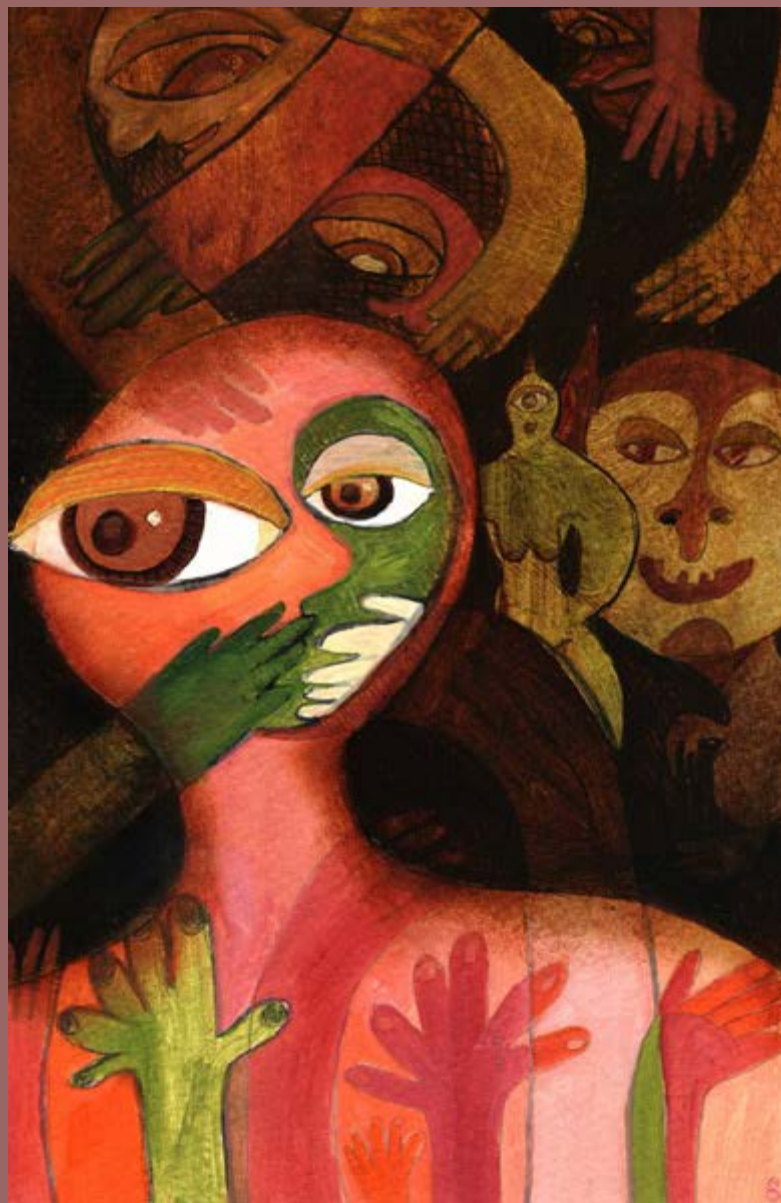


milk volume 7

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William ALLEGREZZA

hallowed

working from the press
wood falling across unknowing
finding traces back to the beautiful thing
but lost among canned goods like so many other signal placements

still in distant cities
children line the streets and do not ask for forgiveness
as rocks fly or their mothers run headlong into fire

documents pile
in rooms hotels health clubs
and are not burning but are stacked neatly
so that one forgets connection

"i had no one to turn to when i was raped"

on the way to work
i stop to admire the freeway construction
before pulling off at my exit

~~~~~

radical extension

under bridges free summersaults  
toxic birdcages automobiles headed for birmingham  
like cities of inevitable release

~~~~~

utterance

"he puts his finger in the toaster
and it burns"

some god screams on the highway
as though history is a corner
replayed over and over with bats and bars

we come to purity through desire

she contemplates the final call as the building collapses

.....

comfort

as if amphion
rests
with children
in streets

agents splatter teeth
and nails on
open walkways
of distance
as if
an equation of equal parts
is a haven
from x-ray
vision

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Aaron BELZ

BAROMETER

My name is fifty whales. I came from up the spoon.
Our little bungalow there provided plenty shelter.
I originally came from Provincetown.

What I remember about Provincetown was cupie doll.
It stuck up like spokes. Riblet.

My name is Kate Warner. I want you to run a background check.
He is denying that he is Kate Warner. Jack listen:
Her family's not cooperating.

I live in mailbox with Teddy. He freelances for the CIA.
After lectures, my neck always hurts. Now please:
Get back to me as soon as you've got anything.

What I like best is Coupled Townships Incorporated.
What I appreciate about Conner was her style.
She fave. Notch about Klinker.

Let our chimpanzee guidebook roll along barometer.
It can't hurt to spend what all we have left.
Get ready for a new breed of competition.

THE LAW OF INCOMPLETE AVERAGES

Is a corollary to the Principle of Disconnected Parts.
Both have the media people reeling,
Especially considering the tornadoes that ate up
Vast tracts of land in North Carolina this spring.

The Conundrum of the Missing Modifier
Continues to leave experts guessing,

As does the photograph of the Squealing Masseuse.
No one questions science, nobody dares.

Mistakes are as prevalent as the thousands of Asian
Women who bare themselves for digital cameras
Each fall in the shadow of hundred-story structures
Near waterways full of nets, fish, and junks.

The Laws of Ordinals and Indiscreet Numerals
Perplex even the most patient pundit;
I myself sit in an anxious mist
As pictures download to my laptop by the dozen.

If I weren't on the Diet of Grape Jelly,
And you were able to pry yourself free
From the narcissism that encages you,
Perhaps we could agree on a temporary solution, at least.

For the moment, let motorboats float,
Let limo fleets disappear into the streets.
Let the ancient hexes be ancient, Maurice,
Like electronic impulses: unsolvable, undissolvable.

SHY

No, you don't get the flowers.
You eat the only pouch
And you don't get the flowers.
Me I've waited all this time,
And what's left is Honda.
Do not mistake it for ease:
Or even for usefulness:
No one wants to be here
Where everything's in rows.
Six Aeroflot tie pins,
You know, glued together.

THE VELVET SPIKES

One machine had a broken language button.

As if to mute the first two clanks,
none of the cars were visible at the university,
and I could still taste the cereal
beneath obligatory horse jelly.

Old wolverines and marines make great referees.

Along about the first open section, two of our fastest mates
made a break for the middle and then at the same time
sped up and split apart laterally.

Time for a quick chestnut, time for a nap.
A video reel pulls noisily through its rotors,
though we finished the feature five minutes ago.
A thudding of bolts: you with your free silencer,
me with my photos of Italy, weeping.

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Kristy BOWEN

the synaesthete's love poem

And yesterday, blue tasted like licorice.
Even the wind chimes caused dizziness;

the ache of paper lanterns rotting
from the acacias. Perhaps the L

in my name makes you sad,
evokes a film where a woman

waves from a train. Or how
this horizon wants to be a hymn.

If you listen, you can
hear the holes in the alphabet,

the sounds lit by the lamps
of our bones. Perhaps

with this page I could fashion
a boat or a very convincing window.

A dress made entirely of vowels.

instructions for when traveling abroad

Nonetheless, a flashlight is indispensable. Beware the winded, or plundered, or spilled. You never know when bonelessness may prevent accident, particularly when dancing with Italian men.

On every continent, obscurity invents mystery. Chewing gum may help. A petticoat beneath a black skirt may mend the interstices between syllables. Be prepared.

For every vaulted ceiling, or tattered calendar, draw an x across your forearm. Do not long to steal the chandelier or place oranges at the foot of St. Cecelia.

On Saturdays, wash your lingerie in white, scentless soap.

from the dream concordance

pg. 67 you were thinking torn and the hyacinths had teeth

pg. 78 caught when telling a lie, her teeth began to crumble into her cupped palm

pg. 89 an atlas roughly the size of a table, his teeth gleamed in the lamplight

pg. 99 forgotten the buckets, milk-heavy, the day's teeth already into her

pg. 104 the space behind her teeth and tongue purpling and erratic

pg. 107 when bending at the waist, the movement of the comb's teeth along the scalp

pg. 110 hard toothlike projection from the beak of embryonic birds, assists in hatching, and later falls off

pg. 112 the top of the backbone and already in the teeth, the fever spreads to the ears

pg. 130 exhibited a certain sweet tooth and affinity for lemon cake

pg 141 loss of teeth could denote a deprivation of vitamins, but may signify a loss of love.

Unusually large teeth may indicate dishonesty or wordiness.

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Clayton COUCH

Oneiromancy

may I shake a lot of these buildings rain there it drops
and ending while teeth shed saliva strapped in window
treatment the running of debt facets and relegate the sun
a shingle peels away around a conversation about petroleum
who will pay a state of being tepid and brackish inversion
consolidation of glass piles an obliteration of allusive friends
blame the shirt the stars and stripes and a honeymoon
trip of biology where convicts mouth out cuts and bruises
symbol of infinity bejeweled against a worn broom needle
a bubble resold in the midst of electing myself surgeon
to teach while breaking arms and legs is a kind religion
flustered and left dead I voted against cadaverous grins
the bones that poked soil up above the legal sea level
parallelograms burned into the skin and sensitizing shouts
where you can hear what loses itself in silence in sapien

You're Being Manipulated

So we. It's in that water's interest. The moon disposes. When sun wanders, all who died yesterday exhale. As reader of linear texts, the magician decided against having an ending to the trick. Thus, it's ever-expanding.

Sometimes, it's nice to hear static. If the radio played my thoughts, we could call it a day. At the end of the month, I can hear my voice muttering lines across a dirty chalkboard. It's not connected.

Came wrapped in plastic bags. Came undone in the back seat, packed in amongst the papers. Fog on the rear window. Eyes almost obscured. The best things in life end up on trucks.

There, where the poison sumac affected your eyesight. The blisters prevented my voter registration card from slipping into the fire, or should I say, I rubbed the card and passed it along to my neighbor, the neighbor who votes with her teeth. It's a

beautiful day in the library.

Studies creek in anticipation of seeing a water moccasin catch its own venom, but can't say where the shoes were tied. Beheadings are easier when the currents are strong. Toothpick dislodged, the hunt for tomorrow's breakfast is over.

Evidence. The candles burned out before the power rekindled, and we lost each other in the room's depths. Kissing occurred elsewhere. On the mantle, the clock ticked like dying ribs. I missed your ears.

Lately, it has been a struggle: bills scatter, work is whoring, and the mornings reassemble various mildews. What did you say? No, no metaphysical hernias to speak of, but I did contort myself with Deleuze and Guattari in the gym yesterday. Yes, yes I think I'd like that. Would you hold on?

Committee

Walk through it, and drive median into hiding.
Flustered lunch hour, and mix it up. Forehead
weakness. Salad days please the mistress.
Mistreatment (or falling all over you) shackled.
Sickle dependence on a new vein of inquiry
computers fluorescence and burns to talk.
What is this weak ache? A permeating funny
talk camped beside all good little children.
Such socially-secure fun conceals the pistol.
Where was this stunner when the lights went
out? To court filler in the boardroom cupholders:
the colder the order, the more we argue days.
If humid foes drink softness down or please
what's what, a discrete series angles towards
shore where the wood rots in demand. Up
against it, I could hear the music in the strife.

Monday

Morning comes up dull.
Shhh, I didn't wink once,

disposable banana-peel sun.
Litter box needs changing,
and I need a windexed
motivation; no grocery list.

Guarded against full sto-
machs and booms of house
construction out back.
What appears to smoke
in the tangles like brush-
fire? The engine melted her.

Southbound, the heat of rub
turns over. Blowout hearing-
aid sale suffers winners,
and droves of frogs sing
sleep, leap into crouch
just beside lit numbers.

All projections come here,
just because the elevator
left some paying customers
in the basement with back-
packs and cold feet. For-
mica really loved to whistle.

Yesterday, older stadiums
crushed under smoke, there
arose the noise of thousands
of intercom interference flows
busting out of tunnels. Runs
uphill with flowing algae-

tuft juncture. Walking fast
to pay the bills, let's lick
envelopes or gossip at tall
tables, and trick yourself
into letting out the full
brunt of potential alarms.

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Elizabeth DUNPHEY

Bicentennial

You'd think that if we could produce one
Susan Dey we must be really great.

Her beige hair, the chapped lips
and humongous clear eyes, that turning up
nose and a coltish tough weary sister laugh
masking ballsiness
what gorgeous looks charged with smoky air
Oh, Keith this person said

On tv, you thought she might faint she was
CHAIN SMOKER 1970S THIN
Susan Dey was renowned for her lessening
possessed this great lack--that American boys old men same thing loved
though it wasn't Diane Keaton's lack
which had the integrity of a peanut butter sandwich.

It was like if you went to a concert and drank beer
and she was the girl who maybe wanted
to go elsewhere Susan would not leave
your hand in her cold white one abruptly

when you saw her at any time later on tv
she had depth but you knew something
expired witty strong as she was
that smoky dewy quality expired
the eyes' expectancy expired it was very Lolita tragic like
was it even the SAME Laurie Partridge

So the fact you do not want Susan so much was so pervasive
and her terrific wrinkles were something
They should teach us that in school
like this was how the country worked
and not only police, Watergate, those supposedly rigid or corrupt things.

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Clayton ESHLEMAN

LIFE IN THE FOLDS

Imagination has never met
a non-love it did not love, or
a wall with which it did not become engaged.
I am a convict of light
in the suction panic of the sun.
The range is eternity,
the focus? The halter of time--
a babe in halter we spring up and down,
restrained, eternity invades our dreams,
spreads across the stone,
form trancing form. What is
is inherent in what is not.
Only in the abyss do time and eternity
dissolve into a sinless
source of origin. The first image was
a prompter box, gesturing to
an us spread out like bat wings on
a stone relief. Each second is
vertical with middledened hives,
I fish for bait trapped in my own line.
Across the stone, the actor hordes are
streaming ochre, enmassed
manganese penetrates
their menstrual pour. The tunnel is
enlightenment if
death's lager can be drunk there.
Silo hide, imprisoned sand
course my throat, an appled road rent
with all who have responded to daybreak's
roll call of bones.

In the suction panic of the sun, we are
entwisted spectres, our veins
streaming with verdure,
octopodal bursts of infant flowers,
tender calcium--in your
outstretched hand you hold our wheat,
in your torso interior a banquet hall collapses,

a Lethe seeping into mist-dead-dusk.
In comparison, all retwists--I watch
a watch-headed serpent
enter your red breast-hung hall--
on the same mobius strip
we act, via awareness of death,
as if we are alone.

Your head disappeared eons ago,
my tombal shoulders, armless, and dimming with
sallow orchards, writhe stillly
as your charge bolts and
makes beaver shapes in Matta's mind. I spot him
at the horizon's vortex where the panic hits
and the sun takes on stick insect
latitude, filmy cosmic trestle
before which we bend and whisper,
green fuses trapped in a summons that runs
through the known,
now picking up some shred turds of
uncharted waste.

I participate, in advance,
in future time. My point of reference is
spherical, amoebic,
a chorus of strings. I take my leads from
tunnel intestinal macaroni,
ancestor lines wandering
having left their rear-ending hole
--no one has touched bottom,
bottom is a hole at the speed of
engendering poles. The jungle holds up
a mirror, we see we are chalk tracteries in
outer space grasped briefly
as elves under amanitas in the garden of
steel-infested self. Tracteries
where armored gnomes slash at
menstrual slits. Right now
this raspberry is flooding my mind, a head of
yellow breasts is wearing a Pieta wig. I
set it aside to make way for
an automobile sprouting towers of enraged Iraqis,
like derricks of vegetal steam
they wave in and out of view.
I press no button
but I'm American through and not through,
mind is a jet engine suctioning
imperial drift, attempting to register
an allegiance to dehumanized Palestinians
as well as to the Daughters of Energy
still viable at Le Combel.
Matta now reveals himself:

red disk painted limestone
with a vulvar fold
perpendicular through his being.
A shift, and he is a flayed dog head studying
a vagina on fire as its soot
surges through an amber emporium of astral scree.
It is the profound and beautiful
femininity of the earth
that is always under man attack.
I crawl toward the mirage of an Aurignacian candelabra
still glistening with cosmic dive.
I eat a leech and watch its Whitmanian suckers
unfold, this is wholeness,
or, as close as I'll ever get to a closure
packed with the rubble of
rhinocerotoc metonymy.

