

European Interventions



poetry by Francis Raven

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For Carolyn and Leah my traveling companions



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francisraven@hotmail.com

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1.

“Commercial”

Fake steam
Rising, blowing
From
The insurance advertisement
Of his mouth,
“without obligation”.

2.

“First Flight of the Summer”

Sitting by the engine,
Landing on the wing -
One shallow phrase:
“airplane food”.

It's not really
That funny
When the phone rings
While you're having sex,
Like it is on TV.

But the airplane
Taps the air
Above the river
Which bounds a state.

3.

“Phenomenology of Wings”

The history of flight
Folds into the compartment above;
Folds into the body
Without a time zone,
In order to hold a birthday;
Folds again
And falls into a bottle
Which tampers
With the notion of flight
As it
Rides the waves,
Far below,
In another waking.

4.

“Vandalism”

Two worlds:
Bridges tunnel
The soul.
Underneath: graffiti.
“Traffic problems
the world over.”

5.

“Acknowledgments”

Dedications in the breeze
On shreds of paper becoming sleaze
In the canal which traverses,
And perhaps erodes, the tower
Wallpapered with both Rorschach images
And the map of a common language.

But still, we dedicate odes from the
Unraveling Egyptian cotton (long fiber).
One end of the thread trips
An Armani salesman
While the other
Wicks the water
From the canal
Previously spoken of.

6.

“Shape Alone”

Piazza to yourself.
Choppy water.
Backlit Basilica.

Mark's lion should eat these pigeons.

Clouds and dust. Slow hum of boat motor.

Tides shape the meaning.

7.

“Little Piece of the Sky Perspective”

The man in the blue button-down shirt
Places his hand on his waist.
Through the hole that his arm makes
A column is exposed,
(perspectives bundle).
The world is sustained, held up,
By that column, at that instant,
Through the hole in perspective
That his arm begins to form.

8.

“Poemette for Carolyn”

Guitar player
In the moonlight
Of tired tourists -

They keep it
Going, but
They need to sleep.

Our walk tumbles into your own tiredness.
Is there anything more than
Glass, high fashion and masks?

Guitar player
In your hair,
In the moonlight.

Ohh, maybe there is
Some great video art
To be made from this scene.

9.

“Long Light Trail’s Veil”

Light from 6:27 morning sun
Reflecting off cobblestone,
Marking a trail with that reflection.
I’m not sure if it goes into the distance
Or if it just always stays here.

Somebody asks the pigeons
About the correct method of viewing
This supposed dichotomy,
But they don’t speak our language.

They give voice to a tongue
Which is the negative image
Of that sun’s reflection,
Passing, waking, pouring into later heat.

10.

“Northern Italian Birthday Train”

Heat, forgot to get first class tickets.
Sparse and sweat.
Is that corn
Or another?

Train station numbers.
Flocks. Sardines.
Names of songs coming back.
Nostalgia and experience.

Pines and cypress.
Cement. Reinforced voyage.
Tracks. The color of fading paint.
Almost the shape.

Deep blue against salmon pink.
Silent curve. Clothes ripple.

Bordering the mountains. Bordering the puzzle.
Experience and lakes.
Graduation. Bundles, parcels, empty
 espresso cups. Empty other.
Is that the famed...?

Various colored awnings, really various.
 California and Missouri
 Mixed into the vines
 Enlacing the railroad tracks;
 Entangling us further; the plot.

Birds warp the map.
Did I hear you chirping
Or was that
A crosswalk for the blind?
Or was that a security cart
Ordering me to move over?

Rubble and center.
Bundles of perception.
Bundles of goods.
And the garbage,
And the categories.

Do they use the elephant's eye metaphor
For corn
In Italy?

Poking out, grapes and terra cotta.
Morning glories at the edge of those same endless corn fields.

11.

“Source Notation”

Copied architectural posters
Fall onto the domes
Which they represent.

Fall, that is, on the idea
Of a source
Which they sustain.

12.

“Bosch in a Venice Palace”

Train tickets almost missed.
Conducting the strange line across canals.
Characters of good and evil -
 Muskrat devils,
 Perhaps rats,
 Larvae.
Conducting the mirror between faces.
Loading supplies onto the sinking boat.
Limbs, logs, and other naturals.

13.

“Function of the Image”

The image of the butcher on St. Mark’s basilica
Lets the blood fall
Below all of the pigeons perched in the square.

