

## FOREWORD

This manuscript is a bag of leaves from the last three years of my life. They've been falling down, dumb in the wind, crushed underfoot, collected. Together they are some experience of the world made of language (which is metaphor) by a me I will never be again. They're stitched together, piece by piece.

Between the writing of these poems, I wrote down other things, too, and loose jottings are often good evidence of our real moods. Not so long ago, near the beginnings, I wrote, "Part of my problem is the distinctions I've created between *life* and *writing*. When they don't exist in symbiosis, all is lost. I believe poetry operates in a realm or dimension that constantly surrounds us, but that we seldom skim our toes and noses in. I want to read on bridges. I want to pierce the thick skin of existence."

One day, I ran home and drew a diagram of a poetic asymptote that I do not understand. Also, my distinctions died off.

So on it goes, living, nearing but never reaching a limit (therefore: possibility), and always I fail to describe what a poem is. But the "aesthetic event," Borges says, "is something as evident, as immediate, as indefinable as love, the taste of fruit, of water. We feel poetry as we feel the closeness of a woman, or as we feel a mountain or a bay. If we feel it immediately, why dilute it with other words, which no doubt will be weaker than our feelings?"

(This word—*feelings*—an apt one, reminds me of Mary Ruefle, who tells us that feelings "involve cognitive reactions that combine, or can be combined, with emotions, memories, experience, and *intelligence*." Is poetry a cognitive attempt to crystalize these four remorseless horses that stampede into our feelings?)

If we're lucky, we're seldom required to word-away the aesthetic event, which leaves us free to feel it as poets. Good people have taught me to nest in the unknown, the possible, and the always-out-of-reach. That's when poetry happens to me. It happens to me at night. Or in the trees. Or when I sense a person that I love. The poems that follow are my attempts to sense these things more immediately, on facets of experience only odd language can reach.

In his essay "Effects of Analogy," Wallace Stevens writes, "There is always an analogy between nature and the imagination, and possibly poetry is merely the strange rhetoric of that parallel: a rhetoric in which the feeling of one man is communicated to another in words of the exquisite appositeness that takes away all their verballity."

This is a hope for the unfettered inner stirrings of poetry. The ablation of language into feeling.

*J.J.*