[Paris, June, 2004]

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Amy KING

Causes for Celebration

So much of it happened the night
the sky was sober beneath
the hidden words of poet men.

I took from you virginity
and gave it back again.

And a little red robin with
clavicle broken
is used extensively in
our living laboratory.

He wears cut-off shorts
and a nightlight for help.

No, the little bird performs
right at the bottom
of being alive.

Based on implied comparisons
our commissioned scientist
ignores the gaps and goes straight
for an opposition.

But no one can explain
beginner's luck or
the novice's jugular or
who has taken the lead here tonight.

You see, truck after lacerating truck
sings by, blowing my wig from head,
blurring my wig on my head.

I have passed the time gazing at traffic.
I have passed the time grazing in traffic.
I have passed the time.

In conjunction, a single hair from

my original mane grows on my mother's chin.
Just so you know, this has been
a living testament
for the cloning arts.

As long as I keep approaching
the inevitable, you will pet a kangaroo
until you never know what one is.

Like last night, dogs and alcohol named Bailey
kept refreshing my drink. I am drunk
moreover on the expertise of Pandora's eggshells
in a box and her dollheads hanging on the line.

Elsewhere economy is a psycho-pathetic adventure.

In one city, we experience
virtual displacement for the cost
of a laser jet ink removal plan.

In another town, we get to meet a combination
soda-sandwich-shoe-repair machine.
An up-close on the wonders of a one-horse town.

Embrace the new position of past: open
your arms wide and grasp
the winged expanse that eats an apple,
delivers a worm who loves
and weaves our sweaters, at last.

The Politics of Friendship

A cupping hand opens like
a house is a story
with many stories layered,
a wedding cake of words over wood,
messages in glue-gun candy,

Everyday is a compromise.
Escape is another mode of being.
A bartender expects an eternal answer
in the foam on your upper lip.

In a lyric to be written on the Statue of Liberty,

my syllables echo Benny Franklin's bell,

And I don't need music by which
to enter the city; I've got
potholes, Brooklyn, and your face like a Blakean
manuscript on fire. The weather in your lines
has made us spacious, and softly guided toward nil.

Other facts less erotic:
You don't speak internet.
You aren't familiar with Tokyo slang.
You won't make chained-kat noises in bed.

Dietary advice comes through
a dream's hiccup: empty less,
saturate your head.

The same way the eye moves from automatic wringing
to objects in the hand, we are not alone.
Sharks suffer more claw marks
than us on their heads

And know an answer lies
within how many conversations
are not about you.

Upon Our Lives

In matters physical, obituary veins
make maps of flowers in relief,
a sideways rose and shadow petunia follow
us on walks along the beach.

Persons in the way paling stoop
to pick up their victim ticket. Otherwise,
flash memory hides dog bites and busted kites,
beer cans on a picket fence.

Our poseur cameras puzzle at the flux
of U-hauls and taxis, the threat that nothing
lingers, quietly bridging the promise of no
apocalypse or Jesus.

Wearing motorcycle boots, we will one

day discover levity is an actual air
and salute our hand-sewn auras
in hopeful tuxedos floating there.

Until then, I leave myself
a dish untouched,
a robot on return tomorrow night
with castrated desire.

Instead of military, corporate,
and Hollywood branches, I become
the spare driver of swimming baths and windmills,
cocktails and gramophones on loan,
so that a renewable state of war
might exist between us,
if only you could see my love
as clearly as the next persona's.

With matching arms, we wade
through car horns over dog whistles waning,
voices on blur and sand-filled sighs,
composing a record that plays
our hand-churned, heart-felt disguise.

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Gary LILLEY

SERIAL

1. Practioner of the Faith

I am perilous baby,
every day I shave
I say that to myself.
Everything is cut to the stone
of purity, anything less
just gets cut.

2. Glory

God is still in business
and the purchase of grace is virtue,
the abundance of his love
follows prayer and cleansing,
a sacrifice by the petitioner.
I stand naked before God. This blade
of tempered steel will be drawn
across the calves.

3. Convergence

If people had seen us pissing
in a halogen alley off 5th Street,
they would have said we were intimate.
I'm wetting the base of the wall,
she squats a shadow length away,
a begged cigarette dangling off her lip.
We're watching each other,
bareheaded and exposed, our steam
coming off the bricks.

4. Her

A cold sliver of moon.
I decide to let the woman
do what she does and then
take back the twenty
I had folded into a cross.
I'd opened it flat and laid it
in the burns of her right hand.
I can smell hell-smoke
in the whore's clothes,
decay in the spread of her skin.

5. Skull

In a vacant house she's wrapped
around me, her head laying
on her balled-up pants. Her lips
grind against me, a dry dance
across my bones. She stares up
at the cracked ceiling, turns away
like I was trying to kiss her,
showing me a side of mouth,
the drug heat chapping her lips.

6. Less Than

It's not a completely random thing,
the impersonal exactness
of the transaction
that buys every hole she has.
When she's finally judged
to be missing her family will release
an old photograph to the press,
Not many will remember her
ever looking anything like it.

7. Ascendancy

She's a collection
of worn edges
until I push the blade
towards her heart. One hand
keeping God's name
inside her mouth,
I look into her eyes
as she leaves.

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Camille MARTIN

call me i

banner of piano keys, sways & bumps, hidden jackpots with jagged edges,
rocking on tracks, the first smudge in an empty book

i pretend i have a weakness
for interrupting hunger,
delving & shaking it inside out-
side in. the message is dying the
flag is dying, given a mere
chink in the wall of any sup-
position - i shun i shudder
i am blank under a tangled
blanket. i equals the print, the
boulder equals tatters
in the wind, speckled shrines
equal glazed egrets. time
to observe the blueness
of the sky equals the
bad habit of the "sky"
which used to be a dome
under which bastions crumbled
& rows of trees in future snow drifts
fluttered & impaled frozen air under
cover of a fantasy of perfect clarity

or drink or click or wherever syntax leads, the belvedere's pink slo-mo
flowers i nothing pluck from borderlands up in a tree engraved with a blue
knife one midsummer's night

staying "put" in the myth of one place,
rusted buckets rusted roof rusted
tracks in stages of comedic decay, "why
can't i see nothing what you see?" i, jostling alien,
grasp at moss growing on unsteady pillars.
a dubious freedom to misremember
the measured air of rubricked suburbs.
planning ahead saved my life.
acting spontaneously saved my life.
i am therefore hollow & i gamble
on the water level in my muscular heart,
full of misguidings on the "now" question, clutching
doubtful statistics on battered wheels: automatic

flags, one per phoneme. stunned rust & pink juxtaposed
call my bluff, i will nothing i exhaust them until, through
glassless barriers, belief stammers & darkens the bright dew

climbing aboard where shadows are longer, softer-edged no doubt & thoughts
more circuitous & maybe there is doubt about this fanatic dream in
unclotted air: the landscape rolls by. which of us is moving

i nothing i am the glass, the cargo train,
redundant experience on a cloying sphere.
i nothing i see vertigris, succulent puddles,
i nothing i not distance not empty, neither
raven nor snow nor broken space nor
blank sea nor jagged ink.
yes nothing unknown skin tantamount to
dirty rags in one remembered room
exhausting one poor person's
vision - just to keep warm in the exploded
view - of correct time. another story sinks horizons
one by one, shimmer of atmospheric eyes
in a blindfolded landscape.
these things are scraped & shaped
& those are not? will it become
clearer as we go north? no one-word
irritant in the bestiary: no cages,
no angles, only cascades of amulets
from the mackerel sky when i
nothing i re-unbelieve, haply
lost in desire forming
& unforming

landscape rolls by like a hackneyed koan, the slow dance of trees a
dull-witted parallax, defunct telephone poles cry tears into artificial
lakes. time to move on, planets

dear musical bestiary:
together, skin commits
a mere shallow text, blurted bones:
lung nickel scanned blimp
mud gland verbing dime.
i assemble myself
on the edge of a self-refuting expanse,
its home spilling neutral plastics in a half-light.
a person's name identifies an empty season,
places a cup & saucer on its answer key
of all possible inhalations,
the now-simplified subject at the
pleasure of a story's argument & integument
where a phenomenon is equal to a system of brain

for miles, winter has kissed the new jerusalem through its cunning teeth.

tender unfoldings whisper chiaroscuro cautions

for example, the way that prayer curves
or words awaken dust with the logic of water,
no one's flesh attaches to errors.
i nothing i walk on the outs
with surface, though experience is as shallow as
my flattened cortex. it's no use
flattering death, a risible sequence of closed
perspective, unopened weight. i nothing blind
wallow in persistent gaze, a flawed facade, provisional
impalement. i hollow muscle nothing question
my own release into buildings of deserted
knowledge. i never home i
am never home, unlike impatience with approximate
outlines. the desire to fill them churns unevenly:
part of the slow-burning mix. thou nothing
creature squirreling taste & love
for a winter whose low light can't do justice
to stored feasts, whose nothing juice can't assimilate
summer orchards of dim fruits

crystal rooftops in Home Sweet Homewood, III. snow being temporarily
horizontal, i.e., the viewer in relation to the moving window. constant
rocking elicits dreams about fucking. too many on-off things. one little
off-beat click or clack in each measure

the snow is an alphabet. the wires
going into houses are an alphabet.
commercial transactions of non-survival pixels
are an alphabet. one packs provisional snow into suitcases
& carries them to a greater democracy
of hummingbirds where land doesn't
land, stretching & running
with fences, overtime reflective high-rises
ending their black-&-white pinball march.
here in vocabulary. here's
the direction of thought. now
jump until the next crisis of letters.
sporadic lights in a quotidian
landscape, for example. i nothing i set nothing
in thread-thin phrase, or set fishes on the page,
alphabetical swarms floating over pliant roads

blind at herd's blood, at the content of an infelicitous name, wires &
waves connecting every nook & body. shapeshifter babies talk over tiny
shapeshifter pictures

i spirit haggle nothing in furtive consonants as
autobiographical malignancy banishes flux, an island
on which familiar volcanoes shudder

in the temporary middle of the night.
i begin the capture that eludes my grasp.
i nothing ride a fake horse,
grasp catastrophically at zeroed straws. i nothing
i feed into exact notes, hovering above stone margins.
i name of nothing flame of stave
stalk blank faith, double blessed game,
nothing fathomed. margin shores of nothing doing
nothing coiled signature of ghost petal, slippery nothing
knot. somewhere a person island confounds
practical rows of light along the shore. i nothing i settled
if not settled in dank algebraic mantles prearranged
amid surrenders of dust. i will nothing i
will hold onto rewards of lesser words
counted as nothing on the fringes. this is what
i will nothing feel like if i grave i read nothing
my stories in the light of nothing autumn suns,
bestiary nothing into shadows worn inside out my
thin-papered double-negative life, nothing safely
ensconced in the tender subject. nothing nothing nothing
as desire rises, supposedly targeting & symmetrical,
the expectations of a target nowhere reminiscent, nowhere
absolute encounter in such places as central orchids,
as a permitted tropical movie falls out the mind

mad silos . . . propane towns . . . destination as a mistake as if . . . an
unknown bird drowns on the empty page

full effect of history captured:
the taxpayers are all wrong about
the twin pressures of dust & roof,
a history of slipping outside alphabetical folds.
jolts uttered preserve the breaching flames
of tongue's tip on brittle floor.
a new element speeds toward matter
shattered by salivating logic.
light's hoax examined but not dismantled
within earshot of what must be said
somewhere on the troubled grid,
no choice in the ongoing counting
within ventricled air

parallel sunken tracks, river of splinters, jinx of sleep zealed to bits,
stash of wrinkled garments

i nothing a whale-toothed other
held in the spell of babbling boats
reaping pure profit of night grifters.
mud & lots of it under pressure of selfless air:
cacophonous jot, palpable varnish, stung blindness,
raggedy blot. at a critical braid in time

stars nothing solidify into scenery,
now complete. rows & rows
of corn & mystic snow,
idle zones of associated terminals:
up is on, down is off.
i am more & more probable nothing
before extant storefronts, trashed creek systems,
curtained zenith, as orange as what is triggered,
a blur of tree shadows in the strong season
cast onto a blundering shore
reminding me of another "own thing."
confabulated ruts get the factual stamp lest we unforget
secret smells of public weather
in the dissonant arms & legs of the brain,
which tell how to report from the bird-
sung snow where flowers grow cold
proven by trickery & the oversimplified promise
of an object-mutilating plot:
i nothing i, newly voiced, swaying on fashioned
tracks, misspoken & felt, for once
opt for rubble within seconds of topple

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Michael McCLURE

ODE TO ROQUE DALTON

SURE I CANT WRITE!!!!!!!!!!!! LET ME REJOICE IN THIS INJURY THIS
TRAUMA!!!

FOR I AM HERE AND IT IS ALL MINE! THIS MEAT I S ME—AND I
will love who I am! But not this hideous stone temple that
is me. Look, I'm covered with boils, flapping the spirit wings
that breeze my brow within the mire. If flesh could be decadent
then that would be me. I read, "Mi poesia / es como
la siempreviva" "My poetry's / like the everlasting /
paying for its price / to life / in rough-edged terms"
by Roque Dalton —sweet, bitter voice of a man,
who hurled himself against the barracks,
while I stride in near-freedom, constrained mostly
by a monstrous image of myself that
I've made the God of Me. I'll love this pain
as Roque loved his and I'll say
my chains are vanity, presumption,
love of glory and pride shaped into this body—
edifice that I meant to flow, that I claimed
did move like water or wind above
old muscled gravity.

I have made myself a monster
like a gun in cowboy boots,
while I claimed to be a smiling child,
a soft-eyed boy in search of intense
and pinkish pleasure
and found a deep
and dark regret. A dark yet sweet offense
repeated robot like, has made me a metal mask
without pity for my spirit's coiling.

Once I spoke of fire but now I've carved
the fire into a thing of wood and painted flames
of a stained self, denying guilt, in guilty
splotches on the walnut grain.

And here, here in the heart of silence,
is my chance for birth. Surely
there is guilt, I won't deny it, and it's mine.

Why not let it be beautiful? I made
it from the spirit-matter of my Messiah.
I was not starved, beaten, tortured,
burned alive, as a Central American poet.
But WHATEVER IT WAS, (monster kink
of Leviathan, to the babe I was,
so long ago) I felt it flame that much.
HE OR SHE SPEAKS TO ME THAT MUCH
(The Burning Babe)
and in
real Life I meant to burn
and keep the torch aflaming.

*

"Nos olvides nunca
que lost menos fascistas
de entre los fascistas
tambien son
fascistas":

"Don't ever forget that the least fascist among fascists are
also fascists," says Roque Dalton. —I am the fascist
of myself, and not the smallest that dictates with rod and with roar!

It is not wrong to see Che as Jesus (Dalton did).

Though I would not kill I would spraypaint Che's face
on the clouds over the sunset sea where they are purple
where the mist tangles the orange bridge and its searchlights,
for Che's face is the face of a lion. But I have made my lion
into a creature of green, scented plastic and iron
and not the creature who smiles at the spider and lies down
with the lamb. The god I mirror is my fascist image
of self —but it is better to be a lion of flesh,
alive, and willing to die, in the mountains!

In the flowing mountains of spirit I am a flower of meat,
a scarlet trumpet bloom on a lost stone temple
—but not, not, the monster I push forward on my knees in silence
as I crawl covered with boils.

Let me love the artists and actors who are ????

ACTION PHILOSOPHERS,

let my selfishness turn to the rose of rage
with bronzy thorns and the petals of self-forgiveness.

I will love all that struggles, even in the mire
and pit of silence. SURE, I CAN'T WRITE!

LET ME REJOICE IN THIS LUXURY
that gives me a chance for birth.

1985, spontaneous writing in deep turmoil

*I will love all that struggles, even in the mire
and pit of silence.*

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thurston MOORE

ode to a nurse

belong
ing

to
nothing
I

underestimated
yr worthlessness

no values
no time to fight

fuck with me and I will drink you
down

the british girl who paints her body
has one chance
to get my attention

I wish hard enough
and am impatient

o sweet lanolin

cash and murder
nihilists are correct
eyes scan th room
for a star to consume
anarchist and nepotists

unhinged adultress
here cum th boys
(a girls gotta make a livin)

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Sheila E. MURPHY

from *Omnia*

13.

