the sea  
let them flow gently

doors open, doors close  
while every door has two locks  
we possess  
one  
key

and the cell phone rings-

Abigail is in  
the bronx,

we'll see lonely john

she  
will find  
brooklyn-

i don't need to ride the train

she'll  
pick me up

sunday.





Afterward: selected writings  
2001-2002

\*

Do not go  
where I will go  
as geese ascend from rain lit roofs,  
and fallen portraits  
    snowy cinders  
fill the city's square  
a porous souvenir  
of what never was  
and likely could have never  
been-  
this laughable  
imagined thing.

If I have lingered,  
    like a cough  
if I have loitered  
on the hope of meeting you-  
please look the other way.  
    While you were here in mind,  
        I boiled my ink  
to cut a mountain face  
and knew  
    you thought you labored  
near the same-  
    I knew  
it is not well  
for anyone to do this thing,  
I should have warned you-  
    shot you down  
instead we spoke of nothing  
        but the brightness  
        of a day.

Do not go  
where I have been-  
to the devil's el  
train  
steel palm trees-  
do not see  
what I have seen  
of this sad continuum  
and the rot  
of insignificance.  
Please don't be  
so madly keen  
I pray you see  
the droll, the dog,  
the dime  
and not the fire  
of a burning wheel  
the holes that bleed to kiss  
each rising solar tongue  
or the empty mercy  
of a greasy sky  
a glass of gin  
the setting sun .

Do not go  
where I am lost to go-  
epistles written in frost  
deface a maze of brain  
brine window  
so my everyday,  
a green eyed ocean-  
green eyes pray  
you will meet my cochlea  
old nautilus shell,  
though if you even dream  
to go  
where I have gone

may you never find me.  
I wish you'll never  
live that poem.

Do not look  
too closely at my dust  
choked ghost  
dear friend,  
my friend  
just kick me in the head  
unclean just  
let me swing the rake  
alone  
for you must never go  
where I have been.

Do not hear  
what I have said  
-dear friend  
should I dare elegize  
upon my truest lie  
again dear friend  
do not go where  
I've had to go.

Do not  
draw near  
where I  
remain.

\*

As in sarcophagi  
ashes melt

nothing left  
is seen or felt

in slivers of peace  
the thin bums dwell

by corkscrew roots  
where the unborn dwelt

so nothing aloft  
is seen or felt

of her hand that held  
the sword of grief

nil is met  
by disbelief

though once dealt  
a decent hand

Tod der bettler  
is a slippery thief

in slivers of peace  
dear sleepers dwell

and in sarcophagi  
some fear sleep

so devils stretch necks  
to disquiet the mind

tuck amber violins  
and hexichord lyres

silver street lamps  
skate on halide

licks of melody  
bent eyes look low

a splendid twilight  
alights on a shear

blade to cut  
the cord of fear

and snap dem bones  
let the meat divide

round sung- roundelay  
rosettes for eyes

my vision ascends  
muttering engrams

hooks pluck out eyes  
red devils condone

these clouds of dust  
tormented tar pitch

and infernal scales  
twined twins- two headed

paper dolls misconceived  
mischief in a niche

drunk with Ash Wednesday  
so dull so we watched

the monkey king dance  
squirm over the outland

to bring my slaughterhouse  
so some fear sleep

will steal their breath  
like a house cat purring

on a blue infant's chest  
on the swollen faced logic

of a night's bayonet  
my veins fear tomorrow

under each night slept  
though some fear sleep

will steal their breath  
I fear my breath

will steal my sleep  
while in sarcophagi

ashes melt  
nothing aloft

is seen or felt  
in slivers of peace

no harm can dwell  
by a corkscrew root  
where the unborn dwelt.

\*

The city cries  
at midnight  
at midnight

comes the wailing  
through peeling  
floral paper  
pigeonholed in the orange  
pocked tree limbs,  
clumps  
of shaken down id weep  
beside invisible Zion  
assumptions  
that have vanished  
with the blue.  
Blue jay phillipics  
slung beneath  
hot linden trees kneel down  
to skim the color off the wet  
of upturned tomcat eyes-  
was it he or I ?  
He or I  
suppressed or stiff  
or wine graffiti  
basso from the beard  
and so i mingled  
in royal blue  
our prophecies,  
and hand prints  
atomized before the brick  
calligraphy  
persists  
a mobile over blood,  
tobacco stained  
your eyes a manger  
your blanket is a Navajo

I guess.  
The handwriting is on the wall,  
those are bullet holes  
in the cinder blocks.

\*

In the beginning  
I AM imagined the cauldron of heaven  
and began to sculpt the earth. The earth was  
without earthy form,  
it had an imagined form-  
but impenetrable obscurity  
shrouded the face of the deep.

