



# **Atwood Poetry**



# Table of Contents

## 1. Atwood Poetry

This is a Photograph of Me	5
Eventual Proteus	6
At the Tourist Centre in Boston	8
the animals in that country	10
It is Dangerous to Read Newspapers	12
Backdrop Addresses Cowboy	14
A Soul, Geologically	16
Game After Supper	18
The Small Cabin	19
Projected Slide of an Unknown Soldier	20
Song of the Worms	22
There is Only One of Everything	24
Siren Song	25
Late August	27
I Was Reading a Scientific Article	28
The Planters	30
Charivari	31
You Begin	32
Heart Test with an Echo Chamber	34
Elegy for the Giant Tortoises	36
Bored	38
Marsh Languages	40
Red Fox	42
War Photo	44
War Photo 2	46
Update on Werewolves	47



## This a Photograph of Me

It was taken some time ago.  
At first it seems to be  
a smeared  
print: blurred lines and grey flecks  
5 blended with the paper;  
  
then, as you scan  
it, you see in the left-hand corner  
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree  
10 (balsam or spruce) emerging  
and, to the right, halfway up  
what ought to be a gentle  
slope, a small frame house.  
  
In the background there is a lake,  
15 and beyond that, some low hills.  
  
(The photograph was taken  
the day after I drowned.  
  
I am in the lake, in the centre  
of the picture, just under the surface.  
  
20 It is difficult to say where  
precisely, or to say  
how large or small I am:  
the effect of water  
on light is a distortion  
  
25 but if you look long enough,  
eventually  
you will be able to see me.)

## Eventual Proteus

I held you  
through all your shifts  
of structure: while your bones turned  
from caved rock back to marrow,  
5 the dangerous  
fur faded to hair  
the bird's cry died in your throat  
the treebark paled from your skin  
the leaves from your eyes  
10 till you limped back again  
to daily man:  
a lounge on streetcorners  
an iron-shiny garbadine  
a leaner on stale tables:  
15 at night a twitching sleeper  
dreaming of crumbs and rhymes and a sagging woman  
caged by a sour bed.  
The early  
languages are obsolete.  
20 These days we keep  
our weary distances:  
sparring in the vacant spaces  
of peeling rooms  
and rented minutes, climbing  
25 all the expected stairs, our voices  
abraded with fatigue,  
our bodies wary.

Shrunk by my disbelief  
you cannot raise  
30 the green gigantic skies, resume  
the legends of your disguises:  
this shape is final.

Now, when you come near  
attempting towards me across  
35 these sheer cavernous  
inches of air

your flesh has no more stories  
or surprises;

my face flinches  
40 under the sarcastic  
tongues of your estranging  
fingers,  
the caustic remark of your kiss.

*The Circle Game (1966)*

## At the Tourist Centre in Boston

There is my country under glass,  
 a white relief –  
 map with red dots for the cities,  
 reduced to the size of a wall

5                   and beside it 10 blownup snapshots  
                       one for each province,  
                       in purple-browns and odd reds,  
 the green of the trees dulled,  
 all blues however  
 10                 of an assertive purity.

Mountains and lakes and more lakes  
 (though Quebec is a restaurant and Ontario the empty  
 interior of the parliament buildings),  
 with nobody climbing the trails and hauling out  
 15                 the fish and splashing in the water

but arrangements of grinning tourists-  
 look here, Saskatchewan  
 is a flat lake, some convenient rocks  
 where two children pose with a father  
 20                 and the mother is cooking something  
                       in immaculate slacks by a smokeless fire,  
                       her teeth white as detergent.

Whose dream is this, I would like to know:  
 is this a manufactured  
 25                 hallucination, a cynical fiction, a lure  
                       for export only?

I seem to remember people,  
at least in the cities, also slush,  
machines and assorted garbage. Perhaps  
30 that was my private mirage  
which will just evaporate  
when I go back. Or the citizens will be gone,  
run off to the peculiarly-  
green forests  
35 to wait among the brownish mountains  
for the platoons of tourists  
and plan their old red massacres.

Unsuspecting  
window lady, I ask you:

40 Do you see nothing  
watching you from under the water?

Was the sky ever that blue?

Who really lives there?