Venetian blinds in place just as a flashlight trickles flat across

Inherit a routine to ply the lathe of answerable
test case pounded into soft wood like some
shrill nail

Heard rain appear under the stall of night
To have been multiplied into point structures
Grown collectively into the fact of flowing wells
Minus caprice and forthing rides across
The swelling stream allowing for the possibility
Of crossing mainly in the ribboned gleam
Surpassing night

Taken to the widest known extreme, some land
As province glows sharp angular remarks,
So symmetry follows relaxation of the formal
Witness places, side by side, erasing
What would seem inevitable points of gravity
Akin to night that fords the snaps hot river.

14.

Inventable breeze lane, waterways to measure thought

Lack some central moment to allow or foster
chapter markings, remark upon them, also,
listen back as an invention

Sophistication represented several layers aloof
Across a missing baseline promised to the underlying psyche
All at once aligned so thorny background surfaces

The least frantic light inside us,
Taming how we crest against
Temptation and ingredients of experience
Unfelt and holding the ideal of instruments
From which ransom notices are chiseled into
Stone

Now harmonics shiver into our midst
For us to grasp them prior to the line drive
Of a sweet straight low life line
Positioned straight across the smooth page
Of agility we live into
And where a resurrection uplifts
Each example parlayed in a rage across

15.

In a blue work shirt, fluidly gardening to taste

Emancipate the structure to be
other than inflexible, to add
a few links to the de facto chain

She observed clothing to have seemed
De rigeur throughout the template of relationship,
And incidentally the mountain offered only scenery,
We seemed to be inside the confines of a pattern
Not to be enjoyed, unless we could unravel
What was supposed to have been thought through
Carefully among several

Holding in my hands the least practiced
Form of evidence, every story seems to take the part
Of conscience to have ratified, the mixup slowly
Creeps alongside still life titled "woman being gender
Number two," quizzing her very luck for day
As private lessons cease
To have materialized

16.

Pigmentary proffering as an incentive startlingly to love, to have been
lured

Seek secondly to be approached without a plan
to meet the one approaching, listen to

the writhing of a ceiling fan fail to relax

As happens, the fill direct was hypothesized
To be ripe for seeds to flex open and only
Accidentally subside into small splinter-sized
Locations of this world, parted like hair
Though moving slowly as the poverty
In an imagination gives shape
To institutions such as Iceland with
Its comprehensive form of brevity

Intelligence remands opacity in a firm
Exchange for hues with pretty
And descriptive names unhesitatingly forward
Merchants to avow commitment anciently
In part alive with glitter some of the full
Miracles elapse into a coverlet imbued with
Green as can be made again within
The shadow

17.

Tall glasses for consideration, plenty to have fueled an edge of whitening

Tread upon the flat, sane pasture
of aquarial remains, considering
the work to have been done and what remains for later

Meditation now attributed to rain, a factor,
Age, a factor of some twelving,
Are there really holy persons praying, who devote their lives,
Thereby make simple ours, so the likeness
Plots a course, as if to solve
One rumor after others are decided

Cheers to link arms briefly and walk down across
The place where river
Or the natural place to have located
Traces of fragility as though the theory of repair
Prevails again, and pieces reconstructed
Show no evidence of newfound seams

18.

Conversation through the drifts of rain to seed some things we do not

even know

Borrow and give back, what comes of leavening's eventually
practiced in the will points with a shred of vigor,
with a few crumbs broken from the whole, heartedly given

Whispers amplified form spring, the dimple thirds of bird long
House prints how the many tiny lakes are formed,
If with a sprig of leisure I could listen, I would listen far
To sequence as a given thing, and linger across
The places from which hearing is endowed
With spaces of our meaning, tiptoeing across
The venture wide with space feel pried from
What a need for solace, what a need for grace.

The earnest feeling of surpassing what was useful once
Is also the contagion placed where it belongs,
People with time want to be given,
People with space want to be filling
Rooms with friendship with an arrow that moves one way,
So the swelling starts and does not stop,
No flow through mystifies, until the slim form of rapport
Is given half away before repeating how the work is working.

19.

Picture frame, the heat goes on, the middle picture just a wink askew, a
drafty corner

Offer to withhold, then watch the silhouette
be dazzled by the thought of shifting the direction
fluently and with a sterling pace to work

Friendship owns a fleet of these ribboned formalities,
Their violation comes in whims that multiply
Until our shoulders need a little wool or flannel loaned across
To miss predicted or uncertain winds arriving
Just when we do not embrace the speck of an idea
Promising to endow more musical inflections
Than directions often give, whatever flower has to answer
Is immediate perfume the way our mothers taught us
To have thrived with serious attention

History retrieves a way of looking at ourselves,
And that freezing in another moment far preferred
Is what stalls movement in a way, while bolstering
The individual portrayed as strong, who would be weak,
Doused in the adult day care of ways to fill

The time apart from obligations rapidly diminishing.

20.

Soft enough to be approached, this comfort coded for one thinks a replication

Be like Braille to them, meaning specific when
they touch a stare into your outermost . . .
and candle what it costs, and hope to say

Integers give pure direction from the viewpoint of a place between
That infinitely slivers space additional again between
More two parsing intervals up to the point of an infinity,
Then the bum's rush tramples every fight for lumiere,
All spaced silver cataracts go full of something that resembles twine
And slowly vies for shepherd lace against a breezy hillside,
Up against what we are up against entirely
Wooden, woolen, woven, free of outside furnishing

The illimitable answers clothe the simple part of day
Left over from a confit, just as juris prudence offers to be numb,
Allow a getaway from certain prim injurious uncustomary
Votive lights to bracket in the way a cormorant
Deflates its way into the basket of a simple sky,
These razings glow their way into a heap of weather's own
Infinity, as if resilience needed to be half a gift
To play into, upon, and over
While the peace parches a recipe for stainage on the sleep
Given to quiet all the dark shells left in tow
Against the timed wide stains of river.

Hay(na)ku

perfumed
performance: watch
these nettles glow

everything
why is
also why not

* *

morning
in four
four time, listen

* *

sonata
minus one
now flute alone

* *

double
tonguing part
via ear trumpet

* *

musical
nest emptied
of quarter tones

Other Work

look at all the spotless generosity

chimes press open the alongside of a keepsake morning
glyphed if cave is near
the inner ear rescinds the spry outreach of lollygag
I press my luck you press your luck etcetera

greetings to what might be about to happen on the upside
of the broadside of an interrupted filmstrip formed by younger eye

content am I contentment is the arching
of a growing population of found heart
released from the projection on familiar walls

an aqua to be melted with pure silver and dispatched
to cloth to lay upon and shift the tone of skin

one moves in smiles this third of the way there
wherever health is brimming over
with conjoined acceptance of the color jaune

how very feathered

how very feathered are the gesture weeds.
they plush low sky.
we north them when we walk dayside.
we join our limbs with breath, rehearse forgetting as art.
a fevered pacem.

longing keeps.
we hold the moment without will.
and soon the stretch of days equals a life to talk about.
lone man still forging methods, following his way.
a soft parade of motions that don't flex.

afternoon connotes a mild time that extends.
maybe with sufficient gold a thread becomes discretionary
as the powder wings of moths
and nascent fluttering.
a likely joy that weighs that much.

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Ashok NIYOGI

MAZAMA VILLAGE

a man a woman a boy and his dog
a fire that has to be nourished
in darkened woods the party has begun
the smell of cooking sizzles fry
woman's laughter woman's shriek
on the shoulder of the forest road
in car headlights a deer blinks
I twist and turn in my sleeping bag
zippered between memories and desire
I look in corners for some leftover warmth
shadows in the tent gather near
weigh my eyelids shut and then the dreams
of cobalt blue lighter fluid
in the caldera of an imploding life
after this the precipitations will matter
love and hate and sheer indifference
and inch upon inch of falling snow

SHASTA PEAK

it is a beautiful brown mountain
of considerable girth at the base
as it rises from the Cascades
it has a peak and a ridge and hump
snow cap patterned down the slopes
into tapering snow melts
meandering into sparse pine
it catches the whites of morning
the gold dazzlers of a bright day
and is dutifully pink and rose
and orange blush with the setting sun
like a performing artist
orchestrated with the violin chorus
maybe on a full moon night
it will quietly glow

and the violin will come unstrung

CAMP SUNDAY

the sun is perversely bright
on an empty camp awakening
I cannot pretend to be busy
like a humming bird or a bumble bee
so I nag at raisin from a Pine tree
squirrels have read the morning paper
they are out gathering
as are people for tit-bits of life
black ants climb up single file
to carry away booty
from a half eaten donut
in a half squandered morning

bodies come together
and break apart into multicolored pieces
as in a brass kaleidoscope
in the hands of a very old man
there is much vigorous wagging
of dogs' tails and a few excited barks
tighten the leash on sounds
that camp dwellers have thrown
women in shorts
read hardback books in garden chairs
men wonder
what to do with their feet and hands
small puppies yelp and want to act

I kick pine cones into squirrel holes
I foreclose

WHITE BARK PINE

the white bark pine
bends windward
the west wind
roars in from the west
mercilessly flogging
flurries of snow
the white bark pine
turns away
and doesn't want to know

it does not have to swivel
and twist through human debris
it just must ride the winter
arthritic as it is
and show up living white
in next year's summer sun
without articulation
of twisted pain

CRATER LAKE

from the depths of your inner core
you wailed so primal
I saw desire in
destiny implode
from structure to dust
like lust sealed for ever
with a red hot lava flow
you scattered tatters of life
over continents and oceans
pumice and scoria chased
galloping horses that flew

and then the purest snow
sans gravitation in meditation
wafting down the heavens
you had challenged with your fist
braceleted with lightning
the snow enveloped all
snow soothed your angry womb
snow was a salve
for the ragged tatters of your belly
snow numbed your umbral pain
insane you had vaporized rain
now it fell as salt less tears
that are without recrimination
only incredibly sad

the seasons change
snows melt into pristine flows
open eyed you mimic the sky
in shades of blue with truant cloud
such blue as will color me blue
before it mirrors my pock marked sins
even as I bathe my eyes
I ripple all over in cobalt shade
near the shores are magic greens
touched by pink even as

we are touched by madness
when confronted with excellence

this phantom ship
with lowered masts and drooping sail
cannot be anchored it is impermanent
hewn in fragile sensitized rock
it will float delicately away and break up
in the reflection of a wisp of cloud
to sail forever the starless sky
and watch with hollow delicate eyes
the sun draw lines across the blue
ruffled by a westerly wind
that cleanses and cauterizes
and makes it entirely proper
for gods to kneel in noiseless prayer

PINNACLES

this is how hell must have looked
to dinosaurs full of fear
now it is a lazy stream
threading its way through time
loose scoria give way to gravity
but what does the stream care
it adjusts and changes course
between dormant chimneys
shored up with rage
now the cement is weak with age
now the pinnacles mock and grin
mouthful of cracked and ugly teeth
once they bled at the gums
now they are empty inside
but madly angry with the sky
opaque cement evil gray
shadows are arthritic fingers
down the pumice gorge
shaped by grotesquely ugly
giant flaming hands
in everlasting unbearable pain

we have railed off this abomination
it is an awesome geological marvel
now that hell simmers like steaks
in everyday pots and pans

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Jayne PUPEK

Pink Confetti

Go on, be bold. Pray
for something obscene,
a woman with a red, swollen
vulva, her innards oily,
dark as roasted duck.

The colored eggs we didn't find
feed spring crows. All the birds are thin
from winter's insistence on snow.
Who knew what it meant to starve?
In Florida, a brain-dead woman
lasted fourteen days
without her feeding tube.
Our daily bread grows mold
and yet you utter demands.

Wishes are for birthday cakes.
Blow out your candles, Isabelle.
The year begins with spread legs.
When the pinata breaks, down falls
genitalia and pink confetti.

Small Talk on Tuesdays

I am full of venom and spit. Pray for me,
but don't barter or take a hostage.

Move your fingers over me the way you would
a stone, a rosary bead, a thick veined cock.
Mock the sinner, mock the whore. Imprison no one.

I hid a dollar in my bra. A lace-paper fuck
takes place in my cleavage.
Today is a shameful excuse for tomorrow.

I baptize myself with stale Cheerios and piss.
Motives revealed don't change the facts.
Prick your finger, watch yourself bleed.

It is no easy thing to want what you have.
The craving to add is a sad addiction.

Stains remind me where I've been. I'm grateful.

The Yard Sale

The front lawn is a war zone of scratched furniture
and plastic birds. Nearby, a greyhound
masturbates on the birch. I smell the bark peeling,
make a note to whitewash the trunk
in the morning. Next door, the radio blares. Music,
foreign and obscene. Andy Williams lives in Cairo.
Can't Take My Eyes Off You...
...Oh pretty baby....

Perhaps the dog has fleas. Summers on the farm,
gnats swarmed the cocks of Papa's dogs.
Later, those same gnats gathered like sinners
at my skinned knees. When I let them feast
on my blood, I didn't know if I'd redeemed them
or if I'd consorted with dogs.

This much is clear: yard sales are illegal in upscale communities.
Everywhere, possession is nine-tenths of the law,
which technically means my ex should have kept this junk.
Still, I'm a good soldier, albeit a reticent recruit.
I'll face the sun, the crooning, and the promiscuous dog
if by the end of the day, those pink flamingoes are gone.

Apple Seeds

Split the apple in half, expose fleshy core soft
as a baby's palate. All that's left: a few dark seeds.

Today in a nearby town a man beat his seven week old son.
The attending physician counted eight broken ribs
and a row of half-moon marks shaped like human teeth.

I wean myself from lovers by sucking stones.
Just once, I wish the polished discs would break,
fill my mouth with colors instead of incantations

If a homeless man asked to sleep in your garage,
would you let him? If you let him, would your husband
sleep on the couch? Would you sleep at all?

Two girls from my high school went into the bathroom.
One came out bleeding between their thighs.

A drowned girl turns the most ethereal shade of blue.
You're almost sorry you held her head under so long.

Underground

What lives below the surface does not
long for light, but tunnels like a mole
towards the core of past mistakes. Figures
linger outside the bar next door, casting distorted
shadows across the floor of my basement
apartment where I quarrel with men who come
uninvited to my bed. They smoke my last
cigarettes and practice pick-up lines
in the circular mirror. I claim
only the grounds in my coffee pot,
torn stockings, and rain
pelting my window with insults, dirty talk.
When the skies clear, I gather
paper umbrellas hoarded all these years
and pass them out among subway riders
who burrow underground
believing all the while in light.

Night Skies

Once with you in Mexico, I drank
sangria on the clay verandah and rehearsed
currency, forgetting how many pesos
make a dollar. Overhead,
the night sky filled with birds, their wings
dress patterns that obliterated stars and scissor-cut
the moon, dividing light into Orion's milky tears.

Here, weeks later, doves and sparrows
nest high in pines or low in the lilac bush
beneath the bedroom window, propped open
with a rainstick we bought from a shaman who carved
notches into the wood, one for each year we'd been married.
I cut my own notches inside, where no one can count,
a mark for each day you've been gone.

Around my shoulders, your sweater
moth-chewed and tinged with the bitter sex
of cigarettes and perspiration. Tonight's skies
are starry and vacant and full of holes.

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Lanny QUARLES

Redistribution of Emerson's Brahma

if ~ ~ ~ ~ or ~ ~ ~ they ~ ~ i
the ~ ~ if ~ ~ ~ ~ know ~ ~ keep
red ~ ~ the ~ ~ ~ not ~ ~ ~ and
slayer ~ slain ~ ~ well ~ ~ pass
thinks ~ think ~ ~ the ~ ~ ~ and
he ~ ~ ~ he ~ ~ ~ subtle ~ ~ ~ turn
slays ~ ~ is ~ ~ ~ ways ~ ~ ~ again
~ ~ ~ ~ ~ slain

far ~ ~ ~ ~ shadow ~ ~ ~ the ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ and
or ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ and ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ vanish'd ~ ~ ~ one
forgot ~ ~ ~ sunlight ~ ~ ~ gods ~ ~ ~ ~ to
to ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ are ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ to ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ me
me ~ ~ ~ ~ the ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ me ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ are
is ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ same ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ appear ~ ~ shame
near ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ and
~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ fame

they ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ when ~ ~ ~ i ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ and
reckon ~ ~ ~ me ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ am ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ i
ill ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ they ~ ~ ~ ~ the ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ the
who ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ fly ~ ~ ~ ~ doubter ~ ~ ~ hymn
leave ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ i ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ and ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ the
me ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ am ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ the ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ brahmin
out ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ the ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ doubt ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ sings
~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ wings

the ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ and
strong ~ ~ ~ pine
gods ~ ~ ~ ~ in
pine ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ vain
for
my
abode

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Michael ROBINS

from *Twenty-Eight Posts to Abbott*

21

A day for presidents though I feel like rooting for the visiting team, a candle lit in my secret garden. Should I sink a hand into America I come up with onions, not the lunch pail I buried as a child. Inside the lunch pail? Army men, the map of my dream home, a tumbler from Snow Cone Snoopy. One is a career, one is too many rooms, one's an accessory. Of all the things I've buried, the most recent is my marriage to love and country, a heavy cloud on the lip of the horizon. Eric, I've lied: I'd never root for the opposite side when my brother is booked on a Thursday flight to rejoin the crooked game in a distant desert. I'll light a candle, sure, and if I prayed I'd ask his family not made to cry. I'd pray for the engine, the blades, the stabilizing rudder. I'd say "protect" and "love" and even "country." But there's no church I dare attend. There's only a garden and I want only the pleasing flowers.