The image of the wine turning
Allows the cocktails to flow
Into all of these cafes which line said square.

14.

“The Cocktail Hour”

Mixed angels, griffins with different proportions
Of lion and eagle.
Souls like cocktails.

A really good martini
Was termed a ‘silver bullet’
By Capote.

Some souls
Are really good martinis,
Shooting for the godhead

While being sipped, sometimes gulped,
On the piazza
Before dinner.

15.

“Postmodern Art Furniture”

Fragmented chairs,
But still, there is room to sit
And enjoy your gnocchi
With gorgonzola, tomatoes and mushrooms.
But still, there is room to relax.

So, relax
In this city of canals and oil,
Relax in the design
As part or parcel
Or even as observer -

Did you fragment these chairs?

16.

“Indigestion/Controlled Flood”

The lens folds in the canal's lips. All is eaten, but not everything is digested. The philosophers must know by now that this is how matter is created, how perspective is urged to view itself from a distance, as part of an era. Did you remember to take the lens-cap off? I'm not sure. The photographs are dark, but I'm not sure if it's because the room we view them in has no lights to speak of or if I merely fucked up and didn't remember to take the cap off. Whatever the case, the light-switches were all broken in the storm. We must now always be awake or always asleep, there is no longer any room in between. This is the fundamental change that has been made. Poetry is taken in this fold. The canal kisses with its polluted mouth, with the burp of its digestion of the art in this world.

17.

“Pages”

Notes are hinged quietly
In violent scores.

The map seems so natural,
So pleasing.
Nevertheless, the surveyor
Is a passively aggressive,
Yet violent, man.

The color of countries
Might bleed into one
Or flow like power,
Fame, or uninhibited money,
Diffusing through complex differentials.

These riverbeds have their courses altered,
Although it must always appear that they do not.

18.

“Pennies Plunk”

Coins stacked into
A lifestyle -
 Sugar pours.
Neptune breaks and brings
 The world down,
 Qualitatively down.
Colors rust,
 But interest needs age.

19.

“Tanned”

Leather bags.
Leather souls.
Leap of faith.
Leap across the drain.
Tacky leather.
Expensive leather.
Contrast soul.
Contrast glass.

20.

“Private Voyage on a Public Fountain”

Life lifts a leaf
Onto Neptune’s fountain,
But the water pushes
It down
And the wind
Blows it
Onto a copy
Of Michelangelo’s David.

21.

“Summer Sale”

The morning of muses mixes
With a Boticelli.
Their mouths blow
His sperm across
The oceans - across their doubt -
Into the genesis
Of our reason and wildness -
Blow again,
Blow the grains of sand from her shell,
Blow the grains of sand with such delicate force
 That pearls are formulated,
 Prayed to,
 And then furtively dropped,
 With a slight plunk,
 Into those oceans,
 Onto the petals of that spring.
 Flora’s dress was bought
40% off at the immaculately arranged Massoni
 Around the wine split corner.
The walls themselves mix
And contemplate each other
In the crowds of the Uffizi.

22.

“Michelangelo’s Prigione”

The soul is stuck in the body -
A prisoner, we’ve read in many tracts,
But, still needs it,
Is nothing without it,
But fights against the marble
And is viewed by many thousands of people in Florence,
But finally does not escape,
Yet shows escape
And leaves its saying to us.

23.

“Stepping Back for the Taste”

Three dishes
 Spit, or perhaps split,
Lonely
 Waves apart.
 Silk bets
Slowly;
 Laying her sexy,
 But not pretty,
Money
 Down
 In the dish,
For the aesthetic distance.

24.

“Fountain Reproduction”

Fountains are all about coming back to them.
The pump of dirty water,
The whirlpool -
Ha! You can step in the same river twice.
You give it its identity as source.
 “In this particular fountain
 the four rivers of the world
 are represented
 as old men
 in this masterpiece by Bernini.”

Coming back again, swirling, haunting.
Coming back again
To the representation
Of coming back again,
Makes you think.
Yes, it really makes you think -
But about what?
Makes you think about how coming back again
To the representation of coming back again
Is how your life comes back again.

25.

“Dwelling for Tomorrow”

Morning houses
Doubt in its mouth,
But does not belch its flavor
Until sun sets,
Until the spinning of the globe
Makes it nauseous.

But when the morning pukes
It really pukes,
If you know what I mean,
So that it can have a fresh stomach
For the next morning.