*The Animals in That Country* (1968)

## The animals in that country

In that country the animals  
have the faces of people:

the ceremonial  
cats possessing the streets

5 the fox run  
politely to earth, the huntsmen  
standing around him, fixed  
in their tapestry of manners

10 the bull, embroidered  
with blood and given  
an elegant death, trumpets, his name  
stamped on him, heraldic brand  
because

15 (when he rolled  
on the sand, sword in his heart, the teeth  
in his blue mouth were human)

he is really a man

20 even the wolves, holding resonant  
conversations in their  
forests thickened with legend.

In this country the animals  
have the faces of  
animals.

25            Their eyes  
              flash once in car headlights  
              and are gone.

              Their deaths are not elegant.

              They have the faces of  
              no-one.

*The Animals in That Country* (1968)

## It is Dangerous to Read Newspapers

While I was building neat  
castles in the sandbox,  
the hasty pits were  
filling with bulldozed corpses

5      and as I walked to the school  
washed and combed, my feet  
stepping on the cracks in the cement  
detonated red bombs.

10     Now I am grownup  
and literate, and I sit in my chair  
as quietly as a fuse

15     and the jungles are flaming, the  
underbrush is charged with soldiers,  
the names on the difficult  
maps go up in smoke.

20     I am the cause, I am a stockpile of chemical  
toys, my body  
is a deadly gadget,  
I reach out in love, my hands are guns,  
my good intentions are completely lethal.

25     Even my  
passive eyes transmute  
everything I look at to the pocked  
black and white of a war photo,  
how  
can I stop myself

It is dangerous to read newspapers.  
Each time I hit a key  
on my electric typewriter,  
30 speaking of peaceful trees

another village explodes.

*The Animals in That Country* (1968)

## Backdrop Addresses Cowboy

5 Starspangled cowboy  
sauntering out of the almost-  
silly West, on your face  
a porcelain grin,  
tugging a papier-mâché cactus  
on wheels behind you with a string,  
  
you are innocent as a bathtub  
full of bullets.  
  
10 Your righteous eyes, your laconic  
trigger-fingers  
people the streets with villains:  
as you move, the air in front of you  
blossoms with targets  
  
15 and you leave behind you a heroic  
trail of desolation:  
beer bottles  
slaughtered by the side  
of the road, bird-  
skulls bleaching in the sunset.  
  
20 I ought to be watching  
from behind a cliff or a cardboard storefront  
when the shooting starts, hands clasped  
in admiration,  
but I am elsewhere.  
  
25 Then what about me

what about the I  
confronting you on that border,  
you are always trying to cross?

30 I am the horizon  
you ride towards, the thing you can never  
lasso

I am also what surrounds you:  
my brain  
35 scattered with your  
tincans, bones, empty shells,  
the litter of your invasions.

I am the space you desecrate  
as you pass through.

*The Animals in That Country* (1968)

## A Soul, Geologically

The longer we stay here the harder  
it is for me to see you.

5 Your outline, skin  
that marks you off  
melts in this light

and from behind your face  
the unknown areas appear:

10 hills yellow-pelted, dried earth  
bubbles, or thrust up  
steeply as knees

the sky a flat blue desert,

these spaces you fill  
with their own emptiness.

15 Your shape wavers, glares  
like heath above the toad,

then you merge and extend:  
you have gone,  
in front of me there is a stone ridge.

20 Which of these forms  
have you taken:

hill, tree clawed  
to the rock, fallen rocks worn  
and rounded by the wind

25        You are the wind,  
             you contain me

             I walk in the white silences  
             of your mind, remembering

             the way it is millions of years before  
             on the wide floor of the sea

30        while my eyes lift like continents  
             to the sun and erode slowly

*Procedures for the underground (1970)*

## Game After Supper

This is before electricity,  
it is when there were porches.

On the sagging porch an old man  
is rocking. The porch is wooden,

5     the house is wooden and grey;  
      in the living room which smells of  
      smoke and mildew, soon  
      the woman will light the kerosene lamp.

10    There is a barn but I am not in the barn;  
      there is an orchard too, gone bad,  
      its apples like soft cork  
      but I am not there either.

15    I am hiding in the long grass  
      with my two dead cousins,  
      the membrane grown already  
      across their throats.

We hear crickets and our own hearts  
close to our ears;  
though we giggle, we are afraid.

20    From the shadows around  
      the corner of the house  
      a tall man is coming to find us:

He will be an uncle,  
if we are lucky.

