Glumenations

entries from

A Personal Dictionary

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what begins in the poet must never end there

for Martine

Glumenations a tree of ideas

age: n; **9**. The lines that appear on our faces, our hands, our entire bodies, are traces of all that we have not expressed, written, spoken, sung, and all that we will never express— the importance of which is evidenced by the fact that our entire body transforms itself, irreversibly and fatally, in order to express just this very incapacity. (MS-1)

art: n; **62**. Art is how we forget what we have never lived in order to live with what we should never have forgotten. (MS-2)

autumn: n; **4**. A day comes when every leaf realizes that what it thirsts for is not to be found in trees. (MS-3)

biography: n; **4**. One's biography is something that must be continually overcome. (MS-4)

boredom: n; 5. Boredom is a failed saint. (MS-5)

breach: n; Sometimes, only for a moment, you experience something as being very thin— so thin a breath could tear it. This breach opens into a place that underlies *everything*. I have always wanted to climb into this place. (MS-6)

breadth: n; The line that separates good and evil is as wide as a human life. (MS-7)

calculus: n; Moral calculus is usually done by those who have no proficiency for mathematics. (MS-8)

calling: n; **2**. There are words that know us, that call us by name. And for a time, perhaps for only a day, perhaps decades, perhaps even longer, we will recognize such a word as our master. The duration of our servitude has nothing to do with our desire to liberate ourselves. Instead it is the word, no longer requiring anything from us, that takes its leave. (MS-9)

captivity: n; 1. A poetically illiterate society will beg for captivity. (MS-10)

charity: n; Charity is not a privilege of wealth, but of poverty. (MS-11)

clarity: n; 4. No amount of learning can compensate for a lack of clarity. (MS-12)

clown: n; **2**. People seek out clowns when they have forgotten how to laugh; they become clowns when they have forgotten how to live. (MS-13)

coherence: n; **3**. When people speak I assume they mean what they say. What is worse, this unmerited compliment seems to trouble only me. (MS-14)

collaborator: n; No matter what level of *pure* poetry is achieved, nor the intensity of linguistic asceticism that is maintained, every poet is a collaborator with the world the moment he utters a single word. (MS-15)

comfort: n; **2**. The comfort offered by a child is insufficient— and that is why we love them. (MS-16)

command: n; **2**. Those who tell people what to think are telling them not to think. (MS-17)

complicity: n; **2**. It is doubtful we are capable of answering sincerely the question which life poses in incessantly and in innumerable ways— *am I complicit in my own undoing*? (MS-18)

compromise: n; **1**. Each day we re-negotiate with death. Each day the contract is the same. Each day we sign it. (MS-19)

consolation: n; **3**. After a lifetime of writing, as a summation, all I have written will say, *all I would like to express is not what I have written, but something else*... Writing is an act of negation, of erasure. What my life expresses will be what remains after this effacement. Not only is this possibility a reason to continue writing, it is also a great consolation. (MS-20)

consummation: n; We are all offered the possibility of proceeding, even if only for one or two steps, towards an inconceivable consummation. (MS-21)

contentment: n; That blessings must disguise themselves suggests that contentment is not something we welcome unconditionally. (MS-22)

creation: n; 8. When I create I agree to carry this burden of beauty... further. (MS-23)

defense: n; **2**. All prolonged creative activity is always a defense of the spirit against all those of forces which are inimical towards it— which is to say, *all forces*. (MS-24)

deficiency: n; There has never been a thinker who has not been convinced that their time is not deficient in some way. *To think is to imagine deficiency*. (MS-25)

demand: n; **2**. To demand that a thinker never take a misstep, that he never write, or speak what may be unspeakable or unwritable, is to demand that a thinker should never think. (MS-26)

demon: n; That we are frequented by demons, that we may even be intimate with them is not debatable. The question is whether they are our ambassadors or we are theirs. (MS-27)

departure: n; **1**. When you arrive on the platform where the train that is *your train* is preparing to depart there is no excuse not to be ready, with your bags packed. The journey should not be a surprise. If it is a surprise, if you arrive without luggage and with empty pockets, perhaps you will be leaving with everything you have earned. (MS-28)

despair: n; 2. Concerning the calculus of despair, we are all prodigies. (MS-29)

destruction: n; **6**. History is unequivocal in its account— people will willingly participate in their own destruction, and will even be impatient to do so. (MS-30)

disquiet: n; 1. Disquiet is measured in books. (MS-31)

divergence: n; In my words you can hear the receding footsteps of the one you have come to meet. (MS-32)

enigma: n; Those enigmas which inform our lives are not things to be solved. They are to be caressed. (MS-33)

