

Washed up (from *Pound Laundry*)

Washed up then on that eutrophic shore
whale road behind yellow brick ahead
where his grandfathers fought and died

following his nose upstream so far people
laughed at him, taking the chip on his shoulder
for some outlandish harvest implement

upstream through the brindled liquidity, the banks
as they crumble bespeaking lower orders of beings
more tractable for having lost their homes

past the musical market place where opulent
behind her veils the brazen one undulates
a cross of gold between her open thighs

past the scornful lips of the god father
holding the power of issue above the laws
nations engrave for themselves in white marble

past the greenbacks swimming like blind eels
the scuttled gunboats no longer pressed into service
the wads of newsprint and tickertape parades

past the great headless body of those
incapable of comprehending their burden
as the means to someone else's gain

past the panics of '93 and '5,
'07 and '29
the eight minor and seven major

depressions from 1880 to 1930
the auction hammers the ruined lives
the boom and bust loop-the-loop

necessary corrections sd the Secretary
breadlines soup kitchens hungry kids
a little suffering for the common good

people starving while farmers go bankrupt
so speculators can play with the money
the Constitution says belongs to the people

businessmen jumping from their high-rise windows
hanging themselves with their own neckties
sometimes taking their families with them

past the gentlemen's clubs and ladies' salons
stolen treasures brought back from the export wars
ransoms held in the coils of the Worm

it is important said the president
of the manufacturers association
that the unemployed understand

that their suffering is not the product
of economic breakdown but the direct
result of their own moral infirmity

past the institutions of bad faith
the household gods in wreaths and robes crying
If they only knew If only they could see

against the current long enough to reveal
the fiscal past with minor variations
reproducing itself as the future:

national sovereignty turned over in the grave
reverted by adverse possession to corporations
financial caustical or productive

the power to mint stamp and distribute tender
deployed worldwide for private ends
the way people get to eat sleep

dress and recreate overdetermined
by choice and chance of a lucky chosen few
unlikely to get caught with their hand in the till

the dollar in '72 pulled off the gold
standard floated on the oil slick global
market in exchange for petrodollars

forty-six thousand prematurely dead
in '74 and '75 alone
strokes heart attacks suicides

the invisible hand tightening belts

though the liquidation less severe
than it would be ten years later

when it was mourning again in America
sweetheart deals junk bonds palm greasing
the trickle of what is said to flow downhill

taxpayer bailouts of banks that over-reached
on high-risk investments followed by bailouts
in the form of high-return loans to client states

followed by bailouts of the S & L banks
after their high-risk real estate
scams fell through followed by lower wages

less net income for middle class workers
weaker social welfare safety nets
bigger shares of the global arms market

the fact is sd the Chair of the Fed
to members of Congress *your constituents*
of course are unhappy but mine aren't

voodoo economics the magic worked
in money begetting money liquidity
to the neglect of industrial production

self interest a public virtue
no *res publica* but that
the market a carnival of speculation

a high tech bubble rising through the ooze
towards the next millennium crash
heads of dead presidents baked in a pie

Finance Insurance and Real Estate a fire
sale of properties underwater
neo-mercantilism protecting the wealthy

government debt exceeded by personal debt
for the first time in the nation's history
the merchants of debt drunk on tax write-offs

tax cuts and deregulation
multinational corporations tax-free

the top one percentile fleecing the rest

in a house of credit cards economy
sold by oval office commercials that assure
consumers that going into debt is patriotic

while sovereignty the power to value money
is given with the power to overrule the nation's
laws to unelected financiers

the banks compounding each other's bad loans
derivative get-rich-quick schemes imploding
War Department budgets on the rise

the usury cartels *in flagrante*
with mortgages drugs and oil too big to let die
bailed out with taxpayer dollars

the specter of evil aliens raised again
just when the pain of the necessary contraction
gets to be too much again

the market's rebirth again delivered by war
paid for again with the public's money borrowed
from firms growing fat on public indebtedness

apprentice financial wizards who caused the mess
put in charge of mopping it up with a lick
a promise and a cat who ate the canary grin

clean-nailed born-again leaders of the free
washed in the blood of suckers born every minute
making the world safe again for vermin

the thick line of smoke from the squat temple
coins jingling around her swollen belly
the stench of pigs fattened on the sacrificed.