*Procedures for the underground* (1970)

## The Small Cabin

The house we built gradually  
 from the ground up when we were young  
 (three rooms, the walls  
 raw trees) burned down  
 5 last year            they said

I didn't see it, and so  
 the house is still there in me

among branches as always    I stand  
 inside it looking out  
 10 at the rain moving across the lake

but when I go back  
 to the empty place in the forest  
 the house will blaze and crumple  
 suddenly in my mind  
 15 collapsing like a cardboard carton  
 thrown on a bonfire, summers  
 crackling, my earlier  
 selves outlined in flame.

Left in my head will be  
 20 the blackened earth: the truth.

Where did the house go?

Where do the words go  
 when we have said them?

*Procedures for the underground* (1970)

## Projected Slide of an Unknown Soldier

Upon the wall a face  
uttered itself  
in light, pushing  
aside the wall's darkness;

5      Around it leaves, glossy,  
          perhaps tropical, not making  
          explicit whether the face was  
          breaking through them, wore them  
          as disguise, was crowned  
10     with them or sent them  
          forth as rays,  
          a slippery halo;

          The clothes were invisible,  
          the eyes  
15     hidden; the nose  
          foreshortened: a muzzle.  
          Hair on the upper lip.  
          On the skin the light shone, wet  
          with heat; the teeth  
20     of the open mouth reflected it  
          as absolute.

          The mouth was open  
          stretched wide in a call or howl  
          (there was no tongue)  
25     of agony, ultimate  
          command or simple famine.  
          The canine teeth ranged back  
          into the throat and vanished.

30 The mouth was filled darkness.  
The darkness in the open mouth  
uttered itself, pushing  
aside the light.

*Procedures for the underground* (1970)

## Song of the Worms

We have been underground too long,  
we have done our work,  
we are many and one,  
we remember when we were human

5 We have lived among roots and stones,  
we have sung but no one has listened,  
we come into the open air  
at night only to love

10 which disgusts the soles of boots,  
their leather strict religion.

We know what a boot looks like  
when seen from underneath,  
we know the philosophy of boots,  
their metaphysic of kicks and ladders.

15 We are afraid of boots  
but contemptuous of the foot that needs them.

20 Soon we will invade like weeds,  
everywhere but slowly;  
the captive plants will rebel  
with us, fences will topple,  
brick walls ripple and fall,

25 there will be no more boots.  
Meanwhile we eat dirt  
and sleep; we are waiting  
under your feet.

When we say Attack

you will hear nothing  
at first.

*You are Happy* (1974)



## Siren Song

This is the one song everyone  
would like to learn: the song  
that is irresistible:

5 the song that forces men  
to leap overboard in squadrons  
even though they see the beached skulls

the song nobody knows  
because anyone who has heard it  
is dead, and the others can't remember.

10 Shall I tell you the secret  
and if I do, will you get me  
out of this bird suit?

15 I don't enjoy it here  
squatting on this island  
looking picturesque and mythical

with these two feathery maniacs,  
I don't enjoy singing  
this trio, fatal and valuable.

20 I will tell the secret to you,  
to you, only to you.  
Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!  
Only you, only you can,  
you are unique

25      at last. Alas  
          it is a boring song  
          but it works every time.

*You are Happy* (1974)

## Late August

This is the plum season, the nights  
blue and distended, the moon  
hazed, this is the season of peaches

5 with their lush lobed bulbs  
that glow in the dusk, apples  
that drop and rot  
sweetly, their brown skins veined as  
glands

10 No more the shrill voices  
that cried Need Need  
from the cold pond, bladed and urgent as  
new grass

15 Now it is the crickets  
that say Ripe Ripe  
slurred in the darkness, while the plums

dripping on the lawn outside  
our window, burst  
with a sound like thick syrup  
muffled and slow

20 The air is still  
warm, flesh moves over  
flesh, there is no

hurry.

*You are Happy (1974)*

## I Was Reading a Scientific Article

They have photographed the brain  
and here is the picture, it is full of  
branches as I always suspected,

5 each time you arrive the electricity  
of seeing you is a huge  
tree lumbering through my skull, the  
roots waving.

10 It is an earth, its fibres wrap  
things buried, your forgotten words  
are graved in my head, an intricate

red blue and pink prehensile chemistry  
veined like a leaf  
network, or is it a seascape  
with corals and shining tentacles.