enlightenment: n; **7**. In order to enlighten people one must teach them to think in the dark. (MS-34)

ephemeral: adj; Achievements which resist time's effacements often have failed to achieve what is most important. (MS-35)

esteem: n; 1. To seek the esteem of others is to profess an optimistic view of humanity. (MS-36)

eternity: n; 3. Eternity regrets you. (MS-37)

evil: n; 10. Evil is the most effective remedy for those plagued with a conscience. (MS-38)

exception: n; **3**. In a world that is mute it is an exceptional thing for someone to speak. In a world that is a cacophony it is an exceptional thing for someone to remain silent. (MS-39)

exhaustion: n; Exhaustion has always been more pleasurable, and more productive than vigor. (MS-40)

exile: n; 11. The true exile is homesick for the future. (MS-41)

exodus: n; When, by the very people who are supposed to be involved in public affairs, a public space is referred to as a household, then it is time to grab what you can carry and *run away from home*. (MS-42)

fall: n; **6**. The foundation of every existential insight is the genuine sense that *we have fallen from a great height*. (MS-43)

fame: n; To seek fame is to desire to be discovered by those who are not searching for you. (MS-44)

fanaticism: n; **2**. The fanaticisms of youth become the lassitudes of middle age as effortlessly as the lassitudes of youth become the fanatcisms of middle age. (MS-45)

fever: n; The fever should be followed, not to find a source, not to divine an end, but because the fever *wants* to be followed. (MS-46)

flag: n; 2. A flag is a veil that an entire nation is compelled to wear. (MS-47)

fraternity: n; 2. When someone repeatedly refers to *we*, it is almost certain he intends *not you*. (MS-48)

freedom: n; **12**. No one appeals to freedom more desperately than the one who has continuously renounced it. (MS-49)

fright: n; Fright builds temples so terror can preach. (MS-50)

fruit: n; From the perspective of a tree its fruit is a burden. (MS-51)

frustration: n; 2. Frustration is the tone reality uses when it wants to teach. (MS-52)

future: n; **15**. I do not write for the future, I write for the past. I trust my words to the future because the future is the most faithful messenger. (MS-53)

genealogy: n; Habitual problems may be born of ignorance but they are nurtured by stupidity. (MS-54)

genius: n; 3. People are always far more eager to proclaim genius than they are to encounter it. (MS-55)

gift: n; **6**. Nature rarely gives a gift to a scientist, but when it does, it is usually in the form of a reprimand. (MS-56)

god: n; **2**. The only reason an omniscient and omnipotent being has not sat with me to talk is that it is afraid of my questions. (MS-57)

grace: n; 2. It is impossible to fall from grace when you have been nailed to it. (MS-58)

greed: n; A tree is not blue because it does not take everything from the sky. (MS-59)

greeting: n; You have all your life to say good-bye to things. *At the end* it is far too late for all that— it is time for greetings. (MS-60)

grimace: n; **2**. The only thing worse than to be born with an ineradicable grimace is to pass through life with an ineffaceable smile. (MS-61)

ideal: n; **8**. The problem with creators of so-called *artificial intelligence* is that they use human beings as the standard by which to measure intelligence, which is perhaps not ideal. (MS-62)

illness: n; **5**. Illness is the most resolute emissary of the *necessary*. **9**. Health is the most difficult thing to cure. **11**. Illness is a writer's workplace. **13**. If there is anything divine in our universe, and if this divinity has any relationship to us, it speaks to us only through illness. **14**. When I am sick I recognize my body for the utter stranger that it is. When I am well I forget this entirely. (MS-63)

impossible: n; **1**. The worst thing about the impossible is not just that we can see it or imagine it, but that we are permeable to it. (MS-64)

inconvenience: n; Thought, which is our greatest convenience, exercises its genius when it inconveniences us. (MS-65)

independence: n; **2**. An advantage of doing something significant by yourself is that once you have finished you realize how much help you have had. (MS-66)

injury: n; 1. Time heals all wounds except those caused by time itself. (MS-67)

intellect: n; 1. The intellect lives everywhere and is welcome nowhere. (MS-68)

intention: n; 6. Our so-called good intentions are the most effective means of keeping us from effecting good. (MS-69)

irrationality: n; People will listen to reason but they will answer to the irrational. (MS-70)

language: n; **2**. We hang onto language for our lives, we grasp it as one who has, at a precarious height and position, lost their balance and fallen. (MS-71)

law: n; 8. A law cannot be broken, but a person can. (MS-72)

leap: v; 1. A poem leads you to the edge of a cliff; poetry is why you leap. (MS-73)

