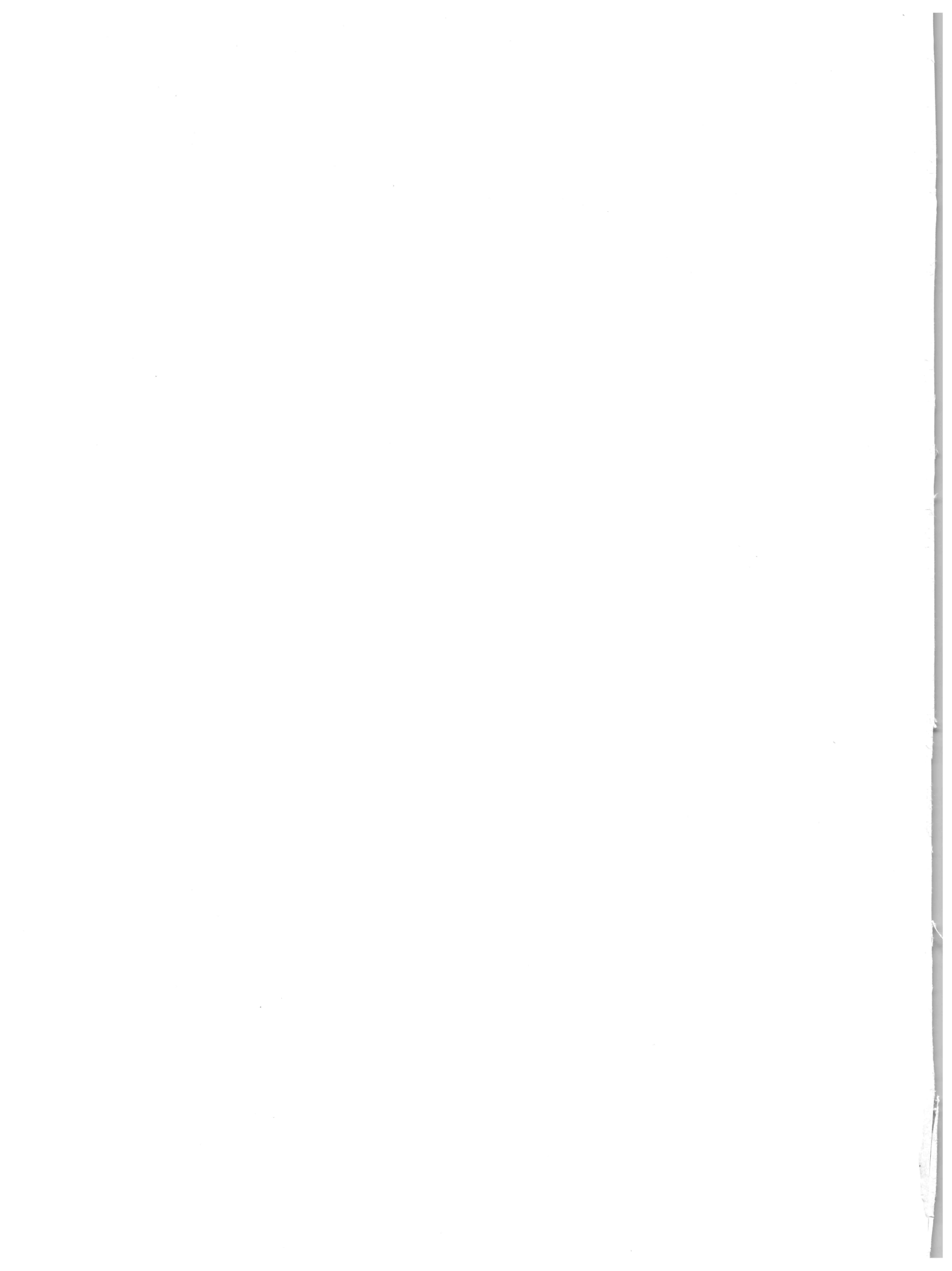


# THE NIGHT BEFORE THINKING

Tony Dingman

Introduction by Jack Hirschman





# **THE NIGHT BEFORE THINKING**

**Tony Dingman**

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## INTRODUCTION

It's about 37 years that I've known Tony Dingman on the streets of North Beach in San Francisco. I must say, as a native New Yorker who left the Apple in 1955, Dingman is one of the few joes who reminds me of that town, and he's from Westwood, Los Angeles! A Californian! But he's got that down-home working-stiff air about him and indeed he's a teamster, a union bloke, like they say, and for many years he's been the left-hand man of Francis Ford Coppola, driving the godfather-maker, as well as Woody Allen and Philip Kaufman to the sets of their movies when made in San Francisco, but also to sets outside the city. Tony, like other New York workers, is very close to the sports page; he knows the stats, can be quippy, even jokesome and all the elements I've described in the last five lines appear in this book, including snatches of the personalities of cinematic directors and artists. His own catalog of jobs, which poems I've arranged at the very end of the book, is a modest list. Tony's excluded about 25 other films in which he extra'd or had a bit role.

But here's the kicker: Tony Dingman is one of the most prodigious poets in the whole Bay Area. For the past 26 years, he has literally written a poem a day! And each one rarely if ever goes on to a second page!

Many, like some in this book, are written in traditional line-form. Others (a future book) are written as shapes on the page— not visual in the sense of say shaping a horse or a tree, though such images may drop in at any time and feed the pome-palette of this openly inventive imagination.

And Dingman as a poet is a memorial brother to others who played an inspiring part in his life and works. The legendary working-class poet Lew Welch, who disappeared in the Sierra Nevada mountains and with whom Dingman had drunk at Gino and Carlo's Bar in North Beach, is one of his ikons, twice figured in this book. And so is Gene Ruggles remembered, who passed a few years ago, as one of the most superb poets of the lyrical-political dimension, especially in the '70s and '80s around these parts.