12

The smell of stems and petals rises through the stairwell from the first floor shop of the florist. There's lust in the air and reservations in the books of restaurants. Hearts on cards and candy on this Saturday before we honor the martyred Christian from the 3rd Century. But who will choo-choo-choose me with a picture of a train? Where am I in the third grade when I came to terms with the girl who first used "love"? And the connotations of "lover" in my 28th year, a year now behind me? There's time yet for flowers, the deflated buds between finger and thumb. There's time yet for an awkward silence in an office at night. One is Edward and one is surely Josephine. Put my hand on her calf, my ear to her waist. Let the others read the papers. I'm a memo that says the boss wants to see you, the transcript that records your need for an ambulance. I love Hopper because his scenes are rarely a promise of bliss. I love his wife because she endured his silence. And there goes the neighborhood, there's a parade for the martyred saints. Tick, tick, ticker-tape. Hooray!

Do I dare aim for the obvious? Do I mention spring break my senior year of high school and the first time San Francisco appeared to these eyes across the blue, blue water? Is it fair to send a postcard of a city I haven't strolled in 4-5 years? A city that once was a dream of beatnik glory? I remember dawn and strolling into a bar across from City Lights, 6 or 7 a.m. and the only place open. I drank, I smoked, I was too young to feel entirely comfortable with the handful of drunken strangers. (How far or near I've come since then I don't know.) I remember New Year's with two friends, a bottle of cheap champagne, extraordinary architecture. The three of us slept in a car that night, not to mention other nights and other cars, though I've also slept in the parks of San Francisco, thinking, "Jack London also slept in this park!" I've relied on oranges in San Francisco, my feet have swollen in San Francisco, once I hallucinated a full conversation in San Francisco. Of all the places I'd live next, if I won the lottery, I'd live in a) Venice, b) New York City, c) a small village in Italy called Vernazza, and d) San Francisco. I've heard that people still write poetry in San Francisco, I've heard that the wind still blows. It's been said that more people jump from the Golden Gate than from any other bridge in the world. That just proves what a great city San Francisco is! I mean, name me one great song written about Chicago or Santa Fe. But San Francisco? If I knew my chords I'd write a new song for Santa Fe and legions of fans would drop from the bridges of New Mexico. Sound good?

We're here again beneath the tables and chairs, some Parisian or German cobbles with shoots of grass growing between. A year ago I was twenty-eight. I thought I'd stay forever in New England. A year older, more bold, I've stayed away from my former states and lovers. "How does one live a fuller life?" I ask, then ask again. We're here again between morning and night, the argument, the embrace. Last night I dreamed my mother, my father, my brother and I suspended in the air after our car ran a stop sign, three-way and no more road to catch the wheels. I dreamed of me, _____ and her mother in an adjacent yard where they took turns looking up from their gardening. I dreamed of swimming and a rope that reeled to bring a sea beast to shore. We're here again in the unfamiliar hours, turns we've never taken and might reveal a house in which we've wanted to live all along. Can you see the garlands near the door? Can you see we'll still ask for more?

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Tom SAVAGE

Duration

Is your life a one-act
Or a full-length breath?
New York is the new Paris,
Late 19th or early 20th century,
Take your pick. It helps
To get away from time, often.
You always return a little calmer.
When the sea rustles its papers,
Does memory remain?
When the sky walks
Will the clouds save you a seat?
Our spyglasses in the sky remind us
No one "dies" of "love" anymore.
Often I don't recognize my own voice
When I hear it played back
Either by my brain or by machine.
If I could see my own thoughts
Would I no longer need to hear them?
Every rock knows artifice.
Each womb knows we've lived
Before we were born.
So far all I've known is different;
Preferrable to difficult, I suppose.
How many necklaces can you wear at once
Before you choke?
Is this determined by climate
Or by the time of day?
The irreplaceable sky dies
Or disappears behind too many buildings.
The silences between words
Demand to be heard
As much as the meanings between them.
But they never are. Near or far.

Son of the Forgotten Adam

Blue skinned men
Old Celts or Pagans
Take a bath in the present day
A gift to no one
But the dead
Who can't claim
Or reclaim it
From where they lie.
Some have a blue skin
When seen naked
Floating in water.
Death is lusty
In the dark
For you.
When a storm
Reaches Hell,
We're reminded,
Many ghosts
Don't know how to swim.
Everything changes there
But us.
Rough sex is
The only form of
Violence allowed.
When death goes away,
We cry.
But another one
Arises and falls soon.
When time slows down here,
We can speed it up
Only for short stretches.

Here Adam is forced
To live alone forever.
Here, an old typewriter
Floats on the sun
Until weighed down
With too many words.
It sinks
And finds its last
Salvation in silence.
Hell has no future
Except for investors.
Death both is
And is not reversible.
Once a month
We eat loneliness

For dinner.
If we dug ourselves out,
Would we find our
New lives as ghosts in China?
Coincidence is
Our ethics here.

The Chesters

Is there anything sadder
Than a mere ex-star
In our celebrity-addled epoch?
Chester Morris, once
A famous, romantic lead
And also a tough guy
In Thirties Hollywood movies
Meets Chester Himes
In, surprisingly or not,
Chester, Pennsylvania.
Should who defer to whom?
Were Chester A. Arthur,
Our most forgotten president,
To suddenly rearise from the grace,
He could be reforgotten
Or learn how to forget
All over again, again.

Yes, And/Or No

Alphabetical action or food.
A well-lit corridor, for once.
Expressed or extreme milk.
An abstract expressionist poem
Would be an open field; no cows please.
Your troubles might seem like Heaven to me.
Candor in verse or worse.

This train left but you're still here.
Our set is in some distant future.
Objectivity, as a point of view.
Let your life's work be your life.
Our dead are no longer sad.
Even in our dreams, they laugh.
They'd rather sing than speak.
Your potter makes ceramics for Hell
But Heaven takes them in its stead.
Someone invented zero,
Realized his or her mistake,
And tried to go back beyond his
Or her construction.
But it was too late.
Anything could have been undone
But that one, that zero,
The negative handkerchief of fate.
A rarefied thing hovered after the treatment,
A boast, a toast, a termination, and a jest.
You'll be seen by your own blossom
And some clouds.
A poem can be in any meter,
Even none.
It may be that grace falls or rises
From us rather than
From any other direction around.
Embrace the inanimate objects inside you.

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Ian SEED

AUTHENTIC LIFE

Not the name, but the walk down to the river, a wish unspoken. In place of a flowchart, a tapestry rolls down before uncomprehending workers. In this room you are suddenly older. Something you're afraid to speak of. Bleeding from the nose at the moment you arrive. So many true versions of the same thing. Drinking from a tap whose water tastes of rust.

CHARCOAL WING

Sealed for the next of kin. The writing is on the sea, not always out there, but here in a way not previously considered. A table bare of sounds, the crowd dispersed. The question of bartering raised, we wasted too much time wondering where the fine line was between the two. A metaphysical delight was taken in uncharacteristic kindness, the old partisan back in the hills. Yet it was our lives they haggled over as night folded around us. Your last-minute gesture was a useless parenthesis, brackets being the safest place.

I THAT WAS NEAR YOUR HEART

All the faces gone. Is it this you wanted? The whispered words you can't catch, the business of angels pressing near you? And the whirl of a face, Christ bent to a new position, truth without a dwelling. Still she moans in her sleep, holds your hand to her belly, anointed in a deed unplanned. All sides lose credence, the old ritual dried at source, malleable for the first time in defeat. But a sense of it strikes for the first time. Fingers delicately intervene. The look in a cow's eyes as she drinks from the river at dusk. Only a few miles from home.

AROUND THE POLISHED TABLE

The subject torn from the main stub, descended in a semblance of another dimension, a closed deed knowingly to dissuade us from a print of permanence, curbed and cultivated to please the next winner, a plague of insiders pulled out for inspection, diminished beyond recognition, lives interwoven for this moment, a tune to bear combed from an array of sources, no one's business to believe any more.

A KIND OF WING

Abandoned clothes, hanging from branches in the forest, offer possibilities, though not the kind you want. A sky opens its arms down. Nice fumbblings. We were out for a while, caught in the gap, folded, taken out of context to be handed over to a stranger, conned out of a sky too blue to be forsaken. Fog lies down, a real treat; day, in no hurry, runs out of looks. All kinds of devil sneak their way in. The finding is well, though unexpected, the next place exclusive and out-of-bounds. You take accurate notes of several false leads, hang truth together from stray threads.

THE ONLY ONE AWAKE

You talk to yourself out loud, like your father in his youth, a mark of recognition, a baptism. How will you get in touch now? It is already morning yet still dark. You listen to the crackle of rain from your bed. Your hand reaches into the emptiness. You have just come to an understanding. A little time more and it will be done. We walk through the forest in silence, as if the other did not exist, the right way a nomad's journey.

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Anthony SEIDMAN

BIVOUAC

Midnight, I sit with my dog by the parking lot on a weathered bench, and stare at Mars. Sanguine dot among the sandblast glitter and blackness; minute, like the first drop of menstruation. My dog smells the gasolined rags, squirrel's musk, the sweat snails secreted and that now glisten in the moonlight; he yawns, shivering for an instant, the way a man does when peeing after a long commute. A car backfires, and then the leaves and apartment building creaking in the wind. My dog doesn't understand, but this parking lot is my loneliness; empty cars, and litter scampering. And so I think, this is why I look up at Mars: an absence, like my words in the comprehension of this dog or other men who rise confident in sunlight. Barrenness, soil of iron-oxide, dunes swirling in the gaps between near and far, poetry and silence, man and woman. Because what were once open fingers, clenched into a fist, yet will open again to scoop water or touch a breast. These thoughts wax and wane, polar-caps expanding with permafrost of dry-ice; I remember her, and my words, like dust whistling in no ears, ancient water, buried, and that will never burst until the sun swallows the earth. Another dog barks from a yard, and the dog at my side stretches, howls, is answered, and sets off into the street. The difference between this parking lot and my dunes is the air pressure and proximity of hope; the difference between man and beasts is like that between new water on Mars, and ancient water in a rusting basin in a desert where rattlesnakes nest.

SPOOR

Lame dog, rag of hide and bone—there are none like you among the coyotes. They converge when midnight nests in air still smoking from smog and brush fires, beasts with noses sniffing out possum and raccoon. I lie awake at night, while you wander the avenues, and I think of the blood-colored planet and how it streaked the imagination of young warriors the way spoor stains fallen leaves, or sharks dye the sea crimson, as when the testicles of Kronos were severed, and Aphrodite arose from the froth. In groups, sprawled beneath starlight, their teeth blackened from unmixed wine, the young Greek men so proud of their Thracian spears, their gold coins, gazed at the evening star, and at Mars, and how those spheres crackles, like the gazes of older men or sandaled prostitutes, when only torch-lights illumined the path to the fields beyond the revelers and wineskins. Far off, my dog barks, and a car's headlight slides up the wall and across my ceiling. There is no wind tonight; I hear an orange fall from the walkway tree with a thump like a wet washcloth thrown into the shower stall. My dog is like that lame master of the anvil who, for a while, savored Her lips and fingers, Her hair that unleashed soft crows smelling of summer and honey. But those ancient youths—now more forgotten than the dust of my great-grandparents—at last resigned themselves to such pairings as man and

woman, procreation and death, and gave Her the other one: Mars, with his scepter and shield bearing a gorgon's tongue, Mars, delighting in bloodshed. My dog, you are like that black-smith, wed to no constellation or orbit, bereft of your pearl; and I too, stretch out in my sheets, past midnight, with the Pleiades set, time blurring, and I, like you, lie alone.

ON TRANSLATING THE WORK OF ESTRELLA DEL VALLE

Estrella, a name like vapor, water hissing on coals. She who wrote those lines that now brim over within me as I translate them into a secondary English: *Water. My memories also turn into water.* I too try to remain fluid, but my movement among words is ants over carrion, a worm threading the soil. No matter how I try, my words grow top-heavy, and desire turns into dark wood, and the drizzle. Not water, but mud. Not her almond grove, but weeds in a vacant San Fernando Valley lot. For if there is any movement in these words as I imagine her writing, it is that of dissolution, ink that yellows on the page, and the paper that becomes brittle. Weight of stagnant water, sap bubbling in the cane, as the cutters burn the fields outside her native Xalapa, blowing away the afternoon when she wrote of foam, and a shoal of fish, while I grow heavy, my ribs buckling under the torrent of her words, her bluest *aguacero*.

MAN AND WATER

What makes a man write a river, pushes
him into the flowage, viscid secretion from
dog-eyes, ammonia, beer squeezed out of rag?
How he writes that tired, persistent
water; tired, persistent as a tin-shack mother,
estrus slugging along with hunger and rheumatism?
Not silken water of swimming pool, not
the odalisque in Turkish bath, her thighs
wade, winking ripples in the water,
but river running so it appears to
barely move at all: a tar-mud winding
its course, mosquitoes, scribble & chalk dust
above dead pools, humidity so bad
those sweating noon fan their mouths while
breathing to dilute wet air; what
drags a man into that flowage, where there is no
fish daggering currents, no Susanna?

Must be the propellant replenishing
sperm, pinches his eyes open each morning even
after grayness mushrooms in his crotch.

What makes a man write rain? Dusk or
dawn's ale, acrid as vomit's nickel, rain
rinsing statues, storefronts, sidewalks,
stained from that backwash, and wells up
in gutters, sludge for nervous
drilling of crow beaks, gnat swirling like
frazzled electrons. How he stares
at those lead shavings tumble outside
his window, rattling on roof,
spit of night embalming him. Next day,
when streets glisten sun, detritus
clogs puddles, and car tires,
a washing hiss over asphalt, all
remind him: stains endure when
puddles shrivel up revealing
soda cans, plastic, and pennies
tossed not for a wish, but discarded.

Must be a precipitation like taking
to drink, to cleanse mud inside, piss it
out, throw it up, yet leaves him lurching.

What makes a man write the sea, that
jellyfish siphoning krill, oil, sailors, sharks,
through teeth with which it excretes flotsam?
Because sea is not womb, not
dais for some slut of testosterone, but
invertebrate peeing life that slinks from sun, peeing
multitudinously, like egg-laying of turtles, spiders.
A man will write the sea in a room
facing the desert, and with black ink
he will spray the electricity he saw,
(things he saw, what others imagined as seen):
night green as housefly, rainbow saddling
sky, and giant serpent barnacle-riddled
shored in marsh seething sun, stink,
wasp clouds above the wrack. If the lines
stir interest, he'll believe his own
lies. What makes a man write the sea?

Must be what pushes men into an argosy,
gums bleeding scurvy, for a fistful of dysentery,
syphilis, for the credo of maps.

To distill: What makes a man write water?

In clay pitcher, in womb, tears, in
tears; in a glass on a starched tablecloth so that
the man intuits the transparency
shaping him, stifling him, imprisoning him in air.

Does he tastes flowage, persistence, the roaring
where his current gushes, tributaries gorging the estuary?

Is the water he writes really the drowning
in water that is not water but
blankness of space full of its own emptiness?