Does that make sense?
The morning needs
An empty stomach
So that it can eat doubt
In the morning.

People walk through people
In order to get to personality.
Well, even if it doesn't make perfect sense
It's a nice poetic story
And it really is how the morning eats.

26.

“Train: Bonn to Berlin”

This is the heart of the train -
Tables and beer. Talk. Perhaps too much.
Tunnels. Her stomach sick.
Eyes twitching back and forth
When she stares
At the trees close by,
Making her sick.

Look further
Into the little hill town.
No, no, don't look at it,
Look into it,
Into its window,
Into whatever
It calls a soul.

This is the heart of the train -
Dirty cup and sweat. Foreign languages fast.
Having to pee,
The distance comes close
Every few minutes
And then recedes again
Into another distance.

27.

“Contingency Plans”

But if there were shoes on the floor
I must have gone barefoot
In the dark
To the garden
With the wet and netted flowers.

But if there were fish
You must have fed them
The change from the subway
Or else you would have caught them
And learned how to clean them
From some fashionable youths
Who were related to fishermen.

But if the windows were open
I must have dropped a letter
From the sill
Onto the prayers below.

But if the garden was windy
Your hands must have tried to catch
The blowing papers;
Your mouth must have tried to catch
The inspiration of that flying poem.

28.

“....bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down....”

Did the table-leg slip? Did your dinner collapse to a fine point of sand? Of course, I asked other things that night, but these were the most important. You answered affirmatively, but also went into a long discourse about how all of your papers had been scrambled with the falling of the planks. Your use of the word ‘planks’ urged me to infer that you thought of the table as a bridge, but from the entire context of the conversation I could not figure out what you thought that bridge connected. Two sides of a thought (the double-edged sword metaphor)? Man and woman connected by the distance between? A falling and a rising? Yes, that was it. You thought of the table as a bridge between falling and rising and now that that bridge had actually fallen you weren’t sure what to do. You threw your hands up, so to speak. But that seemed to me the answer that you were looking for. The best thing to do when the bridge between falling and rising has fallen is to throw your hands up, that is, to represent rising to a distant foreigner.

29.

“Restraint Continuing Influence”

Arms holding
Folded piece,
Something above,
It has to be.
Inference to best explanation.

Arms holding again.
Cross, yes, holding the cross,
But not spread upon it.
Turning your head
Both to the justified lie
And to the inexcusable one.
Walking around
With a curse,
Hidden by holding it;
Implicating yourself in its future.

Arms holding
Another whose arms hold yours.
Enveloping twice.
Circuit.
Fed twice.
One to others' mouth
And back
Against the wall
To hold,
To begin holding
With your back
Against the wall,
Holding a violent piercing,
Crosses, curses, and another.

30.

“Growing Influence”

Tree to mouth's kiss.
A poem.
Can I live it?
Another tree between the ears.
Leaves fall off the lobes.
The roots are now somewhere
Near my belly, can I hear them grow?
Can I hear my beard grow?
Can I hear the distance fall forward
And become another distance?
Bark to lips: rough,
Chapped now because of it.
Can I live it?
The roots just below my nose. Within.
I could kiss them from the inside.
But now the distance has receded down,
Below, another tunnel. Another man
Has hidden that tree, although
I feel its roots creeping.
Is it a cottonwood

Wandering with the river?
Perhaps it does strike me in this fashion;
Perhaps the tree within me
Feels like it has white puffs,
Sometimes termed 'wishes',
Like the cottonwood has. Like this. Like that.
Like I know. Even if I do know or did know,
Can I live it?
The question is not as metaphysical as it sounds.
No, it is a question that acts out its wildest fantasies
In any room that I speak within.
Yes, language is its keeper,
Its place-keeper, its zero, if you will.
Language also holds the trees within,
But I did not recognize this fact at first.
I did not realize that language
Makes it possible to exist twice
And to be kissed twice.
Once in flesh, once in metaphor.
Hypostasis of this small poem.
Can I live the double life of art?

31.

“Beergarden Landscape”

Shadow of Linden on red umbrella.
Its seeds fly, one into the beer,
One onto the goose shit.

Shadow of gray hair
On stern German forehead.
Each piece flies in the wind of the Rhein,

One on top of the glasses, one on the ear.

32.