These and other poets and painters like Lawrence Ferlinghetti have fed Dingman's imagination with streetwise philosophy and idiom and that's what the reader's going to experience in *The Night Before Thinking*.

It contains Tony's work ethic, his fan-atic, his anecdotal self, and, throughout, the charm of a guy who knows how to handle the language, to keep the poems "tight" and ever entertaining in their revelations of a sort of keeping-on keeping-on worker.

Dingman is not ruled in his poems by an overwhelming visionary passion for language or thorough transformative societal change. He's an extraordinarily avid reader of books, poetry and fiction and historical accounts. But his key mode is listening with demotic ears to what the Joes and Janes are saying and thinking in their daily conversations—even with themselves.

You'll see what I mean in the light you'll feel after reading this wonderful book of poems.

Jack Hirschman, 2013



## LEW IS DRIVING

We are on our  
way  
to The City  
and  
I say how  
glad  
I am to see  
him again.  
I have  
all these  
pages  
I want to  
show him.  
How long  
has  
it been?  
40 years  
later  
is  
a lot of  
catching up  
to do  
in one  
dream.  
But the whole  
time  
I did it  
your way,  
I had  
fun. I didn't  
get in my  
own way.  
And I  
wrote  
like I  
talked  
about things  
that  
came to me.  
Any suggestions  
for  
the road?  
Okay  
I'll keep  
a rubber  
band  
around the  
overhead  
visor  
for  
bridge tolls.

8.oct.12

IF BY CHANCE

the auto of my  
bio  
goes out of its  
way

to make things  
up  
just for the fun  
of it

then let it be  
said  
that it was my  
intent.

To bore is to  
sin.  
To be bored is  
fatal.

Rise up with  
larceny  
and rush on to  
theft.

Repeat the bawdy  
story,  
Tell the good  
joke.

Remember what brings  
laughs  
and forget the  
duds.

The best material  
is  
the tale told on  
yourself.

And no apologies  
or  
faux excuses will  
do.