leaves: v; 2. The past tense of love. (MS-74)

leisure: n; 1. Killing time is a legal form of suicide. (MS-75)

limit: n; **6**. That the limits of our universe are also the limits of our language is regarded as a miracle by a poet, as just by a philosopher, as unintelligible by a scientist, and as horrific by the common man. (MS-76)

limitation: n; **11**. Frustrated by his possible achievements, which are limited, man revels in his debasement, whose possibilities are infinite. (MS-77)

literature: n; **5**. We measure a great book by the quality of its shade. Terrible literature hurts our eyes precisely because of a lack of shade. (MS-78)

lucidity: n; 1. Eventually life demands a leap of lucidity. (MS-79)

malevolence: n; To envision one's life as *a rampart against a malevolent divinity* is the necessary basis for every profound creative achievement. (MS-80)

man: n; 3. Man is singular for mania. (MS-81)

market: n; 1. A life worth living must be purchased. It costs exactly one life. (MS-82)

master: n; Time wants to be our slave but has grown hoarse commanding us to be its master. (MS-83)

maturity: n; **1**. The rejection of *utopia* as a concept that has any value to life is the first sign of intellectual maturity. (MS-84)

measure: n; 5. I am precisely the time it takes for a man to end. (MS-85)

melancholy: n; 4. The problem with melancholy is the unmanageability of its elation. (MS-86)

memento mori: n; What we do not write for those who do exist we write for one who does not exist. (MS-87)

memory: n; **1**. A memory is evidence that we have forgotten many other things, almost everything else in fact, *definitively*. (MS-88)

mess: n; If you do not take your mind for daily walks it will shit in your house. (MS-89)

messiah: n; 4. Messianic expectation is a predictable consequence of consistent moral failure. (MS-90)

miracle: n; 4. It may be that we are repulsive to the miraculous. (MS-91)

misanthropy: n; **1**. Everyone is born as a potential poet. Keeping this fact in mind it is difficult not to be misanthropic. (MS-92)

money: n; 2. Money saves us the trouble of being human. (MS-93)

need: n; **4**. Our happiness is dependent on things that far surpass what we think we need. (MS-94)

neighbour: n; **1**. I've always imagined I'd live a life much different from the life I've imagined. (MS-95)

neutrality: n; Neutrality is only an option for those who have already chosen to be impartial, and moreover, to side with the victors. (MS-96)

nourishment: n; **1**. If you cannot find the Eden you wish to be banished from, you must create it. (MS-97)

obstacle: n; **2**. Freedom is not a consequence of the lack of obstacles; it is the activity that arises in spite of them. (MS-98)

oceanography: n; There are two kinds of water on the earth: freshwater and tears. (MS-99)

open: n; Ordinary lives have hidden doors; the life that departs from the ordinary leaves its doors open. (MS-100)

opinion: n; 2. Following popular opinion is the surest means of remaining irretrievably lost. (MS-101)

oppression: n; 2. Oppression is when everyone you know says yes. (MS-102)

optimism: n; **8**. My optimism is so profound it has developed into an intractable misanthropy. (MS-103)

paradise: n; 2. The plural of paradox. (MS-104)

pastoralism: n; I am nature and nature will have nothing to do with me. (MS-105)

patience: n; **5**. We write the words that wait for us. We await the words that will seduce us. And we seduce the time that separates us from what we desire with words that have lost all patience. (MS-106)

perfection: n; **5**. A conventional person does not practice vice, he has perfected it. (MS-107)

philosophy: n; **3**. The philosophy that desires to prolong wonder is far different from the philosophy that wishes to solve it. **8**. Illness is not a branch of philosophy, it is the root. **14**. Philosophy is the part of my delirium that is communicable. (MS-108)

pillow: n; I don't necessarily want to take away the pillow that others may use for comfort. I just don't want to be that pillow. (MS-109)

plea: n; Eyes are the singular punctuation in the soul's insistent request. (MS-110)

pleasure: n; 2. Pleasure is how suffering suffers. (MS-111)

poem: n; **16**. A poem must be attended. **24**. In the poem I want to reach the point where the *what* of saying and the *how* of saying are identical. **49**. The poem, at its best, reveals to you how far you have fallen... how far you still must travel... for most, perhaps all, this is the most unbearable *necessary* knowledge. **56**. A successful poem is a resolution to a problem that cannot be posed in words. **57**. In a society where lies are indispensable for the management of society the ability to comprehend a well-composed and inspired poem is a revolutionary act, and will be punished accordingly. (MS-112)