“Seasoning Extension”

Experienced distance.
Time to call in the debts.
See how the leaves have desiccated.
Time to. Time towards.
Measure differently and separately
Your voice hinges the foreground

To the distant river.
Close that frame,
The key hidden
Within silver formulations -
Experienced aesthetic.
Beauty along, a way.
The way mirrors
Another page,
But it does so in the wrong way;
So wrong, I just can't believe it.
I can't believe what I see.
Experienced walk.
Now, tune. Mirror, grass, barefoot, summer tuning.
Revvng up the distance, holding the sphere
Of the known and the unknown,
Holding it within, burping its presence,
Expanding it in the eye. Both expand.
Truth to be told: inexperienced.

33.

“Kunstmuseum Bonn; Views of Beuys and Baselitz”

Does language travel well?
Do marks mean?
Suitcases; scrawl right, scrawl left:

Stroke towards making; crawl or backstroke?
“Do you wish to look into the ocean
or up at a bird?”

Making scrapes, surface hinged -
Creak of the door between.
Felt postcards sent in place of the body.

In place of presence
There is always travel,
Charcoal meter, attempting a finite language of shape.

“Does language travel well?”
“I don't understand what you mean.”
“Ha! But you admit that I mean.”

Broken glass boat, actually never a boat,
Sets to sea only in the art museum. Awake, on board,
Everything is colored with that stained glass. Ahoy!

And where would it go, if it did travel well?
Into the well or into the mirror?
Perhaps into the city in the palm of the painted hand.

Does language scatter when you move it?
Like light in the form of papers
Falling not to where they ought to be,

But to where they might be.
Probability.
Answer.

The grid seems to shift -
The hole in the ground made by the grinding of metal emits
The possibility of growth in the midst of motion too fast to comprehend.

Melt back. Tie the water close.
Shift speak. Wander around
With recycled words in your throat.

What are abstract mountains?
Points or swirls,
Depending on the weather.

The sharpness of tongues
Is also muted
By the clouds of kindness.

It just, kind of, makes you want to be an artist again.
Birds flying from the fires
In the buildings contained in the rough hand.

Broken airplane wing, scrap metal.
Portrait upside down,
Makes you wonder where we all are going.

Hands reaching,
Or do they just look like they are reaching?
Is the subject actually sleeping?

Every difficulty mounts,
Skyscrapers -
Stories broken off in the windstorm.

Perhaps language traveled to the top
And fell off, shattering as we tried to speak
Our personal prayers, obsessions.

Never again: same shape.
Never again: same shadow.
Or perhaps: whirlpool. Memories bent back to today.

Does language have a lot of luggage?
Samsonite boulder filled with bricks and tissues
For building and mourning.

Building up images and taking them away,
"Faces should always be overpainted,"
A pronouncement made in favor of crevices and burnt maps.

The best of pearls leak and thus their waves
Wind down. The bitter taste of their winter is all that remains.
It is the same with answers all over.

“What was your inspiration?”
“I don’t know what you mean.”
“You’re right, it is beyond meaning.”

Dialogues pierce, collude, and finally conclude;
A new perspective far away from meaning;
Far away, but by car it seems close.

A retrospective; can you introspect the map
Which got you here? Or is that now there?
It’s not just like looking out of a window; water diffuses light.

Perfectly circular holes in the knees of jeans.
Preparing for the future.
Cloth. Hide. House. The holes of sight exist and exit for a reason.

Paraph of your own photograph,
Worth a thousand...every name has initials,
What are the initials of your face?

Organic structure. Change and scratch.
Broken machine: art: shows how it works:
Trace of the mind in time.

And if language travels, what does it wear?
Exposed ribs, perhaps a felt suit if it’s not too hot,
Perhaps it wears the almost shape of words:

The doodles that you make while you’re on the phone.
Why don’t you photograph yourself drawing them?
You’d think that it would be possible with technology,

But it’s not. You’d think that
The nature/nurture question could be answered
Using biotechnology, but it can’t.

There is no car fast enough to smash
Through the limits of language;
And so, no, language does not travel well.

It does not travel at all.
It is always, shatteringly,
Here.

34.

“Stage for Coffee”

Blue tarp rests on metal.
Child bumbles with ice-cream cone.
Books are sold out of milk-crates.

“I don’t have anything smaller than 100,
Is that okay?”
Finally, the coffee comes to rescue the writing.

Fountain mimics dancers in the day’s only hour of light,
Or do dancers imitate water with their toes pointed deep?
Windows hold reflections as well as transmit them.