15 I touch you, I am created in you  
somewhere as a complex  
filament of light

You rest on me and my shoulder holds

20 your heavy unbelievable  
skull, crowded with radiant  
suns, a new planet, the people  
submerged in you, a lost civilization  
I can never excavate:

25 my hands trace the contours of a total  
universe, its different  
colours, flowers, its undiscovered  
animals, violent or serene

its other air  
its claws

30 its paradise rivers

*Selected Poems (1965-1975)*

## The Planters

They moved between the jagged edge  
of the forest and the jagged river  
on a stumpy patch of cleared land

5 my husband, a neighbor, another man  
weeding the few rows  
of string beans and dusty potatoes.

They bend straighten; the sun  
lights up their faces and hands candles  
flickering in the wind against the

10 unbright earth. I see them; I know  
none of them believe they are here.  
They deny the ground they stand on,

pretend this dirt is the future.  
And they are right. If they let go  
15 of that illusion solid to them as a shovel,  
open their eyes even for a moment  
to these trees, to this particular sun  
they would be surrounded, stormed, broken

20 in upon branches, roots tendrils, the dark  
side of light  
as I am.

*The Journals of Susanna Moodie (1976)*

## Charivari

They capped their heads with feathers, masked  
 their faces, wore their clothes backwards, howled  
 with torches through the midnight winter  
  
 and dragged the black man from his house  
 5 to the jolting music of broken  
 instruments, pretending to each other  
  
 it was a joke, until  
 they killed him. I don't know  
 what happened to the white bride.'

10 The American lady, adding she  
 thought it was a disgraceful piece  
 of business, finished her tea.

(Note: Never pretend this isn't  
 part of the soil too, tea drinkers, and inadvertent  
 15 victims and murderers, when we come this way  
  
 again in other forms, take care  
 to look behind, within  
 where the skeleton face beneath  
  
 the face puts on its feather mask, the arm  
 20 within the arm lifts up the spear:  
 Resist those cracked  
 drumbeats. Stop this. Become human.)

*The Journals of Susanna Moodie (1976)*

## You Begin

You begin this way:  
this is your hand,  
this is your eye,  
that is a fish, blue and flat  
5 on the paper, almost  
the shape of an eye.  
This is your mouth, this is an O  
or a moon, whichever  
you like. This is yellow.

10 Outside the window  
is the rain, green  
because it is summer, and beyond that  
the trees and then the world,  
which is round and has only  
15 the colors of these nine crayons.

This is the world, which is fuller  
and more difficult to learn than I have said.  
You are right to smudge it that way  
with the red and then  
20 the orange: the world burns.

Once you have learned these words  
you will learn that there are more  
words than you can ever learn.  
The word hand floats above your hand  
25 like a small cloud over a lake.  
The word hand anchors  
your hand to this table,  
your hand is a warm stone  
I hold between two words.

30 This is your hand, these are my hands, this is the  
world,  
which is round but not flat and has more colors  
than we can see.

35 It begins, it has an end,  
this is what you will  
come back to, this is your hand.

*Two Headed Poems* (1978)

## Heart Test with an Echo Chamber

Wired up at the ankles and one wrist,  
 a wet probe rolling over my skin,  
 I see my heart on a screen  
 like a rubber bulb or a soft fig, but  
 5 larger,  
 enclosing a tentative double flutter,  
 the rhythm of someone out of breath  
 but trying to speak anyway; two valves  
 opening  
 10 and shutting like damp wings  
 unfurling from a gray pupa.

This is the heart as television,  
 a softcore addiction  
 of the afternoon. The heart  
 15 as entertainment, out of date  
 in black and white.  
 The technicians watch the screen,  
 looking for something: a block, a leak,  
 a melodrama, a future  
 20 sudden death, clenching  
 of this fist which goes on  
 shaking itself at fate.  
 They say: It may be genetic.

(There you have it, from science,  
 25 what God has been whispering all along  
 through stones, madmen and birds'  
 entrails:  
 hardness of the heart can kill you.)  
 They change the picture:  
 30 now my heart is cross-sectioned

like a slice of textbook geology.  
They freeze-frame it, take its measure.

35 A deep breath, they say.  
The heart gasps and plods faster.  
It enlarges, grows translucent,  
a glowing stellar  
cloud at the far end  
of a starscope. A pear  
made of smoke and about to rot.  
40 For once the blood and muscle  
heart and the heart of pure  
light are beating in unison,  
visibly.