THE OLDER YOU GET

The less you sleep.  
I'm not  
trying  
to disappoint people  
but  
why not give  
folks  
a proper warning of  
how things are  
going to  
be.  
Trips to the pharmacy  
and  
aches and pains  
that  
come and go.  
When  
the guy on the  
street says  
Hello pops  
and  
no one ever  
checks your  
ID.  
You cease to be  
Mr. Finger  
Popping  
Toe Dancing life  
of  
the party.  
When  
I go up steps  
people  
pass me left  
and sometimes right.  
You live  
in  
the past  
because there is  
so much of  
it.  
So I take my pills  
and take it  
slow  
and take it  
one day at a time  
and hope  
it  
doesn't take too  
long  
for the bus  
to come.

## BIOSEXUAL

Yes I love  
a tree  
and  
if I had  
to  
marry one  
it  
would be  
a Bristle  
Cone  
which lives  
to be  
4000 years  
old.  
And who  
doesn't  
love a  
rose?  
Or  
soft green  
moss?  
All  
the tea  
in  
China and  
all  
the coffee  
in Brazil  
to  
begin our  
day.  
Nature  
lover  
or tree  
hugger  
let  
the sap  
flow  
and the  
roots  
dig deeper.  
Sea weed  
in the  
slip stream.  
Bamboo in  
the wind.  
The chickadee  
in the  
cotton  
woods and  
falling  
seeds.

HISTORY BITES  
(for Dominik and Rosemary)

Save a day.  
Hold  
that thought.

Looks like  
scans like  
but  
is not  
poetry.

For non-  
medicinal  
purposes  
it is  
named prose  
stack:  
Prostak.

A daily  
drill  
practiced  
without  
failing to  
even once  
in 20  
years.

That bruise  
over  
my eye  
came from the  
backswing  
of a fighting  
door.

And you could  
say  
an innocent  
automatic  
weapon  
got carried  
away.

If it's evidence  
you want  
every  
page is  
dated  
and the White  
Out  
is all  
mine.

I FELT IT COME AND GO

Just for a moment  
I had it.

All of it. Just  
a glimmer

and then it was  
gone.

No title. No shape.  
An urge.

I guess you could  
call it

a poem. It was  
some—

how someway to say  
something.

Which now I can't  
fathom.

A vague longing  
for

a non-existent  
possible.

How can I remember  
what

had yet to come into  
being?

There it stays in  
my mind

an undreamed chimera  
as

a gestatable thing  
aborning.

And so it was a  
presentiment

that in its passing  
passed on.

29.july.12

## LESS

Less sleep  
Less yak  
Less fuck  
Less jump

(As you get  
older)

Less patience  
Less energy  
Less appetite  
Less limber

(As you get  
older)

Less teeth  
Less adaptable  
Less understanding  
Less belief

(As you get  
older)

Less eyesight  
Less tolerance  
Less curiosity  
Less exercise

(As you get  
older)

Less willing  
Less interested  
Less friendly  
Less digestion

(As you get  
older)

Less competitive  
Less memory  
Less focus  
Less satisfied

(As you get  
older)

FRANK LOBDELL, FRANK LOBDELL

Harbor pilot in  
a buoy patch

Rocking chair for  
a carousel

Gyroscope on a  
trampoline

Pendulum taking a  
holiday

Prayer wheel in a  
rubber room

Fourth of July for  
a hobbyhorse

Steeplechase through  
a bowling alley

Crop duster over  
Inca ruins

A p-38 unloading  
logarithms

Locomotion in a  
toy shop

Semaphore during  
a solar flare

Boomerang in an  
electric storm

Electrician in a  
fossil field

Measuring stick for  
a pyramid builder

Storm chaser with  
an hourglass

Referee checking  
a crop circle

Night watchman for  
a boondoggle

# THE LOST ART OF TIPPING

Go ahead!  
Be somebody!  
Get large!

If Marcel  
Proust can  
tip 100%

why don't  
you go  
for 30%?

Do it!  
Throw your  
money around.

What's wrong  
with being  
remembered?

And give  
the busboy  
a fiver.

This is  
no time  
to economize.

Get your  
money in  
circulation.

Your tip  
will make  
someone's day

or buy  
a kid a  
present.

It's a sin  
to be a  
miser.

Santa knows  
when you've  
been good

and St Peter  
has a  
calculator.