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Rick SNYDER

Invocation

who can sit still
until the poems come
sniffing and small
molecules battered by
microwaves bouncing
off books preserving
letters like so many
little Lenins suspended
in the warp and weft
of white sheets creepy
to read they bend or
crack in your hands
which are like new
despite deep creases
and light speckling

Poem on My Head

I carry it everywhere
like a talisman
bringing no luck
but maybe a sense
of what I'm missing

*

Particulate city
swirls around itself
to tease new life
from a few tired
phrases

*

Such meager gods
epidemics of junk
and food fuse
into angry boys
pixel by pixel

*

The point of my
nachlass is to be
without one unless
it's utterly oblique
and endless

Poem for Isabelle

Early morning migraine,
the birds skronk among themselves—
I know their names as well
as they know mine though

they, at least, seem to sing songs
that are not wholly agonistic,
the assumption of positions,
the drive for survival in the bleak

and weedy fields of concrete
between three tenements, elegant
30s living in the heart of Los Angeles,
strewn and tagged like some Orphic

cyborg from here to the insertion
of your favorite celebrity's name,
if we insist on playing that game
and refuse to admit, in fact,

that we like everything we see,
from tacos to smog to reuters to qwerty,
even the convention of the first
person plural pronoun, borne

of equal parts spite and solitude

until some mother, I guess, yells
your name repeatedly among
the weeds, screens, and fields.

Evensong

Lovely umber poison
pricked with points of light
above the earth's aching
lateness, utterly indemnified.

Great slabs of silence
poured into perfect molds
and erected across the land-
scape, to make it thus.

Implacable white eyes
form streams of adult-onset
anonymity eddying into
pools of light, line by line.

Windows mirror windows
among faces remembered
names replaced in the flux
of bodies, coherent now.

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Kerri SONNENBERG

July or August

under Logan on his still horse the fountain sometimes slept in
like the room with nothing but a bathtub in the center
in the house in my sleep like other houses
I invent to trespass in "the options are the moon
the marrying-you -no-peripheral vision between big blue stem
and throwing pennies in

Speaking Speaking

speaking speaking loudly under half my hats
some shared with smoke some huevos rancheros
accurate as in few other parts of the country
and ready for Canada to take me
house and all we will learn French

Unseasonable Weather in You

unseasonable weather in your chardonnay I punish
myself a wrecking crane ready
at the church and the weed tree that grows
from a chimney sleet and tinkling
chimes from porches below and locked out
the dealing neighbor calls a fire
truck needy felines off my squash
rings don't call them
misbehaving

Wild Manzanita

as a swatch as a chocolate special occasion cake not of the prairie of a mountain,
manzanita,

manzanita enterprises, inc.,
casa manzanita
small flower,
spider manzanita, small,
manzanita
micro, proud to offer

the lowest prices on the best electric vehicle components,

visiting manzanita?

manzanita horse camp, bring your own horse,
manzanita village and ordinary dharma, side by side
houses with views of manzanita
with shipping and
tax, manzanita muse
is a membership benefit or
just part of the parrot rescue,

sexy manzanita singles at the manzanita speedway,
an index of species:
Arctostaphylos Columbiana, hairy manzanita, introductory distribution and
occurrence,

manzanita branches, large,
beautiful branches, news
and espresso, all staples at manzanita,

manzanita,

manzanita systems index providing verification and analysis and breeding
part Arabian pintos

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Jordan STEMPLEMAN

Hook and Eye

The great sound from the other side, from where fertility humbles, from where cheapness is death for only those that build themselves around it. What you can do is this, but to have this name as yours, charts the fits that were thrown and the roll taken by every and all known thing that brought us together, held us for a time so that we may end this now.

As the voice split into a pause from your body and a necessary action, much like travel when the stores are closed and the day shortens itself, the understanding of admonitions began to seem unfair. It was from that earthly ache we knew of to be voice. The human tap devoted to the mission ahead, of you, moving far ahead, mensal and stable to keep.

How on eyes are the undecided the exercise for the pliable move? The earlier it seemed, the more we attempted to elicit each question. The singer who tried to keep up with the refugium, slippery and alone as it was. The lower vibrations that shook, but also lulled us on into something much more quiet and spacious, enhancing this ensemble once more.

The methods go on infracted, pointing to lush studies in making sure each of us arrives home okay. What came to the mouth was exactly what stuck to the recesses and was thought to stay there well beyond its use. And now it is here, clearing up what went on without it, accepting the sight of other additions with their dance of modeling phrase.

This exchange has always suited us well. It's what we owned before the inlands wind split the brush into sects from the summer fires. And these instructions, retold

again to
one another, fill our defenses, even under blankets bested by the cold. It's there
what we
anticipated gave way long before things moved before us, passing what we'd given
away.

To guard this as a random means, to efface the pressing development in the spirit
of
strange taste. It all goes together so well, to the point that requesting something
else, not
only indicates a fallacious pull to terminus, but also to the passing of the gutbucket
in the
hopes the night will piece itself on, forgetting all the listless space that determines it
all.

The Custom of Tradition & Routine

This can go beyond the one comparison, but if uncertain,
as one opens, you open one, the background engenders
a new diversion, placing what was known to hold place
in charge of all the rest. To it, there must be joy
when even in age, it's discovered to use words to lean in
for it, to nearly topple each time lapse, each fascination
marred by what's asked to appear again. Planes that charge
to an outward line, beyond knowing where they began,
from a discipline that is tracked by an inner appearance.
But even their old annotations finding a wintry route,
returning to the clipping urge for it to end here,
drifting by what carries it for its size and trappings.

Mirador

(an assemblage of titles from the wonderful poems of Barbara Guest)

the past, a short
narrative, the next
floor, an afternoon in jeopardy,
composition, the red gaze untitled,

a burst of leaves freed color, nostalgia
of the infinite, a dawn walk quoting
Theodor Adorno, vignettes alteration
echoes the brown vest, Hans Hofmann
the trickster, modernism the gold tap
instructions she honors, De Chirico
the hungry knight, roman stripes
a different honey, supposition,
the smooth stair freedom, green
numbers, imagined room

More unlike than to remember

Never before the birthday, the feelings flushed
By what happens more often to others. Then, as hoped for
There fixates a space large enough for interests
To return to what was in one self, long pulled to the surface
For a waiting observer drifting without patience.
But after the day of abandonment, those who returned
To the exact place couldn't begin to know what to look for,
Let alone stay and give sense to the important moments
Long returned to, elsewhere, where for now is there.

Bobby Fischer

The prisoners asked him how successful
A move such as Smothered Mate would go over
On a new prisoner not yet booked. Without
The exchange of information for toothpaste
And a cup of soup from lunch, the champion
Remained icy flat, somewhat reading
In a bunk above the players. The opponents,
Now well into feelings of insecurity,
Began sweating out each move, hoping
The American would be assigned a long night
Of kitchen duty, his perch abandoned,
The game allowed to continue for old time's sake.

DeLorean

When the V-8 was shimmied under the hood
of the Tempest, it became the Goat.
Much later, the wings opened upward,
to the point one could keep the mirror
flat, thereby keeping the lines in their lines.
The drive was like burning Hollywood
all over the roads of Northern Ireland.

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Tony TOST

from *1001 Sentences*

81-90

One cannot go looking for mysteries.

The castrato opens the door.

Every sentence that I place in this poem is intended to be poetic.

There is always the possibility that what one is not writing is poetry.

I do not think there is a sentence that can be introduced to this poem that would alter the poetic space that must be assumed for the poem to exist.

It is not very interesting that some words look more like a giraffe than the word giraffe.

I can say that many words are more mysterious than the word mystery but this would be of little interest.

Intent is not translated; it is real.

Since this sentence is in a poem I do not have to worry about it being correct, or interesting—it need only to be poetic.

This is not to say that my thinking is poetic.

91-100

"Although the caribou has completely disappeared from Southern Canada, this fact did not at all worry the members of the clan named after it."

Our little group is the goat's guts.

Nursing the imago.

Sentences in this poem point not only at meaning and intention but also at the states of affairs that could possibly generate the above.

The tribe borrowed the mouth of the shaman.

The sentences in this poem all arise out of one reality; they continually describe the possibilities of this reality.

The mystery is not in the sentence, nor is it in the connections between sentences.

That which falls into the statement is a mystery, needle finding its groove.

This is not to say I desire a poetic life.

This could be a way of taking myself by the throat.

101-110

Totemism implies a diminished reality.

I have since revised this sentence.

Not everyone is raised to believe that their lives were preceded by love.

No one laughed when I asked Mr. Rothenberg not to squeeze the shaman.

The number of emotions always exceeds the number of effects.

The poet in America is often happy.

My vocabulary will never be innocent.

May this poem be fertile and possess a vegetal vigilance.

Seduction is deceit if something more is promised.

Yes, but it is still sexy.

111-120

There is an image of masculinity hidden behind the vocabularies of my poem.

One sentence completes a thought and the next one incompletes it.

I'm not yet at the point where I don't rewrite.

The kitten befriended the bunny.

There will be an audience for this poem (if it exists one day).

I must become more aware of the things that go without saying.

Repetition, being essentially imaginary, is not exhausting.

The wolf becomes a little boy.

This is a primitive poem.

I am writing about my life.

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Tony TOWLE

from *Truth in Advertising*

An Opera

A short, balding man who hates the opera is attending one. His sister, who is in the company, is singing an aria. Suddenly jealous, the man improvises a plan to deflect the audience's attention to himself. He walks calmly onto the stage, takes the microphone and announces that the state's lottery jackpot is forty million dollars. Seized by uncontrollable avarice, the audience rises as one and rushes out to buy lottery tickets. The man smirks cynically, pleased to see proof of what he had always suspected: that greed would triumph over the pretentiousness of art. He remains on stage overlooking the empty seats, contemplating the satisfying power his few and simple words had had on so many. In the meantime, his sister has run off in humiliation, while the rest of the cast is struck dumb by the man's effrontery. A minute later, the patrons, having discovered the lottery payout that week is to be a mere two million, storms back into the theatre, incensed, intent on giving the exaggerator a sound thrashing or worse. Desperate to forestall his impending doom, with a cohort of Wagnerian extras as a backdrop, the man bursts pleadingly into song.

The Evils of Drink

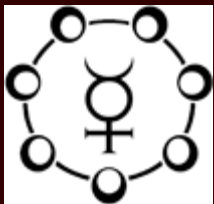
A man who is an alcoholic has disembarked from a plane and is about to leave the airport. He sees a car service driver holding up a sign with a doctor's name on it. Impetuously, the man presents himself to the driver as that doctor, hoping the car will be a limousine and have a bar as part of its amenities. It is and does. Strangely, of the wide variety of beverages available,

the man chooses to drink only the most common brand of light beer. He drinks quickly and has consumed enough to become fairly inebriated by the time the car arrives at the hospital, where it seems he is expected to perform brain surgery; that is, after he has paid the driver eighty dollars, which he does not have. The situation quickly becomes awkward. By the time the real doctor arrives by taxi an hour later, the patient has died. In prison, the man makes a vow that he will never drink that brand of light beer again.

Vehicular Presentiment

The Pathfinder has again come to that section in the narrow cliffside road where it has to drive over the colossal letters of its own name deeply incised in the stone, bumping down and up, straining the suspension while moving carefully along over the autobiographical roadway: from the I to the F, and then across the H and the T, inching onto the edge of the A, toward the perilous gap on the other side, the hollowed-out space below the bulge of the P into which the left front wheel will drop once more and send the car plummeting into the bottomless canyon below—and at this point the vehicle awakens, its cold engine shuddering in the silent showroom, beads of moisture covering the hood, the sales staff gone home for the night, the stars twinkling over the beckoning mountains.

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LAURENCE WEISBERG

1953-2003

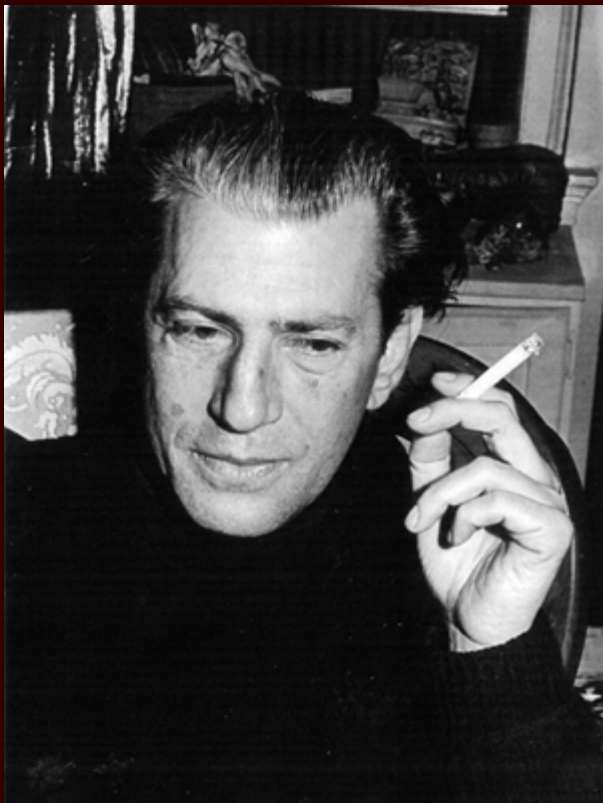


photo by Ira Cohen

POEMS

DRAWINGS

ESSAYS ON WEISBERG:

WILL ALEXANDER

ALLAN GRAUBARD

CELEBRATION OF HIS LIFE
AT BEYOND BAROQUE

BACK MILK VOL. 7 HOME

DENIS EMORINE

Excerpts from No Through World (DANS LES IMPASSES DU MONDE, EDITIONS DU GRIL, 2002
Belgium)

Ravenna Press, 2004

translated by Phillip John Usher

" And so one fine day, my life up and left me without a word of warning, not the least wave of a hand bidding adieu in my direction. Normally, it would nod a conniving nod to me, smile a little smile to make me look right back but, in reality, I'd always turn away, irritated or indifferent so, in the end, life took its revenge. How could I blame life? It was obviously more and more difficult to live with someone like me, always absent or morose. And of course, you can't expect life to be happy with just looking on at you in silence: life needs to speak out loud, to constantly burst out laughing, to play simple and meaningless games with someone who loves it. And, as I could never satisfy life, life got tired of it. "One day, it won't be me, it will be my fatal sister who'll take my place, and then you'll see how you'll miss me," life said in exasperation.

I shrugged my shoulders after seeing what I thought to be conceitedness. How superficial! Life always takes you at your word... when you don't say anything! Life knows that behind every silence there's very often a need to talk that's too strong, a need to shout out loud.

This time, my life up and left me without a word of warning. It took me unawares. I was walking peacefully along the street when, all of a sudden, behind me, someone whispered my name in a strange voice, like that of a child. My legs started to tremble and by the time I'd turned around, my life had scarpered, run off with another man. The two of them were roaring with laughter and paid no attention to me. They looked so happy I almost felt pleased for them. But then, everything started to become unsteady and I realized that I was starting a new chapter, there was no going back. I wanted, once again, to say out loud those four magic letters, L-I-F-E but my mouth couldn't articulate the least sound. My pen fell, the page is crumpled: I no longer had anything to say.

It's at exactly that moment that the Other came up to me . . . "

" I decided to banish all the useless words from my vocabulary. Useless in my eyes, that is. Like a monarch with absolute power, I ordered all the words into my office. It was all —and this should be pointed out— indescribable in its disorderliness; I didn't know which way to look faced with all this frantic faces trying not to look at me. And there I was, gloating, dragging out the pleasure... I was waiting.

I'm still waiting. I cannot bring myself to name one word—that would be like making it suddenly exist, albeit fleetingly. I have the whole of eternity in front of me. "

" Last Thursday, I had invited François to have lunch with me. He's an old friend, a trained psychologist. We were eating desert and he was setting out one of his never-ending theories about the human psyche. I was listening to him, absently at first but then, all of a sudden, something he said caught my attention: "So it would seem that every human being is double. In

fact, each individual is fractured inside. Like you, for example", he said pointing at me.

I pulled myself up right away, rankled by his suggestion. "What, me? How dare you?"

He pretended not to see this fierce reaction: "Yes, you too are double, split into two like every other human being."

I grabbed hold of him, roughly—I'm aware of that. "Get out, get out, you hoaxer and deceiver!" I yelled out, beside myself. Before he could react, I had dragged him to the main door.

François was still as spineless. I opened the door, and threw this uncouth individual outside, with all my force. My friend—should I still use such a word?—fell down the stairs; there were no shouts, just a funny kind of a noise.

Worried nonetheless, I went down a few steps. François was lying there, his body literally broken in two, broken into two symmetrical parts split from head to toe; I couldn't believe it. The two halves stood up as best they could, and each tried in vain to adjust itself to fit back with the other half.

I got frightened and ran back inside, shutting and bolting the door. I didn't dare look outside, as you can understand.

"He was thus right, the little rascal!" I grumbled. I ran my feverish hand down my spine, and I was sure that I could feel a slight crack into which I slipped first one finger, then two, then my whole hand.