35.

“Leather Jacket Purchased in Paris”

Jacket folded.
Jacket crumpled.
 Distance,
 Mourning,
 Sprouting
 Distance -
 Homes in the palm.

Jacket worn.
Jacket sewn.
 What we wear and tear off,
 Tears
 Distance -
 Compression of landscape
 And language.

Jacket compacted.
Jacket sealed.

36.

“Going to the Beach; Going to Work”

Shoe clicks:
Heels rough,
Heels dark.

Shoe pounds:
Heels soft,
Heels pink.

37.

“Storm Near the Rhein”

Weathering the storm Under a Linden tree,
Under a reason for being,

Sometimes,

Weathering the storm,
Under a cloud,
Under a cause.

38.

“Event Coming Out”

A certain glass breaks.
A certain other event occurs.
 The fountain pumps the same water.
 A surprise mounts upon the day.
A coffee stain enters the usual story of the map.
The routine bubbles along, transforms, dulls, but we still get there.

39.

“Landscape Retreat”

Perseverance, ripple on
Sparrow wings tumble -
Repeat, change, add windy days.

Inverted clouds, mist,
Sticky roots, bliss reflection;
Bubblegum wrapper.

Pain and withdrawal,
Waterlilies speed through veins
Between the water.

Windy umbrella protects
Chaos poem in
Low tones of graceful dresses.

40.

“Handmade Graph Paper is Never Personal”

Nuanced elation.
However, the distinctions made are also taken;
Stolen by another’s sense of awe
...How can I describe?...
Subtle interventions
Of scope and depth
Of what joy mounting,
 Also taken away
By distinction,
 But then again,
Given back
By distinction.

41.

“Paranoia”

Tamper of light.
Free idea.
 He is on the white phone
 Talking about you.
Tampering with ideas:
 Paranoia.
Sometimes the free motion
 Of ideas
Leads
 Only to
Fear and organization.

42.

“Seduction/Entrapment”

Objects trapped
In the spiral of ideas.

Ideas trapped
In the fading of objects.

Spirals trapped
In the unconscious oceans of shapes.

Fading trapped
In the daunting changing of light.

43.

“Reified Reflection”

The red train
Crashes into
Its reflection
On the modern office building.

How many memories are held in motion?

The small spoon
Spins in the
White coffee mug,
Clinks with your soul.

44.

“Tasks”

Taking up questions,
Moving the mirror.

Washing down the tables,
Changing the water.

Drying the laundry,
Pinning words to the line.

Giving them answers,
Blowing through the noise.

45.

“Another Art Museum”

She is a set-piece on the ocean -
Although, the waves have messed her hair.
She remains a set-piece
In the right proportion
To the other characters,
In the right direction.

46.

“Reichstag in the Heat”

Prickly heat
Competes
With beauty
For my eyes.

Actually, neither cares
If I see
Or am blind.
It is a competition
Without will,
Except my own.

Doors open,
But no hand
Can be found
That turned
The brass knobs.

47.

“Moving In”

The rude angels
Move into the wings
Of ruder angels.

The clock slowly bends.
Its arms break the rooms
As they enclose
Less and less space.

The morning breaks
Into the afternoon's
New quarters.

Ashamed, we purchase
New furnishings,
But then again and again
Our clothes neither matter or match.

48.

“Restaurant in the Rain”

The roof gets wet.
Cars pass,
Pass out
On the lawn
In front of the café

Where the waiter
Refills the glasses
So many times
That the roof
Gets wet.

49.

“Friction and Possible Reversal”

Resistance of a pen,
One word,
One mistaken intention.

Resistance of an arrow,
One crash,
One way.

50.

“Pen Lost 7/25/01”

The pen is lost for good,
But the day is found
In the flying buttresses of Notre Dame.

The pen is lost,
But that does not mean
That all is lost.
After all, there are always
More pens in the sea;
Rusty, though
Almost triumphant.

There are always pens lost,
Sentences misplaced,
Candles lit in tourist churches.

51.

“Shingles”

Roof,
 Belief -
Structure at a cost,
Structure at cost,
 Bundled,
Taken back from economics:
 Roof, wine,
 -Summer-
House
 Over your head,
 On your back.

52.

“Giverny”

However, ripple,
 Curve of limb -
Cold water reflect:
 Leaf mind
 Floats along;
Monet's hat
 Floats too,
 Thoroughly soaked.