## PAELLA FOR A DIZZY FRIEND

He told me he  
was too  
dizzy  
to walk down  
the stairs  
so  
we took him an order  
of paella  
from Alegrias Spanish  
restaurant  
plus  
an order of bread  
pudding.  
It  
seemed only right  
a retired  
chef  
should have a good  
dinner and  
his  
birthday has just  
come and gone  
so it  
wasn't meals on  
wheels  
but an overdue  
gift.  
He  
collapsed last year  
and it  
turned out he  
hadn't had enough  
to eat  
and  
I hope it will  
be solved  
by  
this food infusion.  
For a man  
who is  
legally blind  
and  
living below the  
poverty line  
I  
can only admire  
his fortitude  
and grit  
and  
his resolve never  
to use  
a cliché or a cellphone.



## BE KIND TO YOUR FINE FEATHERED FRIENDS

That funny looking bird  
is about to  
take off  
so let him go his flighty  
way  
to warmer climes  
or the cool  
south.

Meanwhile back on the  
ground

I'll be digging in  
deeper and  
deeper  
to get away from  
flying objects.

All  
God's creatures are  
form fitted  
to be  
where they are meant  
to live  
an adapted life.

Swim  
with the turtles and  
run with the  
wolves  
and don't forget  
the sun screen.

It  
could be somebody's  
brother  
many times removed  
but propinquity  
is all we've  
got  
so give a helping  
hand to  
any and all.

The worm  
that crawls is no  
lower  
than the squirrel  
that climbs  
in our  
upside down gymnasium  
spinning and  
tipping  
in centrifugal homage  
to the circle  
of fire  
called Ra.

“GO AHEAD AND MAKE A PIG OUT OF YOURSELF”

said the goofy guy  
in front of  
Caffe Trieste.  
He was  
sitting in a chair but  
couldn't go in  
because he was 86'd for  
punching out  
their window.  
Not dangerous  
but mad mad but not  
necessarily  
at me.  
I heard him say  
once he  
had a portrait of  
Kaiser Wilhelm  
on the wall over his  
bed.  
It's true  
I'm forty pounds  
overweight  
but he could have  
said it to  
anyone.  
I  
didn't go in  
because  
of a  
long line.  
Not unusual on  
a Sunday morning.  
I left him  
laughing at nothing  
which might be  
a reasonable reaction  
in the absurdity  
of his world.  
Fools in the queue!  
Eating  
their way into  
death!  
All  
the coffee addicts  
coming to  
get their fix!  
Beatniks,  
go home!  
Painters, stay in bed!  
(I just hope  
he stays out of  
The Rubber Room).

## LAST OMS FOR GENE RUGGLES

1

His hand reached  
up for a nest  
of words.

2

Keep the fires  
burning. Keep the  
fires burning.

3

Gene called me to  
read a poem.

4

Gene called to  
plan a reading  
for Iraqi children.

5

Gene called me to  
say he loved me.

6

I never forgot  
his strong hand-  
shake.

7

He grew up on  
a Michigan farm.

8

He lost a fight  
with a tree (and  
the bottle).

9

He had his friends  
and he had his  
enemies but what  
he really had was  
a poetic gift.

10

He hated unemploy-  
ment lines and he  
despised dictators  
and he loathed the  
polluters.

11

Gene was all heart.

## HOW TO WORRY DIFFERENTLY

is what Cezanne  
did to us  
(I read  
Pablo Picasso said)  
and how  
to end  
the end game  
or  
Better Exit Strategies  
on your  
way  
out of the museum  
of art  
or  
I stand before a Cezanne  
“Knitted  
by symphonic pushes  
and pulls of  
color”  
or  
why do those apples  
and oranges  
look so  
full and round?  
or  
if the light hits the  
side of the  
barn  
is  
it coming or going?  
or  
was he really  
afraid to touch doorknobs?  
and if he  
was  
what about shaking  
hands  
or  
God forbid a  
sneeze  
in his direction but  
those grubby  
peasants  
playing cards didn’t  
seem to bother  
him  
as he brushed in  
roughed cubes  
of  
squared light  
avidly.