45 Dressing, I am diaphanous,  
a mist wrapping a flare.  
I carry my precarious  
heart, radiant and already  
fading, out with me  
along the tiled corridors  
50 into the rest of the world,  
which thinks it is opaque and hard.  
I am being very careful.  
O heart, now that I know your nature,  
who can I tell?

*Interlunar* (1984)

## Elegy for the Giant Tortoises

Let others pray for the passenger pigeon  
 the dodo, the whooping crane, the  
 eskimo:  
 everyone must specialize

5 I will confine myself to a meditation  
 upon the giant tortoises  
 withering finally on a remote island.

I concentrate in subway stations,  
 in parks, I can't quite see them,  
 10 they move to the peripheries of my eyes

but on the last day they will be there;  
 already the event  
 like a wave travelling shapes vision:

15 on the road where I stand they will  
 materialize  
 plodding past me in a straggling line  
 awkward without water

their small heads pondering  
 from side to side, their useless armour  
 20 sadder than tanks and history,

in their closed gaze ocean and sunlight  
 paralysed  
 lumbering up the steps, under the  
 archways  
 25 toward the square glass altars

where the brittle gods are kept,  
the relics of what we have destroyed,  
our holy and obsolete symbols.

*Selected Poems: Volume II (1976-86)*

## Bored

All those times I was bored  
out of my mind. Holding the log  
while he sawed it. Holding  
the string while he measured, boards,  
5 distances between things, or pounded  
stakes into the ground for rows and rows  
of lettuces and beets, which I then (bored)  
weeded. Or sat in the back  
of the car, or sat still in boats,  
10 sat, sat, while at the prow, stern, wheel  
he drove, steered, paddled. It  
wasn't even boredom, it was looking,  
looking hard and up close at the small  
details. Myopia. The worn gunwales,  
15 the intricate twill of the seat  
cover. The acid crumbs of loam, the granular  
pink rock, its igneous veins, the sea-fans  
of dry moss, the blackish and then the graying  
bristles on the back of his neck.  
20 Sometimes he would whistle, sometimes  
I would. The boring rhythm of doing  
things over and over, carrying  
the wood, drying  
the dishes. Such minutiae. It's what  
25 the animals spend most of their time at,  
ferrying the sand, grain by grain, from their tunnels,  
shuffling the leaves in their burrows. He pointed  
such things out, and I would look  
at the whorled texture of his square finger, earth  
30 under

the nail. Why do I remember it as sunnier  
all the time then, although it more often  
rained, and more birdsong?  
I could hardly wait to get  
35 the hell out of there to  
anywhere else. Perhaps though  
boredom is happier. It is for dogs or  
groundhogs. Now I wouldn't be bored.  
Now I would know too much.  
40 Now I would know.

*The Atlantic Monthly* (1994)

## Marsh Languages

The dark soft languages are being silenced:  
 Mothertongue Mothertongue Mothertongue  
 falling one by one back into the moon.

5 Languages of marshes,  
 language of the roots of rushes tangled  
 together in the ooze,  
 marrow cells twinning themselves  
 inside the warm core of the bone:  
 pathways of hidden light in the body fade and wink out.

10 The sibilants and gutturals,  
 the cave languages, the half-light  
 forming at the back of the throat,  
 the mouth's damp velvet moulding  
 the lost syllable for 'I' that did not mean separate,  
 15 all are becoming sounds no longer  
 heard because no longer spoken,  
 and everything that could once be said in them has  
 ceased to exist.

20 The languages of the dying suns  
 are themselves dying,  
 but even the word for this has been forgotten.  
 The mouth against skin, vivid and fading,  
 can no longer speak both cherishing and farewell.  
 It is now only a mouth, only skin.  
 25 There is no more longing.

Translation was never possible.  
Instead there was always only  
conquest, the influx  
of the language of hard nouns,  
30 the language of metal,  
the language of either/or,  
the one language that has eaten all others.

*Morning in the Burned House* (1995)

## Red Fox

The red fox crosses the ice  
intent on none of my business.  
It's winter and slim pickings.

5 I stand in the bushy cemetery,  
pretending to watch birds,  
but really watching the fox  
who could care less.  
She pauses on the sheer glare  
of the pond. She knows I'm there,  
10 sniffs me in the wind at her shoulder.  
If I had a gun or dog  
or a raw heart, she'd smell it.  
She didn't get this smart for nothing.