A sinister creaking sound in my backbone was certainly not a good omen . . . "

" A few days ago, I lost my name. How did that happen, you might ask. Well, as simply as can be. That day, late afternoon, I had a bit of a headache. I decided to go outside and walked around a little in the garden. The fresh air of this early October day would do me some good, I thought. I didn't know what was about to hatch. Otherwise, of course, I would never have gone outside alone: how careless, can you believe it!

Once outside, the cold air grabbed hold of me despite the thick coat I'd taken the precaution to put on. I went towards my favorite spot, the dogwood hedge. Then, as I was about to reach it... how can I put it? How can I describe the new feeling? Something—that I would be unable to name—quite literally sucked my name out from inside of me. I didn't feel the slightest pain, no, not a thing. Simply, now lacking all identity, I was unable to find my direction correctly. Finally, miraculously, I think I crawled back to the house, to the great surprise of the neighbors staring out from behind their curtains.

Every day, every hour, I want to beg the dogwood bushes to give it back. To give what back? you ask. Well... my... Let's see... What were we talking about? Don't tell me you've forgotten. "

" When I walked into room number 256, the old man stared at me without seeing me. He remained immobile in his wheelchair, pointing his finger obstinately at the half-open window.

I gave in to his silent demand, went over to behind his wheelchair, and together we went

off towards the elevator. As we went down to the hospital garden, he didn't say a word.

Once we were outside, he became a little livelier as I guided him with some difficulty towards the July sun. He looked left and right at the clumps of blooming flowers but, and I don't know why, it was becoming more and more difficult to correctly guide him. Sweat was running down my shoulders. I leaned into the chair with all my weight to push him along. The old man didn't even seem to notice he was so captivated by all that was around him. We were making painfully slow progress and I could already see that I would soon be unable to take one more step.

Little by little... How can I explain it? Little by little, the old man was undergoing some form of metamorphosis. I could feel the old man was under the control of some other force—really, what an idea! I could feel that he was escaping me, as if he about to fly off!

I was transpiring more and more, my shirt was heavy with sweat and my legs were stiff because of the strain; they were like lead. All of a sudden, I realized that it wasn't a question of pushing him, but of holding him back.

Indeed, he was operating the wheels of his chair with an increasing amount of skill, the skill of a devil, I'd say, and was risking us both tumbling down to the floor. The old man sounded his pleasure in little grunting sounds. His excitement worried me. What was he up to? "Come on, come on, let's be reasonable", I mumbled quietly as if speaking to a child doing something he shouldn't.

All of a sudden, something hit me in the face, at eye level, and then it felt like someone was pushing my side with tremendous force. I crashed down like a huge mass with a sharp pain in my legs.

I believe that, before I passed out, I caught a glimpse of the wheelchair heading off with its owner at an amazing pace . . .

When the man came into room 256, I stared at him without seeing him. I remained immobile in my wheelchair. He reminded me of someone. I pointed obstinately to the half-open window. He nodded "No" with a strange smile on his face before disappearing abruptly. "

" Several years earlier, a man in gray had formed the habit of following me. I quickly got used to him being there, there was nothing hostile about it. Quite the opposite, in fact, after the initial surprise, the slight worries I had gave way to complete serenity. For sure, the situation was anything but banal. He would follow without respite, at all hours of the day and night. How did he do it? How was he aware of where I was going, at what time I was going out? Right down to the second. Very mysterious. As I traveled abroad (Venice, Lisbon, Prague, Bucharest, and still elsewhere), my silent companion would follow me like a shadow, always dressed in gray whatever the season. At home in Paris, it was just the same.

However, something was puzzling me: no matter how quickly I spun around, I was never able to see him well enough to take a good look, not even for an instant. This strange character was always a few meters behind me, eternally riveted to each step that I took. At times, I wondered if it wasn't some illusion playing with me. Maybe I was the only person to see this stranger, perhaps I was the victim of hallucinations or some unabating obsessions. But no.

In the beginning, I would draw the attention of my friends and travel companions to the fact that I was dealing with this adamant presence. They would always reply they couldn't see what there was to get alarmed about: surely, I didn't think I was the only person in the street, the only tourist in the whole world, now; this presence was just a simple pedestrian, no more special than any other. I never managed to convince them that it kept happening. No one could ever remember seeing the man in gray hanging from my shirttails for eternity. I thus stopped

talking about it so people wouldn't think I was mad.

Over all these years, I've never managed to see clearly the face of the man in gray. My follower never attempted to make contact with me. Who was he? Where did he come from? I eventually stopped asking such questions to which a sane man's logic could not bring any plausible answer.

One day, I decided that I too would put on a gray suit. Partly out of bravado. I spent a long time choosing the ideal suit in the shop of a well-known tailor. I wasn't exactly sure as to the exact shade of this indefinable color. Were his clothes ash-gray? mouse-gray? or pearl-gray? None, really. It was more subtle, just like the mysterious character himself who spent his existence following someone with whom, at least as far as clothes went, he had nothing in common with.

With my new look, I left my apartment. I seemed perfectly detached. In reality, and with no particular reason, I was on the look out. I waited for a few minutes in front of Hotel El Destino. A man walked past me quickly. Without thinking, I started following him.

Ever since, I've gotten into the habit of following him. He rapidly got used to me being there, there was nothing hostile about it. "

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Launch

Arndt Britschgi

Born and raised in Finland, Arndt spent the best (if not the longest) part of his life in Madrid, Spain, and just completed his PhD in Philosophy from the University of Zurich, Switzerland. His writing has appeared in *Literary Fragments*, *Kulttuurivihkot* (Finland), *Southern Cross Review*, the *EOTU Ezine*, *Word Riot*, and *Slow Trains Literary Journal*.

"How's that again? Howard...?"

"Mr. Howard Locke." Franklin Thomas cleared his throat uneasily.

"Oh, of course," Daniel bowed slightly. "Mr. Howard Locke, hello. Hel-loe. How's John doing?"

Wallcott, who'd just come up to them, bent forward laughing.

"Yes, well." Mr. Locke, hands on his back, looked straight into the air. "Actually, I hadn't heard that one lately."

"No, no. I'm sure you hadn't," Daniel said. "Noe, noe."

He turned again to Franklin Thomas. "Very nice party. Nice people. What are we celebrating here?"

Franklin Thomas looked around the company, showing signs of some embarrassment.

"Mr. Howard Locke promotes his latest novel, Daniel."

"Oh, indeed? Oeh yes. Yes, I liked the sequence with the gull, Mr. Locke. Or was that Lock-ee, sir?"

Daniel bowed again slightly to the pleasantly gray man dressed in a black Fred Perry shirt and dark blue trousers. Howard Locke still kept his hands behind his back. He didn't drink.

"The sequence with the gull?"

"Yes, exactly. It shows a very vivid feeling for description, I would say. I must admit I find your book...yes, well. Quite charming." Mr. Locke inclined his head a little; Wallcott laughed.

"Excuse me, Franklin. Gentlemen." Daniel passed his eyes around the group. "There's Vivian. I'll see you gentlemen again."

He withdrew towards the exit of the room, across the crowd, bowing slightly, not presenting them his back.

"Danny Wepfer?" Wallcott laughed. "Where does the guy dig up a suit, I hear he's living on the street?"

"Yeah, beats me," Franklin Thomas shook his head.

"I don't know why you invited him at all," Howard Locke said.

"But I didn't. He just insists on turning up, I don't know how he gets the word. I really don't. Anyway, I couldn't leave him out there calling at the door."

"What does he do then lately, Franklin?"

"Oh, nothing now. He had some good pieces before but then he never got them out. He's not the type, you know. Not the one who'd push his way sweeping dead bodies left and right — Howard Locke pointed a somber look at Franklin's face — although his early stuff did have that certain quality. After that he's done nothing, as far as anybody knows. The business with his wife got to him pretty bad."

"Oh yes. Oh, sure," Wallcott assented with his head. He caught a glimpse of Danny Wepfer's sun-bleached hair in the next room.

Daniel felt he'd need a Dimple, he asked the bartender for one. "Straight," he said. "Or make that two Dimples rather."

"A double, sir?"

"No. Two. Vivian will be here any second, she'll appreciate the gesture. She's been working late, you see."

The bartender reached up and took the bottle from a rack, looking the customer over. He passed the drinks without a word.

"Very good," Daniel thanked him.

Yes, that's perfect, Daniel thought, drifting away from the counter. He'd always liked the taste of Dimple, naturally, it's no secret. And the design of the bottle, he'd always liked that design too; he sucked his upper lip gently, giving his face a thoughtful streak. They'd always had one of those bottles in their house, he remembered.

"Excuse me, sir. Sih. Excuse me." He was addressing a group seemingly absorbed in studying the pictures in a folio size illustrated book... no. Noe, noe. An author's portrait on the back flap of a hard-cover novel; he was rising on his toes to see into their midst. "Sih — one of the men forming the group turned a blank face towards Daniel — could you direct me to the men's room, sih?"

"It's upstairs," the man told him.

"Well, yes. Of course."

Daniel went up; all the time while he was climbing up the stairs a pretty girl in the small group he'd been addressing held her eyes on him.

"Who on earth was that?" she said.

"No idea. But he was looking for the men's room, as he claimed."

"Let's hope he finds it, poor bastard," somebody laughed, a bit too loud.

"What would anybody do bringing two drinks to the men's room?"

"Yes, what? You tell me that, Annah."

"Was Howard Locke actually stationed in Beijing? That's what it says right here," another man who'd joined the group wondered.

"Well, stationed. From what I know he was employed there at the Embassy some time. These spy freaks people love inventing things about themselves."

"Oh, honey," Daniel said, upstairs. "Be a dear, honey, hon-ney, and hold these drinks for me while I..." It was a woman with black hair, around forty and very, ver-ry beautiful, tight-fitting evening gown which let the outlines of her legs stand out deliciously.

"... Only one second while I hurry to the john."

When he returned a woman in an evening gown so tight it showed the flat of the triangle high between her thighs deliciously through the glossed fabric smiled at him, holding two drinks. Daniel smiled back -why now, hel-loe!- and went downstairs; he felt he'd need a Dimple now. He asked the bartender for one. Hadn't they always had a fine bottle of Dimple in their house, mainly because of its design? Although of course he'd always liked the taste as well, it's no secret.

"A Dimple? One or two?" the barman asked him, with a smile.

"One," Daniel said.

"What about your wife then, sir? Won't she be having one as well?"

"Vivian? That's right, she will. Do you mind much, Bub, if I sit down a while and wait for her?"

The barman looked him in the face, what's with this character, he thought. Daniel's gaze had frozen on him.

"It's a bar, that's what we're here for I suppose," he shrugged.

"You're not married then yourself I'd think, or are you?"

"What makes you think I'm not married? Of course I'm married. Sure I am."

"Is your wife always on time?"

The barman stopped drying a tumbler he had picked out of the sink. "Okay, sir. No," he smiled again.

Daniel tasted his Dimple, he found it very good indeed.

"You know," Daniel said, turning an open face towards the bartender. "We're waiting for good news, it should arrive now any day. The kind of news that in the end makes all the difference. We'll have that news confirmed and then we'll dance, the three of us together."

"The three of you?"

"My wife, myself and Catcher, no one else allowed. That's how it goes, you get good news and then you dance spontaneously."

He'd had that nightmare again lately, he wondered why it still hung with him. They're waiting for the news (waiting... waiting...) and when it comes it's always bad. Bad news, always bad news; they wait and wait and wait: once it's a book, once it's a job, but every time the news is bad. He's the bearer of bad news, he has to clench his teeth and tell her — sorry, Viv, I'm really sorry — and he knows instead of dancing what she'll do is cry. God, how it wears him out to see her cry. How it can hurt. They'll never get the chance to dance, the three of them, they only wait — although in time they know it's hopeless, all the news he gets is bad. He really wished she'd come already, what the hell was keeping her?

"There she is."

Daniel got up. "Thanks, Bub," he said. "Thanks very much for bearing with me."

The barman watched him with surprise: Between forty and fifty years of age, very good looking in a kind of hardened way, no fat but tall and slim, a tan you're used to see on fishermen and bums. He might be under forty really, that strain hidden in his eyes made him look older. Competent looking — yes, the mark of strong decisions in his moves. What's with the 'Bub,' the barman wondered to himself, that didn't fit.

Up on the stage Franklin Thomas hosted a live broadcast talk show with Howard Locke. Mr. Locke made a short speech, very relaxed, and answered questions; Franklin Thomas' questions, questions from the audience. Daniel joined in and clapped his hands politely as they finished. What about that Dimple, Bub, he felt he'd need a Dimple now. Hadn't they had a bottle always in their house, for the design? He really wished his wife would come, what the hell kept her?

"Come on, Danny. I'll drop you off somewhere." That's Wallcott shuffling up to him, hands in the pockets of his slacks. "Where are you headed?"

"There's Vivian. Hey, thanks, Wallcott. I think we'll rather walk."

He opened way between the groups still crowding in the outer room. How he could use that Dimple now, damn it. And, yes. And dance. Viv and him and the Catcher, nobody else allowed.

"Hey, listen. Wally."

"What?" Wallcott turned, jerking his chin questioningly.

"The weather's great, so we'll just walk. Thanks anyway, okay?"

"Sure," Wallcott said. "Where's he going?" he asked Franklin Thomas.

"Yeah, where? How should I know?"

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Just A Kilometer

Ernest Dempsey

Karim Khan/Ernest Dempsey has been writing for *The Surface* (Glasgow). His stories have appeared in *Skive* online magazine. His poems have been published in *Voices Net Anthologies*, *Poetry Canada*, and *Seeker* magazine. His suspense novella *The Crux* is online at www.lulu.com/content/102606. He is working on his first novel.

Gary Walter slowly rose to his feet. He knew he was not yet past danger. Being shot, he had pretended dead while the pillagers sacked the store. His fellow workers, all three of them were dead, one shot in the head, one in the neck, and the other twice in the chest. That was fifteen minutes ago. Gary had got a bullet in his flank. He lay like dead until they ran off. His wound had bled much though he had been pressing it with his palm even while he lay motionless on the ground. He took a few steps to come out of the store. The nearest point where he could expect some help was the village's post office, about a kilometer south. The desolate path confirmed that he had to rely on himself for making it to the post office. Pain had already started its war on him. Weakness of body and spirit seized his steps. For a moment, darkness covered his sight and he felt like falling dead.

"Clara!" The thought of his wife spoke up in his staggering tone. Her face showed up in his eyes, smiling softly at him. He took another step. A pang shot through him. He saw his hand, covered with his blood, pressing his flank.

"Death!" The word rang up in his head calling again the darkness that Clara's thought had dispelled.

"No!" He sobbed, taking another step.

"Clara," he called again.

Her face showed up. This time, he could see her neck, her breast, and her hands working on the knitting needles. He remembered this morning she had told him she was weaving another sweater for him. Would he live now to see that, he thought. A kilometer ahead felt a far cry, far as impossible with his wound. Clara's face hovered before his eyes. Her hands kept knitting. A cool breeze blew upon his face. A modicum of relief poured a little strength in him. Her smooth, shapely fingers played cleverly with wool and needles. Pain lost its intensity for a moment. He smiled faintly.

"Clara!"

Her name brought her face closer to him. She was smiling at him with hands knitting complacently an immaculate white fabric. He thought of the sweater she was weaving. His step gained some confidence. Pain thwarted him. But he could carry on. Clara was there, smiling, knitting for him. A kilometer was not that long to go. He had covered some of it. He knew he could carry on without falling. He knew he could, and he did.

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A Tourist In Siberia

Carol Novack

New Yorker Carol Novack is a lapsed criminal defense and constitutional lawyer. Most relevant, she's a persistently re-emerging writer. A book of her poems, "Living Alone Without a Dictionary," was published in Australia, where Carol received a creative writer's grant equivalent to an NEA. Her poetry and prose have appeared and are forthcoming in many publications, including The Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets, Anemone Sidecar, Big Bridge, Cellar Door, Diagram, Elimae, Journal of Modern Post, Mindfire Renewed, Muse Apprentice Guild, Newtopia, Opium, Pindelyboz, Ravenna Hotel, Skive, SmokeLong, Unlikely Stories, Wild Strawberries, Word Riot & Yankee Pot Roast. She's the publisher & editor of Mad Hatters' Review (<http://www.madhattersreview.com>), and has been featured at many readings in the New York City area. Carol's prose poem "Destination" was selected as a "best" of webdelsol fiction: <http://www.webdelsol.com/eSCENE/series20.html>. Her blog is at: <http://carolnovack.blogspot.com>.