A PAINTED ACTOR ON A PAINTED STAGE

let there be wigs  
and false  
mustaches

lights on wheels

sound booms  
swinging

cars in a carousel  
of activity

a  
singing  
typewriter

explosions without  
shrapnel

makeup for  
make believe

artifice in auto  
suggestion

where cats and  
dogs  
do a rairdance

a Cuban cigar  
in  
Emerald City

resuscitated words  
written  
to be spoken

from the bottle  
comes  
the genie

every emotion  
has  
a carbon date

gypsies never  
have to  
say goodbye

even a coat  
can make  
you believe

## THE STARVING ARMENIAN

Our parents used to  
say,

Finish your food.  
There

are starving Armenians.  
Starved

by the Turks and  
death

marched into the  
Ukraine.

Much later in Fresno  
when

they were prospering  
during

the Depression it  
was said

in an ironic fashion.  
Vivid

personalities, hard  
working

they are also a people  
chosen

to be resented and  
scapegoated.

With pride they were  
early

Christians surrounded  
by a

world of Muslims and  
infidels.

A daring young man  
on the

American flying trapeze  
William Saroyan

a face on the U.S.  
stamp.

NEIL ARMSTRONG, NEIL ARMSTRONG  
(for Don Wilhelm)

There he goes  
again

slipping the  
pull

of gravity to  
be

on his way out  
of here.

He'll never need  
a passport

just a few moon  
rocks

to show St. Peter  
his

earthly bona  
fides.

As always on  
take off

his pulse is  
normal

blood pressure  
stable

voice calm and  
even.

He got his pilot's  
license

before his driver's  
license.

Out of Ohio he  
came and

Upward Ho was the  
fascination

with no footprints  
in the dust.

## A GOOD YEAR FOR SWALLOWS

and an even  
better  
year  
for blackbirds.

Humans aren't do-  
ing very well  
for all  
the known reasons

and for all the  
unknown abuses  
about  
to come our way.

Mother Earth has  
taken a beating  
for  
every fracking reason

that digging for  
dollars can  
justify.  
(Stealing from mom's purse)

Music has always  
been good  
medicine  
and medicine is

the music of opera-  
tive good  
health.  
(The song of surgery)

It's still a good  
year for the  
meek  
who shall learn

to inherit what's  
left of the  
last of  
our surviving earth.



## I WISH I HAD A NICKEL

everytime I  
heard  
"Take Five"  
said  
my friend  
Michael.

Dave Brubeck  
died  
at 91  
but his  
quartet  
keeps on  
swinging.

Gene Wright  
Joe Morello  
and  
the irreplaceable  
Paul Desmond  
kept it  
together.

I heard  
them  
play at  
Mills College  
way back  
and just  
enough times  
for 50  
years  
not to  
forget that  
tune.

In bars  
supermarkets  
cars  
elevators  
in  
Viet-nam  
bunkers  
and golf  
course  
club houses  
forever Brubeck  
on  
the black  
and white  
88's.

“SO?”

(for Michael McCourt)

My first job  
back in

Limerick was a  
kitchen boy

in a hotel. The  
chef

was a French  
lunatic

who screamed and  
threw pots.

One day I heard  
a “meow”

and I looked all  
around.

They used to keep  
a big pot

of soup stock on-  
going

and finally I  
found the

little guy down in  
the pot.

I pulled the poor  
thing out

and tried to clean  
it up.

When the chef came  
in I said

I had some bad  
news.

The cat fell in  
the pot.

All he said was,  
“So?”

## OFF THE TETHER

And I sleep sleep  
sleep

I read a Victorian  
novel

I try not to look  
at the clock

No need to get in  
an automobile

(I confess my girl  
gave me a ride)

I surf my television  
channels

I don't go near my  
telephone

(again I confess to  
carrying my cell)

I do a little walk  
to the store

I drop my laundry  
to be done

I don't have to call  
Southwest Air

I don't have to look  
for my gas card

I have a martini at  
The Big Four

I go to Fog City  
for dinner

I avoid waiting for  
anything

I resupply my meds  
at Walgreens

I cull the Sunday  
paper of ads

I vegetate without  
any guilt.

## THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Are we well started  
or have we  
started well?

It  
is going to be Day 17  
of 46  
early signs of  
Battle Fatigue are  
showing  
with work dreams  
and  
certain crew members  
beginning to  
irritate.

In the real world  
bombs are  
falling  
in  
Libya and president  
Obama is  
in Brazil.

I  
take my pills  
and talk to you and me  
here at my  
desk  
glad I didn't commit  
suicide when  
I was  
26  
and not famous like  
Keats.

After 45 years of film  
work I have  
arrived  
at one rule never  
to be broken:  
ALWAYS  
BE ON TIME!  
All sins are forgiven  
except  
BEING LATE.

And  
if you work in  
San Francisco  
don't forget your coat  
and don't make  
fun of  
the old the fat  
or the poor.

Okay, ready when you are.

UNDONE BY A STALKING PHOTOGRAPHER

He followed us from  
the house  
to the airport or  
he was  
waiting but he ruined  
our day.

A  
silver Toyota,  
license  
plate unknown,  
driver  
maybe Asian,  
invasion  
of privacy certain.

A beautiful  
goodbye  
turned into paranoid  
anger.

I  
had mad daydreams  
of smashing  
windows  
and breaking headlights.

Blocking his  
car  
and bringing the  
cops.

Fame is not a  
game  
to  
be played lightly.

Children  
have to be protected  
and sleep to  
be had.

Who  
are these creeps  
with no  
lives?  
They are bottom  
feeders  
lurking at the edge of  
rich lives  
with  
insulting opportunism.

Peepers on  
wheels  
with a telephoto  
lens  
they scurry away  
like the  
cockroaches they are.

## MY LEADING LADY

went home in  
her  
bath robe.  
Why  
bother to change  
with so  
little time and  
besides  
who's going to see  
through  
the tinted windows?  
Her  
husband called but  
even he  
couldn't see the  
regal miss  
Nicole  
in white terrycloth.  
All day long  
in and out of wardrobe  
and  
now quite late  
and after  
dark  
if  
anyone were to see  
(no one did)  
they  
might assume  
she was dressed in  
Ermine!  
Eyes  
on the road  
and  
foot on the pedal of  
the Cadillac  
I  
crossed the city  
as  
my leading lady  
was on the  
phone  
to Australia.  
Dimming  
the lights when  
we got home  
I  
only saw a blur  
of white  
and  
a well turned  
ankle.

## HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

I drove by the graffiti  
20 times before  
I saw it:

GHOST  
PISS

on the wall of  
the old Amtrak station  
in Oakland  
in  
bold black letters.  
It has been  
40 years  
since passengers came  
this way  
and  
now HBO has transformed  
the abandoned  
station  
into the Hotel Florida  
of Madrid circa  
1938.  
Reduced vision as we  
implode into  
our  
interior lives  
without  
even looking up at a  
world to behold.  
I  
include myself as  
we fail to  
see  
what we are looking  
at.  
The blond floozy  
remains a  
blond  
as she empties  
your wallet.  
As for  
the invisible micturator  
who has gone  
into  
the mists of time  
only the echo  
of the steel on the  
rails stays  
in the memory of those  
railroad days.

## DON'T SIT ON MY APRICOTS

which is the  
title of

the short story  
of

a long day in  
the field

traveling to  
various

parts of the bay  
area.

The car was full.  
Three

in back two up  
front

and we had lots  
of gas

and a list of  
places

that our director  
had to see.

This short story  
is about

the reality of  
appearances

and how Woody  
Allen

sounds just like  
Woody Allen

and he wears a  
floppy hat

and after all  
these years

knows what he  
wants

if he gets to  
see it.



## MY BOSS IS A BACKSEAT DRIVER

1

Keep your eyes  
on the road,  
Tony.

2

Both hands on  
the wheel, Tony.

3

Don't look at  
the GPS, Tony.

4

It's against the  
law to talk on  
the phone in New  
York, Tony.

5

Are we there yet  
Tony?

6

Do you know where  
we are going,  
Tony?