15 She's a lean vixen: I can see  
the ribs, the sly  
trickster's eyes, filled with longing  
and desperation, the skinny  
feet, adept at lies.

20 Why encourage the notion  
of virtuous poverty?  
It's only an excuse  
for zero charity.  
Hunger corrupts, and absolute hunger  
corrupts absolutely,  
25 or almost. Of course there are mothers,  
squeezing their breasts  
dry, pawning their bodies,  
shedding teeth for their children,  
or that's our fond belief.

30 But remember—Hansel  
and Gretel were dumped in the forest  
because their parents were starving.  
Sauve qui peut. To survive  
we'd all turn thief

35 and rascal, or so says the fox,  
with her coat of an elegant scoundrel,  
her white knife of a smile,  
who knows just where she's going:

40 to steal something  
that doesn't belong to her—  
some chicken, or one more chance,  
or other life.

*Morning in the Burned House* (1995)

## War Photo

The dead woman thrown down on the dusty road  
is very beautiful.  
One leg extended, the other flexed, foot pointed  
towards the knee, the arm flung overhead, the hand  
5 relaxed into a lovely gesture  
a dancer might well study for years  
and never attain.  
Her purple robe is shaped  
as if it's fluttering;  
10 her head is turned away.

There are other dead people scattered around  
like trees blown over,  
left in the wake of frightened men  
battering their way to some huge purpose  
15 they can't now exactly remember,

But it's this beautiful woman who holds me,  
dancing there on the ground  
with such perfection.

Oh dead beautiful woman, if anyone  
20 had the power to wrench me through despair  
and arid helplessness  
into the heart of prayer,  
it would be you -

Instead I'll make for you  
25 the only thing I can:  
although I'll never know your name,  
I won't ever forget you.

30      Look: on the dusty ground  
          under my hand, on this cheap grey paper,  
          I'm placing a small stone, here:  
                  o

*The Door* (2007)

## War Photo 2

Even if you had remained alive,  
 we would never have spoken.  
 Suppose we'd shared a road,  
 a car, a bench, a table -

5        Maybe you would have offered me  
           a piece of bread, a slice of lemon.  
           Or else there would have been suspicion,  
           or fear, or nothing.

10       Now though it seems I am asking  
           and you are answering:

          Why is the tree dying?  
           It is dying for lack of truth.

          Who has blocked the wells of truth?  
           Those with guns.

15       What if they kill all those with no guns?  
           Then they will kill one another.

          When will there be compassion?  
           When the dead tree flowers.

20       When will the dead tree flower?  
           When you take my hand.

          This is the kind of thing  
           that goes on only in poetry.  
           You are right to be suspicious of me:  
           I can't speak your absence for you.

25       (Why is it then I can hear you so clearly?)

*The Door* (2007)

## Update on Werewolves

In the old days, all werewolves were male.  
 They burst through their bluejean clothing  
 as well as their own split skins,  
 exposed themselves in parks,  
 5 howled at the moonshine.  
 Those things frat boys do.

Went too far with the pigtail yanking—  
 growled down into the pink and wriggling  
 females, who cried Wee wee  
 10 wee all the way to the bone.  
 Heck, it was only flirting,  
 plus a canid sense of fun:  
 See Jane run!

But now it's different:  
 15 No longer gender specific.  
 Now it's a global threat.

Long-legged women sprint through ravines  
 in furry warmups, a pack of kinky  
 models in sado-French Vogue getups  
 20 and airbrushed short-term memories,  
 bent on no-penalties rampage.

Look at their red-rimmed paws!  
 Look at their gnashing eyeballs!  
 Look at the backlit gauze  
 25 of their full-moon subversive halos!  
 Hairy all over, this belle dame,  
 and it's not a sweater.

O freedom, freedom and power!  
they sing as they lope over bridges,  
30 bums to the wind, ripping out throats  
on footpaths, pissing off brokers.

Tomorrow they'll be back  
in their middle-management black  
and Jimmy Choos  
35 with hours they can't account for  
and first dates' blood on the stairs.  
They'll make some calls: Good-bye.  
It isn't you, it's me. I can't say why.  
They'll dream of sprouting tails  
40 at sales meetings,  
right in the audiovisuals.  
They'll have addictive hangovers  
and ruined nails.

*Dearly* (2020)