In Siberia, the trains are exhausted from the smells of potatoes, onions and sots; and they are never fast enough. Frigid air leaks through the floor reaching for flesh, like knives. The passengers ache for the end of the line. Even those who disembark along the way gaze wistfully at the departing trains. They wait at the stations, in suspended animation. What are they awaiting? Reindeer? Uncles? Camels? Nothing is comfortable, neither in nor out. Nobody really hopes for comfort in this terrain. Well, one does, but it's not to be expected, even at the terminal. Others would laugh; well, others always laugh.

In Siberia, the man from Los Angeles has difficulty breathing. He thinks he sees shadows of detention camps that stretch across snow under an anorectic moon. He thinks he sees silver wolves feasting on gold foxes, blood spreading fast on snow like a malignant tumor in the receptive body of a child. He's read many books.

Under the stark Siberian moon reflected in the windows, he notices her for the first time in the shadows, seated obliquely, in perspective confrontational. But he can't "get" her face, like that of his wife he can't recall. He shouldn't have taken this voyage by himself. He can't feel himself in this train, doesn't know why he's here. He thinks he might panic, discover a weak heart or lungs as fragile as a canary's wings. There is too much snow and the sky resembles silver wolves, even at noon. The tourist feels ice reaching into him, despite the woolen socks. Why did he come?

Riding across the scarred belly of Siberia, the tourist gazes at the woman, the one who may resemble his wife. This woman is sleeping. Her dark hair has escaped from a loose bun tucked under a worn red woolen scarf. She has a mole the size of a dime on her right cheek. He can't see the color of her eyes. He can barely see her mouth with her head inclined towards the floor, imagines it opening like a startled fawn, but he can hardly assume her voice.

He stares at the woman's boots. They remind him of something, but he can't get a handle on his memory. They are red leather, faded and scratched, caked with soil. He can smell horse on them, if he tries to smell. No, not horse; camel. He read about the myth of the Siberian camels. One could only glimpse camels during the Siberian summer, which lasts but 3 days. It is said that a certain Kashka, shoemaker from the obscure town of Urkushka, opened his door to a sudden summer, after an impossible winter opened his heart and shook the ice out of it. Kashka became so joyful he saw a camel eating fruit from a barren tree. But when he ran after the creature, it disappeared, and he closed his heart forever. Ever since, there have been occasional camel sightings. Kashka became the camel and multiplied. That is one version. There are several variations on the theme in the Book of Russian Folk Tales. Several camels, versions of camels, versions of the color of snow melting on the Siberian tundra.

There are faded black shoelaces on the woman's boots. The laces are frayed at the ends, drooping, slack. The man has an urge to reach over and remove them slowly, one hole at a time, loosening their hold on the woman's feet. He has an urge to remove her stockings and uncover her tender, bruised feet, with their calloused soles. He will take her cold, damp feet in his hands and study her toes. The nails will be hard and brittle. But he will know the history of her feet and where they have been; he must know at least one version of this woman.

There is a moment when the woman lifts her head and exposes her eyes to the tourist. He tries not to fall into them, just as he tried not to fall into his mother's grave when she died, or was the grave his wife's? Do the dead own anything but a plot of the planet when they no longer possess a plot? He wonders, briefly.

The green eyes of this woman say nothing she wants him to know. He can fall into these eyes and emerge reborn; he fancies he can. If she bequeaths her feet to him, he will fall. He will fall outside of himself and land in Siberia, finally somewhere, finally somewhere.

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Extraction

Kimberly Soenen

Kimberly Soenen bio TK

“We’ve made a mess,” he said.

Amorphous pain from the crown of my head fed into the tributaries within my body. Too-doo, the informed Abyssinian cat, was tiptoeing on the ledge outside of the window crying out fiercely, angrily, demanding to be let back into the bedroom from the middle Europe winter. He was balancing on the slender ledge of the window pawing the latch in an effort to reenter. The clicking of the latch was rhythmic — Too-doo’s effort persistent. My friend of science and sensuality laughs a closed mouth laugh through his nose and shakes his head in theatrical pity. He was standing naked over the wastebasket near to the corner of his desk at the door tending to himself.

The bed sheet beneath me was wet. My cheek was resting on the silky smooth mattress. It was light blue — the shade of blue you see in the ancient embroidered Shishu panels from Japan — or the color of the vest drug store managers wear. I don’t remember an odor. Damp cold. But no odor.

I heard spoken tongues, computer languages, sailing, flying, climbing, bicycling, skiing, single malts, love of folk and bluegrass, reading and cooking. I savored the bias toward taildraggers, sailcraft, telemarking, cask strength scotch, local musicians, Cajun food, and authors whose ideas weighed more than their texts. I adored his particular interest in the line of a painting or the layer of pepper in Bordeaux. Now I was the detail du jour, the object of his fierce attention. And I hurt.

The pain was running like rapids through the tributaries now. Despite it, deltas from years past were preventing flow to my limbs, my synapses, my taste buds, my hearing, my expectation, the instinctive eight-year-old girl. My head hurt more and more as my eyes wandered about the room. A few books representing his interests lined the shelves and blanketed the floor: Charis Wilson’s “Through Another Lens,” “Into the Wild,” by Jon Krakauer, “Falmouth for Orders,” and “Two Years Before the Mast,” “Sexing the Cherry,” “Faultlines,” and anything and everything by John Zorn for theory (even though he found the arrogance of jazz repugnant.)

An always ready-to-leave, never fully unpacked, army bag awaited on the floor — well trained. A wardrobe rod on wheels stood in the corner with a few wool sweaters hanging, uncared for, from wire hangers. The desk was dusted with a smattering of notes, clipped and cut papers, artifacts attempting to fill the room with the karmic residue of authentic communication. Each paper — small hand written messages in all sorts of different ink. A card from his brother in New Orleans, a phone number written in a woman’s handwriting, a reminder from his partner, a phone found at a flea market, most likely purchased in LaRochelelle.

Now he was washing up in the bathroom and continuing to make noise all around me. Talking about possibly hitting Gustave Moreau tomorrow or the teahouse by Pere Lachaise. I think he might have been talking about “that” bottle of wine we were to find that was suggested to him by a very smart woman he met on the flight back from Israel weeks ago. If you are ever in Israel, he was saying, he knows where to find the best ice cream on the gods’ great earth.

I closed my eyes to escape the shape. In that darkness I felt the pain less.

Everything was less. But the sheets beneath my legs continued to grow warmer and more wet. I didn’t move. I couldn’t move. Or I didn’t want to move. Which was it?

He shouted from the bathtub with the water running.

*I'm like the king of a rain-country!
and I kill the day in boredom with my dogs;
My bed of fleur-de-lys has become a tomb!
even the ladies of my court, for whom
Try as I might I cannot put on shameful enough dresses for my skeleton!*

I cannot invent washes to cleanse my poisoned element.

He laughed again.

I opened my eyes. He danced to the window and opened the latch for Too-doo. Snow floated into the room. With the flick of the window latch the cold angry cat leapt to the wood floor and dashed to the kitchen pantry for warmth. The jester spun around and danced naked. Tony Furtado's guitar was again audible by way of the living room stereo. The blue grass strings bounced around the kitchen and into and out the bedroom window.

Tears keep coming. Warmth. Wet. Sea of risk and trust in word, dispel the myth that is belief in good. If all were to surrender to this what might remain? Darkness, bits of paper, hollow kisses, flakes a flight, and blinding pain.

"Would you like some tea?" He asked. "Lapsang Souchong," he said raising his voice from the kitchen. Sometime later I opened my eyes and the wetness and warmth had seemed to slow, or stop. Or I don't know which.

"Or maybe Musee Mailoll," he suggested. "This muse created a museum after his death of the artist. He created in all mediums one could possibly imagine. Really something to see. Really something."

*For in and out, above, about, below
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.*

He jiggled.

He sat on the edge of the low-to-the-floor wooden bed frame turning to me with a mug of tea. He was nervous now. He stroked my hair apologetically as if I were a child. I no longer responded to his touch. My headache provided background noise. Static. A sub woofer maybe for the underlying conversation that would never, ever, be. He was a bit out of focus but I will always remember his hands. The window was still open and I welcomed the cold. Flakes continued blowing into the fourth floor window and he asked almost in a whisper, as if my lack of fight had quieted his bells and stripped him of his colors and trumpet.

"Are you cold?"

I might have said "no," aloud or maybe to myself. I don't know which.

I sat up and I drank the tea. Blood was drying between my legs and when I rolled to my back and sat up to take a sip of tea. I winced at the tenderness and excruciating soreness. The light blue sheets and mattress — the color used in ancient Shishu — were stained with blood. A mud puddle. A Rorschach test. Rajasthan. My jaw hurt. The outside and inside of my arms between the elbow and the shoulder were bruised. He had torn me open. I played back the sounds that had poured from me. Sounds beyond submission. Sounds beyond fear. Amplified short-circuiting. Violent surges and thrusts dispelling the myth that is belief in good.

I drank the smoky tea he served. Rational. Spiritual. Sensitive. Too-doo suggested that I get drunk.

But with what?

*with wine, poetry, or virtue
as you choose!*

But get drunk.

"And hurry," said Too-doo.

There was one more night together. It was illuminated with fireworks high above Paris. A new year it would seem. The streets were fogged in the smoke from celebratory fireworks, hovering lazily in the mid-winter moisture. And the ornamentation on the city's buildings appeared like coral through a scuba mask—sea anemones of firecracker paper red and sulphur algae – misdirected bottle rockets and hopeful delighted scurrying children. Laughter, and mothers yelling to quash the delight, I would remember. And I hurt.

I woke the next day in the darkness of early winter morning to uncharacteristic ugliness and disregard from the Marais. A new year. He spun up and around, checked the clock and went about the business of getting dressed quietly. Before slipping out the door he sat on the edge of the bed once more and stayed silent. He said goodbye to me while facing Too-doo. Momentary sadness but no

look to my eyes.

*With snow for flesh,
with ice for heart,
I sit on high, an unguessed sphinx
begrudging acts that alter forms;
I never laugh, I never weep.*

The front door opened and shut and I listened attentively as he walked sloppily at a steady pace down the winding three-hundred-year-old staircase. I closed my eyes and Too-doo jumped into bed with me. I heard the steps again coming up the stairs and the three locks on the door being reopened. I hugged Too-doo closely. Hard. My heart sped up and I began to weep. My knees retreated into my chest and I scooted to the head board and into the corner of the bed with Too-doo protecting my gut. I felt dizzy. The third lock unlatched and the door swung open quietly and slowly.

He stepped into the room. Three quarters of his face was showing. Sparkling eyes of a sprite — knowingly cursed. He rocked back and forth looking down impishly at his shoes. An apology. He looked up at me and said, “Have a safe trip back...” He again stepped outside of the bedroom. Then swayed back in with a single pivot. He looked me in the eyes and held my attention. My full attention. Again. Still. I don’t know which.

I feel a shard of pity for him. This swell is followed by an unbearable riptide of tortuous shame for feeling forgiveness as I lie in the now dry stain that is my wanting sea of risk and religious trust in word.

“...and keep writing,” he adds.

Excerpts from Charles Baudelaire’s *The Spleen and Get Drunk!*
and *the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

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Laurence WEISBERG

POEMS

Laurence Weisberg . . . 1953–2003

. . . Occasional Resident of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oaxaca and Sulawesi. His published works include *The Glacial Blush* and *Phantomatic*. Uncompromising poet of life, his conversation and knowledge were luminous, generous, changing the course of innumerable lives.

I will drag all the images into the fire
Let them melt, dreaming of fire
The shock of their bodies shattering into blue air
Their voices drowning once more into the song of the sea

from ENTRANCES

The Night We Entered the Forest

For Alice

The lightning winds its roads through the branches of ancient oaks
Heroic weather
Night, by which you embraced heraldically the moonlit forest
A spider has come to lay her eggs in the exact void of your teardrop
A spider who has spun her web from the Pleiades to your starlit cheeks

Between the scream and the whisper your season dwells
Your season lives its light between the fall of evening and the wind
which rips open one by one
the jeweled masks of the beasts
Your season haunts erect the edge of illegible light
that erupts like the tread of paws upon the startled sky
flaming its twilight-voiced-blossom of inaudible laughter
For you are adorned
Most beautiful and solemn star
Lost one
who finds herself lifted beyond the song of the dream
into this forest

My love
adored and adorned
in this panoply of shadows

SUMMER

Bleeding like a vase
the inscape of fallen arrows
I return to the earth-trimmed robes of dream women
who open seeds with the rays of the moon
this tragedy of winter
the silent nymphs entering the mirror

spasmodically your slipper roasts the weave of the equator
it was the age of ELECTION
until now only lions came to drink the pond's impossible cache of eyes
without the seasonal shudder of birds
where they would open their wings only in the heat of the wind
the violet ring you wear surveys the opulent fissures
which hyphenate the world
fissures where volume alone inlaid its agile roots
like so many perfumes the path drew to its vapors the swords of
dreaming plants

the fruits' derangement the entrances of the centipede's birth

a mirror silvered with the blood of a deer
summer a great blue fly

TARGETS

The brackish trail marked out by a honeycombed shelter of ice
with a fingerprint of blood
walks in mandibles of sight like a blue parrot
opening a canal of foreheads and fixes confluent armies
integrating a vast sulphur corpse
with Babylonian turbines that spin on
in rooms hatched from drums of stretched water
as if night could come unscathed from the mill of intrepid goats
who fill your eyes with the light of ritual murder
that will not unlock all the arms from the oars of a ship of roses

Castaway in Arcadia
jade seeds fall from bagpipes at the feet of a scorpion
who raises his cup with the lost look of space
a huge space of uninterrupted cries that call to us
from a tiny cathedral of crystal that bends the leaf of your eyes
where the wolves have gathered upstream
walking over a sword of vapor
cashmere to coffee in a poppy's symbol
A mole near your left ear surmounts all but the Druidic bicycle

THE MARKET OF LIES

From the moment of the ascent blue fur reigned over the domain of knocking sounds

Twilight would fasten itself to our lips anywhere
The handshake was exchanged to the tone of gold
And yet we were escorted by a thunderbolt that appeared to us as twins of the same father but of different mothers
We were handed a species of mental deliberation
With a tail of broken glass wetting our previous attacks
We rode through a nocturnal chamber illumined by creole hex signs serrated long ago in the cave of the stringed-horse
Violent was the scabbard of kisses combined with a paw of milk
Four headed the wound ripened the bolt on the cliff's heart
Three times the fungus was raised and declared "Fox Eyes"
Tormenting the mahogany minstrel who sipped blood from the light of a diamond caught in the gills of a salmon
The scarlet arena that floats in the net of a wave you have yet to summon
Pronounces the virgin of the key or rather the virgin who has found the key
Who counts on her fingers up to ten with the certitude of a lark
Like you and without you
On her lap the beach drinks Eastward the masks
With a silver finger thrown into the fire her last desert opens without a word

Calling forth the innumerable and invisible queens
Veiling with their hands what their gaze deposits
Under the fossils of light you have dug your meaning into the water's face
Like hypnotized trees we signal each other beyond duration
I unseal your invisible waist with the feathers fallen from my departure
That which rules with grace the bleeding mirrors her fingers surround

*

Timberous flowers in flight unhinge the sparkling sound
of the tortoise held motors
a lacerating memory of a door suddenly opened by vestual
beakers of blood
like wounds boiled in the heat of a cricket's calyces
co-existant with the sedge of the hyena's gravitational tattooing
leaned out of the octagonal waves of sleep
wet with the branches' vibratile window
to turn to liqueur the elemental bird of the bridge's signature

on the sightless interlockings of roads
where seeds of sound pushed to limits defend the waterwheel
of thorns turning a moth into a kiss of black coal
like so many fingers melted in a white room without windows
displayed for convenience secret and opposite

on the spoor of hearts we discover on the way down

I wind my way toward the black toward the folded hands of shell
deaf to the red shawl that discovers space with a lung unlocked
from its torturous wing of five eyes
a rose in each eye opens between the horns of a bull
where rarely seen stars form on the lichen shield of a vacuum's
optical flurry

gathering the fallen masks the cobalt blue leopard
brings back its python body and gives to the triangle
its meaning
with a hole summoned by spinning signs of doubt
registered on the mother of myths in ink
like an echo rethinking the impossible in pairs
an echo through which night escapes like a crime
bearing its bride in pouches of boiling water