8.august.12

## SHAKESPEARE IS KAPUT

The bard is  
no more  
and Avon has  
a new  
name.  
The Globe is  
a garage  
and all the  
players  
have changed  
roles.  
Hamlet has  
a shrink.  
Romeo got  
a sex change  
and Juliet  
is in  
Vegas.  
Falstaff  
joined AA  
and Iago  
is in the  
Peace Corps.  
Othello  
can't be  
found  
but Desdemona  
is in  
Pomona.  
Prospero got  
a tattoo  
and Richard the  
Third  
went to  
Samoa.  
It's all  
so different  
now that  
Henry is  
Hank  
and Antony  
is Tony.  
The revision  
continues  
with no  
ghost  
and not  
a hint  
of jealousy.

29.nov.09

## I ASK MYSELF

Is this all there is  
my friends?  
and the answer is  
yes

Things are just what  
they seem to be  
so don't complicate  
the obvious

The birds are in  
the trees  
and the fish are  
in the river

Cars go over the bridge  
one after another  
sometimes with their  
lights on

The water on the bay  
looks green then  
looks blue then looks  
a flat grey

I hear the old song  
"Is You Is Or  
Is You Ain't My Baby?"  
despite the grammar

The big bang at night  
is only a noise  
but sleep can be got  
anyway

I shine my shoes  
so I can see  
the clouds moving  
at my feet

21.oct.09

## SPEAKING OF MYSELF

I'm all about  
me

said the self  
satisfied

self. I talk  
about

myself, I think  
about

myself, everything  
I do

is for me, my-  
self

and I. My con-  
versation

is full of I,  
I, I.

I never do any  
thing

for anyone else  
because

I'm so busy  
taking

care of myself.  
If

I take a good  
look

in the mirror  
I'm

gratified to  
see

it's the one  
and

only lovely  
me

staring back  
at me.

FRANK McCOURT, FRANK McCOURT

President Obama sent  
the White House

flag that flew on  
the day

he died. "For service  
to his

country (Air Force)"  
and of course

for "the courageous  
and honest

account of a painful  
Irish childhood."

Michael called and  
also said

the president told  
Frank at

one time, "I've read  
every word

you ever published!"  
Me too.

28.july.09

HYMN TO HER

Al Young said it.  
Which came  
first,

the musician or  
the poet.  
In

his case a tie,  
with a dash  
of

humor and a touch  
of jazz.  
He

was reading at the  
Poetry Festival  
at

the Palace of Fine  
Arts auditorium  
along

with poets from  
all over the  
world.

A Jack Hirschman  
production and  
airline

tickets paid by  
Robert Mailer  
Anderson.

Al, an old friend  
who I met when  
he

was teaching at  
Stanford,  
is

so very articulate  
and poised  
and

with a melodious  
voice a master  
of charm.

## SHORT STORIES FULL OF HEAT

Somewhere on the  
Caribbean  
maybe on the  
north coast  
of South  
America  
a coffin  
is sweating.  
The pirates  
are gone now  
but the  
old parrots  
are still  
afraid.  
A duel is  
in the air  
and the  
banana workers  
still have to  
worry about  
spider bites.  
A widow  
sits in her  
room sewing  
with memories  
of her  
husband  
the colonel  
who had  
a long scar  
on his leg.  
Late in  
the afternoon  
a downpour  
will turn  
the dust  
to mud.  
Naturally  
someone's aunt  
has seen  
a ghost  
and a goat  
got lost  
near the  
harbor.  
The wedding  
might be  
postponed  
because  
the groom  
has caught  
the measles.

ACTING CLASS, 1-9  
(for Jafar Woods)

1

Bring the drinks.  
Don't be a  
waiter.

2

When you talk  
to me talk to  
me.

3

You don't hit  
your marks. The  
marks hit you.

4

When you remember  
don't remember.

5

Motivation is  
just another  
excuse.

6

Say hello the  
same way you  
always say hello.

7

The only way  
to get out  
of yourself  
is to leave.

8

Being on time  
is not square.

9

On location leave  
your agent, your  
manager and your  
spouse at home.