poet: n; **3**. The poet's desire is that in this life of countless departures there is one approach. **11**. I want to reach those places where the word loses its composure. **15**. Love will open a poet's mouth; dread will keep it open. **16**. The poet is a thief; it steals your discretion, your common sense. And this is a good thing. You should be grateful. **17**. The poet is an uncomfortable and suspect citizen of truth. **18**. Often the poet is walking barefoot across a desert of shoes. **24**. A poet is part of a jury that has been sequestered and everyone else on the jury went to the washroom, together, and have never returned. **43**. Every poet is a possible civilization. **44**. The poet cultivates immensity. **53**. Every poet is only ever a footnote in a catalogue of vanishing things. **57**. To be the next step when there are no more steps to be taken. **59**. The difference between a poet and everyone else is that words will tolerate a poet for a time instead of typically expressing their indifference or even disdain. **61**. What begins in the poet must never end there. **64**. A poet can exist only in a place where something is demanded of poets. (MS-113A/B)

possibility: n; 7. To search for the impossible is to find the possible. (MS-114)

present: n; 2. The present is the name of our battle with what is not. (MS-115)

prognostication: n; **2**. He who sees clearly and proclaims what he sees does so not to be right, but to be proven wrong. (MS-116)

property: n; The only property I own is a small tract of land between some words. I spend a lot of time there. (MS-117)

revolution: n; **9**. Fidelity to the truth ensures the betrayal of every revolution. (MS-118)

saint: n; No one finds it harder to live with a saint than the saint himself. (MS-119)

salvation: n; **4**. When someone *offers* to save you, to flee from their advances is the only salvation available to you. (MS-120)

sanity: n; 3. If you cannot see the walls of the asylum it does not mean you are sane. (MS-121)

scar: n; **2**. The preoccupation with *security* is the scar that persists after the intellect has been excised. (MS-122)

science: n; **12**. External reality is always an hypothesis; a *working* hypothesis. **16**. Science does not tell you what is right or wrong. If you are looking to science for these things you are not looking at science but into the eyes of a devil. And a devil is always replete with answers. **34**. When I see a growing tree, I see a process that is critical of its foundations. (MS-123)

scientist: n; **3**. The most important skill required to be a scientist is to know where science ends. **5**. The most a scientist should hope for is that its errors are fruitful. (MS-124)

sea: n; The sea whispers two things: *swim... traverse me*, and, *it is too dangerous, go back*. (MS-125)

security: n; **6**. Intelligence and education are the surest means of securing us from those who insist on *protecting* us. (MS-126)

seduction: n; 2. Seduction is how honesty plays with deception. (MS-127)

sense: n; **8**. A man has a particular capacity for finding sense in the non-sensical. Nevertheless, this capacity is feeble when compared with his propensity to degrade all that is sensible into nonsense. (MS-128)

servility: n; In order to speak one's mind it is a good idea to have one. (MS-129)

silence: n; **11**. To be the poet who is unfaithful to his language, to sneak out at night while my language is asleep and to speak the nightwords to my lover, *silence*... this is my task. (MS-130)

siren: n; **2**. The totalitarian society hears music in a siren, and sirens in music. (MS-131)

sleep: v; 2. Sleep is a form of protest. (MS-132)

smile: n; 2. No revolutionary leader will smile... unless he is dying. (MS-133)

sociability: n; If you can't drink by yourself you are poor company. (MS-134)

society: n; **3**. Society is a system of punishments for the inclinations that it is responsible for provoking. **5**. Accidents of birth do not constitute an ultimate authority. (MS-135)

solitude: n; **8**. Solitude is the trajectory of thinking, but not its destination. **10**. Someone who cannot bear solitude is not someone who should live with others. **11**. As Camus states, there are "solitudes that reunite those society has separated". It is the task of an artist to create and validate such solitudes. (MS-136)

soul: n; **8**. If you have a soul, and if that soul is immortal, you can be certain that this soul has nothing to do with you. (MS-137)

spectacle: n; **1**. Well-funded stupidity always outshines impoverished intelligence. (MS-138)

submission: n; A creative life is a rejection of every form of submission to the dictature of incomprehension. (MS-139)

subtraction: n; In reading certain books, in fact, in considering the lifetime of *work* of some writers and thinkers, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, as a consequence of their contributions, the world has been diminished. (MS-140)

success: n; **5**. Success is in a large part a measure of the responsibility one is willing to assume for the failure of the entire enterprise. (MS-141)

suffering: n; **11**. The richer is one's interior life, the more expansive is one's existence, the greater is one's aptitude for happiness, and the more profound is one's suffering. (MS-142)