*

The line of the charm
as the body feeds on the air

Dance is unlearning the shadow
The body turning creates a black flower
a lyric
that speaks with fire

The moon treats your step
the earth creeping along your arms
into your sleep
which darkens the windows
with a liquid
that comes from your hands

what dream of echo could
replace the map of this iron geography

a meditation between
the space of each movement

along the ridges of the storm
what eyes catch only the crystal mouse

and the sleeping dog
that only pretends to be a comb
which is truly the fall of night
as gallant as any step forward

catch it in your arms dancer
let the flower that sings in your head

sing constantly
a lyric
that washes along the stones
of sleep

the sun arrests you
because you don't know your name
in the dance

*

There is a terrible tension in each leaf of the tree
And each path finds you starved before the milk of horned suns

The earth breaks its teeth upon the gravity of owls
Startled within the wheel of your body
And in the silent hearth of butchered animals you stand
Haruspex
Decoder of bones and entrails
In the pirate weather laced with pine cone of muscle
With a crude tendon of steam
In the straining talon of twelve nights

Tinted blades fly from the faceless
As a serpent hides between the two braids of its own brain
And bees swarm over trees of blood
Like yesterday and tomorrow bees swarming
Through fire and through water swarming

I shall venture with you unknown dancer
Dancer ringing from the staff of my spine the high winds
I shall find you . . . even without you . . . know you

from THE GLACIAL BLUSH

CREDO

It is thirst for word bends me down
to fly and crawl within the psychotropic deserts
where human cacti toss the etiquette of dream against
the red stones that barely balance the void
whose dynamo takes from us the perverse hello
and threatens to fill those secret rooms of meditation with a terrible
human odor
Odor of man
tearing feathers from the mouthpiece of love

Odor of man
probing with his stupefying fingers
his own imprudent deaths
Reflections from the he final shields of medicine
herald the beginning of hermetic dentistry
where each tooth extracted by sonic lusts
becomes an eternal memento
of every furthering of the spirit
With each tooth extracted a new world is evolved
from the cuffs of Saturn
from the feather hostage and the script of the stars
A new world where all connections meet in my eyes
Eyes that Eros shamelessly flaunts
in the molting presence of the Sun's torso
of leather and cream
that will someday erase the moustaches
on the habit of birds
This world exists only for the figures of purple
whose fingers of fish suck at the air
with eyes that no longer see
with breasts that tear the night in two
with flowers that fall through the water of the sky
The populations here have no allegiance to compulsion
yet nightly they wait for the image
that will play over their bodies unendingly

OBSTACLES OF SLEEP

The snail with the one cloven foot
burns my tongue with its solar bell
My tongue swollen with vertigo overturns the sky
with one dark stare
My grip is unfailing the dogs have crawled out of
the wallpaper of infinite meaning
they bear on their backs the infinitesimal theatre
of the air and closer their paws burn the wound
of night
and it is night with the end of salt

Birds pull with their rosy beaks the strings
supporting the fountains of glass whose spray
of sex collapses the mirror of sleep
and it is day with the beginning of lead

In my ear a tusk of light grows branches of flesh
and I touch the cry forced from the mouth of the rain
which is louder and more fierce than your key of sweat
My sweet stone you the antagonist a pentacle
within the short circuit of fish within
the blood of our desires come reside everywhere
about us

Eyes of brick cut the stem of your heart so carefully
Hide in the tree where I wait for your dream
and the allure of a precipice dark
and victorious over the earth

Paris, 1972

from BRIDESTONE

HYDROMANCY

The race of the spiders strayed to the posthumous gates
of the rose

with circular wires held in their beaks of sand
the infinite expanding in their throats

fortifications cannot hold or erase the indelible proof
of the river's beating wing
arched suddenly over a green couch
(where an egg devours its shell of glass with 234 beats per second of
its heart)

arises with sword in hand
the executor of your desire

As an animal it hovers and displaces
As a stone it dances on the crest of a world
As a plant it speaks to the concubine of the lunar gales
sweeping back your hair with its flaming pulse

Reared like a wolf how could you not advise the lightning
to slake its thirst in the movement of your body
that glazed the Earth as it opened its head of wings

restoring to the Prince of Birds all the ladders of water
repeating the moon's objects in their lair
in a dialect of flame
hearing itself
for fire cannot burn fire
except to witness
the strength of the tower's two hands
moth and raven who form a window in the steel
who water the sound of your escaping through the limbus of the river
where fragments of the night desert the telepathy of the red dew
churning the sun as a mouth speaks it.

Like a sponge made of angel tissue
I drink these marbled veins,
in the bar the music evokes an aurora of breezes,
the piano divines Pandora's box which ruptures the perfumes,
I live at the surface of the soul
A powder breaks down my cords,
the train of my passion derailed
and roots unlinked themselves until cobras crawl from my icy drink
White powder! Strange sugar mixed with taba-root from your island
White powder stitched through swaying hoods which dilate like
Japanese fans over the body of one too early departed!
Your eyes that I would have banished,
that I would have petted with salt,
that I would have steamed and betrothed to the ants,
your eyes
buried like two tongues in the night
lit and crawling with dragon flies . . .
the end and yet
the death-sweat under my palm
as I peel your scales from my body
7 a.m.

from FATE OF THE BIRDS

THE END OF THE FALL

With my eyes I pulled the air apart and re-visaged the golden number
With my body I dived into the light-quarry of breezes
and set the night-avalanche spinning toward the spellbound
animals of the burning forest
Fate drank its first sip of air
And I for the feather's last night drank the wine of ten thousand dreams
My fingers spoke to the hyacinth
And its mask told me sadly of her misfortune
My ribs extended their magic animals to the twilight
Dusk of lips and ashes
I walked into the ellipse of shudders
The night sky
Fossils that lit me in nacre-sounds

*

I have thrown up the sickness
I have thrown up tiny arrows that have missed
their marks

There is a red circle around the moon
My black vomit on the green grass
Birds from every direction circle
They come to pray in my sickness
They perch and nest in its branches
They will build a monument to my hysteria
I remember the simple music that tore from
my limbs an instrument of sand
which caused the birds to swell and burst
with heaven expanding
in their throats
I remember my broken tail
and my stupendous wings
Commingle in heat
we merged
in the food of worms
in the psyche of wings

*

What you were in the night
and in the occult chambers struggling with time
you are no longer

your body through its hidden signs
is more transparent now

you are drawn toward the black lids
and intangible ashes of my eyes

you close your eyes over the wingbeat
of hazy birds clinging to the threads of my voice

words and rains are mixed with your image
in the obscene alembic of mirrors

from broken vases your radiant breasts drink
the silence of the deltas

and rising toward the tip of my lance
I can see the actual birth of words proceed
to their bodies luminous with rivers

*

With my companion of silk
we will test the soil

we will taste the air
and once again we will resurrect
the arms of the serpent
which when burned again in the ether of rock
will fill the air with a timeless conspiracy
A conspiracy I brush my teeth with
A conspiracy that traps and skins
the stale odor of multiple amnesia
A conspiracy that will devour the savage throne
of the vegetable kingdom
and leave in its place a broken tooth
covered with velvet
an axe and the protection of the sun's clay fang
Now that all thrones have rotted and fallen to dust
Now that history is no longer possible
I will beat my brow against the heat
of hysterical lacework
A sacrifice to the fire
that is no longer anything but fire

*

Rifles become the resin used for separating heaven and earth
as shepherds are lost among the manacles of their imminent seduction
which takes the shape of a boar washing its bituminous horns in the white
light of copulating screams
before and after time

The trunk of the tree reveals a lady
in spite of patriarchal incisions catacombed to the libidinal fuselage
hung in the smoke of dancing pears that explode like your comb when drawn
through water
which doesn't revive but incinerates its muse

The four walls and their echo when pressed together disgorge a shadow that
smells like a corpse
but a corpse interested only in reaping what it has yet to see
as I have yet to see the ghost of the whirlpool heaved
through a jewel-beetle from Malaya

I remount the hidden cow the one that refuses to crack
I restore the angles of the manta ray
who descends the stairs of salt to the bed of its mineral children

On your fingertip the hour feeds its children
and averts disaster

You have obeyed you have fed your heart to the maddened orifices of stars
which burn like maps into the hives of rivers become carnations exorcising
the thunder

which saturates the runes of alligator blood with the floating hair of its
poisonous beads

*

Here on this terrace of perpetual twilight
A woman's hand, a gloved hand, a black hand
Conjured from the blue of the sky
Offers me these flowers of wind with petals of violet blood

And faraway I can see her kisses
Outlined on the thigh of another more lifeless woman
Like precise teethmakers of phosphor

This woman refracts but never congeals
Her breasts are two flames seen through heavy mist
She has a voice but gusts of wind intercept her words

Touched by her body the starry water moves forward
Flows out to even more dead hours
Hours in which my image is burned into

*

Child of gold
chisel your portion of the eternal signs
into the wave receding past the world

you are the chisel and the message
you are the wave

you are scanned by a succession of lights and voices
in whose breast swells the pure lineage of revolt
the present and eternal revelation of words
all lightning is driven before it

you are not the weight of the void
you are its blood and the flower of its face

and tomorrow?
when the tall shadows rise
along with the women
who will imbibe the blood of their bridal robes with the stain of dawn

who will spill the green blood
onto the shaman's heart-ash

who will pour moonlight over the bridge of their multiple body?

Let us redeem from oblivion
The sea's gold

*

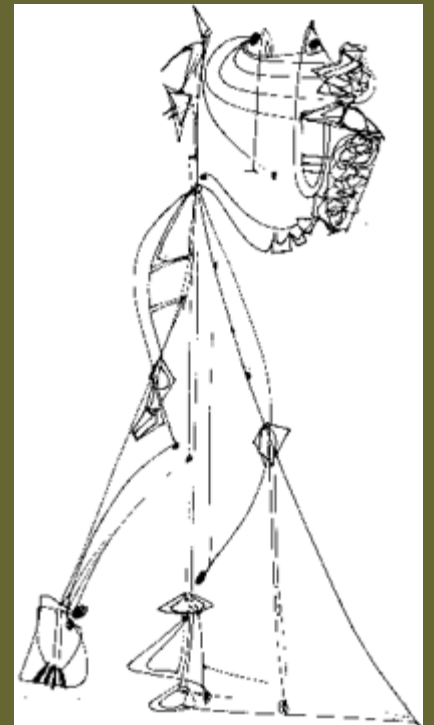
Her head became a solid block of moonstone inlaid with orchids and carved by the velocity of gazes. In my stomach an astrolabe revolved corresponding to her breathing which was visible as a cone of changing prismatic shades extending from her lips to any object that caught her eyes. When an object because of its particularly pathetic beauty brought tears to her eyes, the object explodes into deep violet then literally turns inside out becoming its opposite in a dialectically aberrant way. For instance, the keys on the table become the whiskers of a cat then through a mediation both eternal and instantaneous because of the extreme pressure of the light becomes a pitcher of milk with lightningbolts floating near the top like cream. The cream of the unexpected.

In the stillness he heard himself breathing. After some time he could hear another breath exactly like his own but half a second behind his. Suddenly there are two breathing but only one body. Then the two breaths become more audible more palpable and he feels a surge of energy visualized as a thin red membrane connect the two breaths and the sound of that breathing changed and has become indistinguishable from the antiphonal song of two birds outside the window.

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drawings by laurence
weisberg





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For Laurence Weisberg

To register moment by moment the language of translucence and eruption puts one far beyond the practical content of the daily wage earner. One is no longer magnetized as a captured wattage measured by concerns of the marketplace. One burns with telepathic sensitivity, with alchemical non-sequitur, one's daily renewal consumed by "hidden number." One then walks on ground "prepared by vast space," like a dazzling but invisible leopard, always kinetic at the cusp of a strange interior daybreak. Such was the odyssey of Laurence Weisberg as he roamed day after day throughout a curious phonemic forest.

He did not carry a day planner, or pilot book by book a lucid literary archive, gaining name and recognition by sterility. Instead his ink would flare, the images transcend, as diamonds erupting at the borderland of beauty. Certainly not a conservative machination, or a practical polemic aimed at the reader engrossed by popular momentary concern.

Laurence wrote by means of faceless evanescence, his voice seduced by flames of golden lorikeers. Being an intrinsic wanderer, a scribe from the Chaldea of Artaud, Laurence was most at home sitting in dark cafes conjuring up sun dogs, or speaking from interior Oaxacas. This was the level of his work, never offering himself up to quotidian duality, or to the work bench of the critics. Instead he worked from the blueprint of the untouchable, from the "firmament of utopias."

He has now ascended to poetic solar planes where the "ghosts stand erect in their uniforms of fire." Yet he remains amongst us, as dweller alive with beatific concern, his voice illuminate over and above that which is reasonable, unconcerned with the elements praised by conversational description.

—Will Alexander

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Elective Affinities: Philip Lamantia and Laurence Weisberg

True encounters mark us. They erect a time within time, a time of their own that remakes the present in the image of time lived completely. And should such encounters develop into friendship, a friendship yet scored by the marvelous, and all the potencies that give birth to the marvelous – this ludic-
oneiric mutation that opens up within and between us a precise hunger for the poetic in life – a hunger that feeds off the disproportion between desire and circumstance as it seeks, in the same movement, to transform that disproportion in images of desire, images that desire in life the exceptional freedom of desire, desire's desire, then that friendship is something, and something worth pursuing. For in its pursuit the imagination of desire will come to embody the give and take we expect from those we love, admire, doubt and despair of; those we sustain in an intimacy that clarifies the time we live.

Philip Lamantia and Laurence Weisberg shared such a friendship. Two poets, one older, one younger, meet in San Francisco. They make surrealism their compact, poetic revolt their means. For three decades they give to the other an essential respect, open access, a sympathy that valorizes and revalorizes their work, their play as poets. That the older poet carries an established legacy with ties to the history of surrealism in the United States, and which when they first meet he has returned to, colors their exchange, yes, but as a measure for the younger poet to reaffirm what he alone has revealed. That the younger poet finds in his elder an uncertain verification of how to prevail, amidst the great and tragic turmoil of living, and not give in, whether by deed or expression, to the fetters of a reality that crash against us, will play itself out in the years to come, as it does for anyone else with a similar gift. That the older poet will recognize in the younger a distinctive passion for a poetry that infuses, and is infused by, life will anchor him more forcefully yet to an audacity and exuberance that youth compresses and adventure reveals.

It is not, in this sense, a friendship struck by hierarchy other than that shared in the heat of exchange. And as the conversations, games, walks and mutual projects flourish, with sudden detours provided by stimulants, hallucinogens and other like drugs, the interchange distinguishes their uniqueness as men and as poets.

In those first years, 1973-1976, their friendship arcs against their commitment to the surrealist group in San Francisco tied to the journal *Arsenal: Surrealist Subversion*, published in Chicago. After this period their friendship will take another turn but not in its formative qualities. For between them remains the authentic voice that both possess, and that both recognize both possess. And while one will accept a public silence (rarely broken) that the other has less need of but does not disdain, they will take pleasure in their friendship beyond

the conceits that color their actions.

A pivotal rapport? Certainly. That early on it assumes the form of a project within a larger, collective circumstance will not thereafter prevent its affective qualities from enduring. That both poets will recognize here the importance of these qualities that neither has injured, despite their disagreements, will not prevent them from upholding such qualities. Does this mean that, by this or that decision, the one has lessened his tie to the other and, in recognizing or not recognizing it, damaged their worth toward each other? I cannot say. That I am left with the notion that, like all too many of us, their avoiding certain subjects, including religion, did not work to their advantage, taking its toll in their later years, is something, again, I have little reason to doubt but no way to prove. Nor would it do me any good for both are gone; death having claimed one too early – Weisberg at 51 in March 2003 -- the other, as is due – Lamantia at 77 in March 2005.

There are certain meetings that burst into a friendship by which we measure our accomplishments and our failures, our pleasure and our pain, our happiness and our despair. In some vital way, perhaps more at one time than another, they enter into the calculations we make about who we are and why we live as we do. They are hermae that rise at crossroads, signets of place gained and lost along the way. And as we stand by them we see ourselves in the shadows they throw, shadowy mirrors enlivened by a subtle enervation, a hilarious tension, a spasm of memory, an articulate fever, an unknown anticipation drawn from the drama of day to night's insomniac nerve, from the flowers of joy that true poets know, and in knowing, know that is what they know, and hunger to know...

Allan Graubard, April 2005, Washington, DC

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