13.oct.12



THE NIGHT BEFORE THINKING  
(after the Ferlinghetti painting)

The boy canaries  
were not  
singing  
the blues  
but to  
the tune  
of running  
water.  
Meanwhile  
fluffing  
their feathers  
the girls  
were chirping  
their way  
to sleep.  
And  
all through  
the night  
while  
the cage  
was covered  
the painter  
in a green  
mode  
made lime  
characters  
in con-  
figuration.  
The mannequin  
in his  
lap  
has come  
to life  
with a  
sugar fix  
and a  
brush  
with glory.  
With a  
herd  
of words  
riding a  
wagon of  
colors  
he is a  
visualist  
born to  
rectify  
a bloodless  
joke in  
a hyena  
night.

## NUMB WITH RELIEF

Done with the  
work.

Over with the  
worries.

Finished off the  
job.

No damage to the  
car.

Never not once  
late.

No foot in the  
mouth.

No losing my  
way.

Mixups and foulups  
nil.

No tickets to be  
had.

Receipts all turned  
in.

No new enemies  
made.

No more cellphone  
madness.

End of all dumb  
questions.

Everyone got away  
safely.

Last check in the  
mail.

One more for the  
resume.

Scroll the end  
credits.

LES MURRAY, & WHY HE WRITES POETRY

For the weird  
unemployment.

For the painless  
headaches,

that must be tapped  
to strike

down along your  
writing arm.

For working always  
beyond

your own intelligence.  
For not needing

to rise and betray  
the poor to do it.

For a non-devouring  
fame.

9.jan.02

## HOW I WORK AS A POET

The title of a Lew Welch  
book that I could not  
find. Lew always  
said it was  
better  
for a poet to have a  
real job in the real  
world. Just being  
a poet and only  
writing poetry  
was Dullsville!  
He worked  
on the waterfront  
which gave him  
the money  
to drink himself  
to death  
but at least he  
heard real talk from  
real people and  
not academic  
yalps.

**DON'T GET IN YOUR  
OWN WAY**

and have a good time  
and write like  
you talk and maybe  
you'll get lucky.

12.nov.09

## JOB DESCRIPTION—I'VE BEEN

- A baby sitter, yard boy, box boy,  
(Santa Glen Market, 54)
- A bakery worker  
(on wrapping machine at  
Orowheat)
- A kitchen worker  
(Stern Hall Stanford, EX  
house) '56-'60
- A Bekins furniture mover  
(swamper on trucks)
- A machine operator  
(Jennings & Bryan  
Wheelchair factory)
- A janitor and maintenance worker  
(Hastings Law School) '64
- A Coldwell Banker  
(Residential sales)
- A Hartford Insurance  
(Claims department)
- A fund raiser  
(Community Service Society,  
NY, '66)
- A concession man at Shubert  
Theater (soft drinks)
- An English Instructor  
(Rio de Janeiro, '67-'68,  
private & school)
- A Production Assistant  
(Rain People, THX, Godfather  
II, III, Apocalypse Now,  
Outsiders, Rumble Fish)
- A teamster/driver  
(Francis Coppola, Richard  
Gere, Robin Williams, etc)
- A drinking coach  
(for Nicolas Cage, Leaving  
Las Vegas)
- A house painter  
(between pictures)
- A personal assistant  
(Richard Brautigan,  
Montana, '74, '78)
- A shepherd  
(Dennis Hopper, on Out  
of the Blue, Vancouver)
- A truck driver  
(Set decoration, greens)
- A location assistant  
(Basic Instinct)
- A stand in  
(Dead Pool)
- An actor  
(Rain Maker, Trauma,  
Gunfighter)





...poets and painters like Lawrence Ferlinghetti have fed Dingman's imagination with streetwise philosophy and idiom and that's what the reader's going to experience in *The Night Before Thinking*.

It contains Tony's work ethic, his fan-atic, his anecdotal self, and, throughout, the charm of a guy who knows how to handle the language, to keep the poems "tight" and ever entertaining in their revelations of a sort of keeping-on keeping-on worker.

--Jack Hirschman  
from the Introduction

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