supplication: n; **2**. If you neglect your life to the point that you must beg a doctor to return it do not expect a miracle. (MS-143)

suspicion: n; 2. Many poets consider language to be their friend; they trust everything it says. I am suspicious of language; I always hear it speaking behind my back. (MS-144)

task: n; If one has a task in this life, a duty, it is to "deprive stupidity of its good conscience" (Nietzsche). (MS-145)

tear: n; 4. A tear is water that has experienced humanity. (MS-146)

testament: n; **3**. Everything I have written, when considered as a whole, represents a series of objections to an unwritten philosophy. (MS-147)

thinking: v; 11. Our thinking is an immaterial monument that we are incessantly trying to visit, and to photograph. (MS-148)

thought: n; **17**. Often the contortions our minds must make in order to receive a thought are all that is important about the thought. (MS-149)

time: n; 13. Those who never tire of proclaiming that *there is not enough time* have never experienced time. (MS-150)

tomorrow: n; Tomorrow is an untested hypothesis. (MS-151)

tourism: n; 4. Tourism is colonialism practiced on a personal scale. (MS-152)

tragedy: n; 2. The impossible approaches me in the breathtaking attire of possibility. 6. The tragedy inherent in human development is that a child can perceive and comprehend what he will then use the rest of his life to deny. (MS-153)

truth: n; **11**. It is a weak truth that nails a man to a cross. **16**. Those who insist most vehemently that there is no truth, or that there is no such thing as goodness, will always present themselves as seemingly inexhaustible sources of truth and goodness. **17**. With our half-truths it appears as though we have more to say. **21**. Truth desires only the praise which is never forthcoming. (MS-154)

uncertainty: n; **2**. What I want to point to with words is so tenuous, is so suspicious of presence that even the act of pointing is enough to disperse it. (MS-155A)

utopia: n; 5. Every utopia is serviced by delusional plumbing. (MS-155B)

vacuity: n; When someone expresses a longing for *the simplicity of childhood* you can be certain that intellectually speaking this person has already attained a radical, perhaps terminal, simplicity. (MS-156)

value: n; **9**. Religion is a requirement for those who wish to be convinced that their degradation has a positive moral value. (MS-157)

vanguard: n; An artist is never ahead of their time— it is only that most people take very small steps, and almost always to the side. (MS-158)

violence: n; 2. Violence is the destination of every life that has been exiled from relevance, from consequence. (MS-159)

virtue: n; 2. The fool not only moralizes with fallacies, but derives virtues from them. (MS-160)

wealth: n; **3**. In a world where we are incessantly solicited, taxed and impoverished, a word spoken honestly with another person is a source of wealth. (MS-161)

weapon: n; The *weapons of the future* are designed not to win wars, but to prolong them, indefinitely. (MS-162)

weather: n; In the neighborhood of non-existence, of nothingness, it is always unbearably windy. (MS-163)

wilderness: n; The only remaining wilderness is in my voice. (MS-164)

wind: n; For a reason I cannot understand, the profundity of *wind*, as an elemental force, can only be appreciated at an advanced age. (MS-165)

wine: n; When you drink good wine you do not become drunk... you become good. (MS-166)

wing: n; **1**. A wing takes the sky seriously. **2**. An artist who does not know how to fall does not know how to fly. (MS-167)

winter: n; In winter some trees, finally able to clear their heads, speak, without adornment, their irrefutable clarity. (MS-168)

wise: adj; 1. Wisdom has not avoided crises, it has lived through them. It is an indication that truth has been endured. (MS-169)

word: n; **4**. We all have the words we deserve. And our words cannot help but carry into the world whatever treasures, whatever rot, that constitutes our minds. **6**. Every word is a dream that has established a career in reality. (MS-170)

work: n; 3. A passion does not just happen. (MS-171)

world: n; **4**. I have become habituated to the world becoming lost within me, irretrievably lost. But what is always disquieting, even paralyzing at times, is the fact that I can feel every effort the world makes as it attempts to free itself from me. (MS-172)

writer: n; 29. A writer who does not leave the world a notebook has taken from the world more than he has given. 30. I wander across the limitless terrain between what life suggests is possible and what life refuses to give me. 31. Every writer is necessarily a reader, and so his progress as a writer depends not only upon those books he reads, but also those he does not read. It is also true that the progress of a writer is impeded, not only by those books he reads, but also by those he does not read. 33. When the pen touches the paper a writer has created time. (MS-173)

writing: v; 2. I am too large, too clumsy to enter many of living's most important spaces. However, I can write my way into them. (MS-174)

yearning: n; This is where the year lives. (MS-175)