The Spirit  
of I AM moved cautiously nearer  
to the face of the deep  
so its mouth could drink  
more deeply  
of cold and colorless water.  
And I AM said: Let there be light  
and so there blossomed light.  
I AM tenderly held  
the fragile light, and wept  
because light is beautiful.

I AM divided the light  
into shadow and light,  
and then exhaled a Word-  
and light refracted into Day  
while the darkness  
of weariness became forever  
the Night.

And the evening  
and the morning  
were accidents.

I AM murmured to no one:  
Let there be  
a damask firmament  
in the midst of these empty waters.  
Let it cleave the waters of heaven  
from the waters of yet unredeemed earth.



And I AM made the firmament  
distant,  
severed by silvery waters-  
waters churned beneath the cloven  
firmament, beneath atramentous waters  
and so the seas began to swell  
and the firmament fell from the waters.  
And so sky and sea were separate,  
it was so.

And so I AM applied great colors  
and whispered that blue firmament  
will always swaddle Heaven,  
and Heaven embrace everything.  
And the evening  
and the morning  
lay upon an ashen beach.  
And the first horizon uncurled  
over Earth,  
and this was the second day....

And I AM commingled a shred  
of its spirit with all  
of the swirling waters  
and into the swirling waters  
new worlds of wandering creatures  
became animated,  
acrobatic with promise.  
And the gliding fowl of every hue  
knew to fly above the Earth  
and under the firmament, and under heaven,  
and through the vertical rays  
of a newborn Sun, yet unnamed,  
and beneath the gathering spine  
of a mountain range of vaulted clouds.

And so I AM created leviathan-  
the breathing whales,  
    lungs  
on the third day, and every  
living creature  
    fated to toss upon the surface  
of the waters.

And I AM raised in up  
    in abundance,  
all dazzling sea denizens  
and I AM made each one cherish  
their own kind, and the winged  
fowl from land to sea each one  
to cherish  
    their own kind

and I AM  
saw that it was fair  
And I AM blessed them,  
saying-  
    Be fruitful  
    in this state  
    of grace,  
multiply by love in your liberty  
fill the waters of all the seas,  
and to the fowl- you too  
    shall multiply  
    upon the earth as you will  
and know the pristine firmament.

And the lavender evening  
and the saffron morning  
were known by the world  
    on the fourth day.

Yet without anyone to understand  
the music of its language

I AM said-  
Let the fruit trees disentangle,  
let every living creature  
gather beside its kin  
let the cattle, and creeping  
    organisms feel the wind,  
Let every brute  
blessed by an earthly coil  
follow after its own kind;  
and every shoal  
and every flock  
and so it was.

I AM had made the brutes of the earth  
    each one after their own kind,  
    all cattle after their own kind,  
and every protean thing that skulks  
    upon the earth- uniquely formed  
        after its own kind,  
and each eye and every textured sense  
    was granted an inner nature.  
The fifth day saw  
all of these wonders.

And I AM said-  
Let us make a Savage  
in our image, after our own  
    celestial likenesses.  
And let these savages have dominion  
over the monsters of the oceans,  
and over the keen and musical,  
and free roving fowl of the air,  
and over all of the earth facing brutes-  
each one of which I AM has made,  
and over the swelling and fecund earth,  
and over every ravenous thing

that increases upon this small  
and splendid earth,  
and Ourselves will know my word.

So I AM created Ourselves  
in its own celestial image,  
and in the image of I AM  
Ourselves was created  
    male and female.  
and I AM blessed them,  
and I AM whispered to them  
in a wonderful soothing language-

    "Be fruitful and multiply,  
    replenish the earth,  
    and subdue it-  
take dominion over the fish of the sea,  
    "      "      over the fowl of the air,  
    "      "      over every mortal thing  
that I AM have placed upon the earth.  
I AM have given you this dominion  
because

    you alone can hear  
    the music of my words.  
And I AM peered  
upon every being  
and every small detail  
of green and blue Creation  
and every strand I AM had made,  
and beheld with the compassion

of a mother  
of a father  
of a titan-  
of a god  
that the world was pleasing  
to its mighty eye-

And the evening  
and the morning  
were the sixth day.  
And the heavens  
and the earth  
were perfect.  
And the dream  
and the thought  
were complete.





## New York: A Haibun Journey

Awodey, a National Poetry Slam haiku champion breaks and rewrites most -if not all- of the haiku and haibun rules. However, New York : A Haibun Journey is more than a technical achievement or chronicle of dipsomania and self-destruction.

Its rhythm and pacing are consciously symphonic. It is a personal journey that in a strange, sad, and ultimately redemptive way foreshadows the destruction and reverberations of Sept. 11. It's Awodey's Howl. It's poetry for our 21st century times.

**Roy Morrison**

Warner, N.H.

January 2002

W.P.C. - Minimal Press

P.O. Box 114

Warner, NH 03278

[www.essentialbooks.com](http://www.essentialbooks.com)

ISBN 1-930149-15-8



51295>



9 781930 149151