



Untitled (Polaroid & Oil Stick), Drew Kunz

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***From Because Noah Was on the Verge of Moral Collapse***

The Virgin Mary's whereabouts: sure things seamed together in our age. Our precision is our faith. She is there in the hills; the confections of leaves will tell us when. We will make her accurate cakes. When the new Admiral comes to visit, he will give her light from his gun. His inflection in her house.

The Admiral doesn't spare a dime for a word when he shares his meals with everyone else. Now they worry. They edit the lunacy out of her, pin her memories to still her life: Sunday's leftovers posted to roads. In her shadow mirror she looks pretty. But she resigns herself: her grammar is her containment. She is slung towards time without it and she will send us postcards from her mouth. She will tell us when she sees a turn become a man. When a green parrot with an assault rifle will arrive at the wrong time. The Admiral will ask her whether her sun is where it was and she will tell him it is his fault for whispering to her of a key to a cloud when there never was a combination.

The Virgin Mary knows he's been over-served. He promises her to find him another parrot. She knows about the end of the succession of the seasons. The Admiral tells her her sideways eye seems wicked. She will encourage the arc.

In this disquiet, waiting for the shaking, you should hope for her. You need to be ankle-deep to believe.

**Don't think the earth needs men need it**

No instinct is absolute all of them fail. It was not always so: we were once ambidextrous. This perfect handedness was learned like the liver and its disregard for symmetry, like marriage by capture, like electricity, cholera, the eastern question. It's in the air. It infects our speech. We never were, did not have tails anymore than we descended from electrons. Science is not a life of yearning for missing links. The only ones gone were unimportant anyway.

Jessica Wigent

**It is what the map is not**

We named our children after towns  
we'd never been to, towns  
named after shotguns.  
We swore we'd be bells  
waiting to be struck.

Deprived of our wits by  
the moon the urge to do  
as marvelous works as work  
done by Neosporin.  
The urge to be  
an ordinary liar  
tired from migrating  
within pleats of matter.

**Philosophers. They're just like us.**

They know we are not  
under water but we are whole  
but they have forgotten that  
local gravity, to feel it is  
possible man could have  
a hand for a heart that a polaroid  
of the sky could show the whole sky

Remember when was was the sound?  
When belief came before Adam Smith?  
When you said to me "Be my former  
prime minister?"

Think of a map of Indiana when we  
romanticized dark lines irregular  
When we hammered a wire round  
thing then no, not cultured, I said  
cluttered the philosopher said  
cultivate my facts I said  
defend me when I'm wrong

For the philosopher without  
a blueprint it's difficult to breathe  
If only the philosopher said don't go  
without me I want to take that picture



**Scab collection**

It was kind of fey, gingersnaps and peachy  
tulips at tables  
but I'm glad I fit

into myself  
sentimentally.

Clutch my iconography to plasma, rig  
an IV in a dry and  
thirsty land:

make do with green  
coconut fluid

and what? A straw? The fit when it comes  
on, the theme  
when it falls

off all over  
the place, the other,

weaker members want in. Vultures  
circling their luck:  
each found thing

reminds of its finding  
and suggests its loss.

**Photon hydrant**

make a proposition about leading  
(an action) and being led (a state) in  
the dark of mercantile  
verticals                      the kind of hair  
and thinness we usually describe

people like the punchline of  
the most extravagant scenarios  
spangle                      know we're taking  
a meaning from them and dirtier  
for it                      you are dirty  
your street is dirty              your information

propose a method by which a young woman  
propose a method by which silently  
leads a man rigged and marked by  
the hand                      *She looks Asian*              *He looks homeless*

propose a mode like a pearl  
unsnap it                      owe it to them  
twining out like saliva              a pop-bead of saliva

a statement about the state  
of the world-hydrant and  
three kinds of barriers

Kate Schapira

**Swan jacket IV**

The down, it's too warm  
it's too troublesome.  
Beaks bite hair into similar shape

someone's favorite  
weather pattern, someone else's street.  
Would it have been a better  
fit. Now for the swan

and its grip. Exact baffle  
fits between favorite and favorite  
grip suits. The jacket whatever happens.

Kate Schapira

**Swan jacket V**

The room burned up with sun. It took  
weeks to fit my arms

around the whole swan.  
Boiling water knows no better  
snow like twists  
of sugar swept up with dirt.  
You came to meet me  
I attempted to rise.

**The thing you love more than once**

Nobody's answering the phone, it's ringing.  
If you don't, you're one of them.  
You could write about a beautiful strange bird  
or you could stage a coup, which birds  
do by singing the same song over  
and over in the same spot.  
My bus-stop acquaintance and I are adamant.\*  
Maybe we will re-use this conversation  
or one of us will embroider a beautiful  
strange bird onto a shirt.  
In its new purpose is it the same thing?  
Would a new person re-use its mistakes?  
Think of yourself in a new way. If  
you don't, when you read about a ripped  
seam you'll want to mend it,  
think that makes you different, sleeping  
under cotton with your head toward the door.

\*We were adamant that total disassembly  
means killing, becoming the people  
you want to kill, which leaves mending.  
Which is not new, the old thread clumps like nerves.

### **Hiding Places**

A hollowed-out cantaloupe  
A hollowed-out doorknob  
A hollowed-out bullet  
A hollowed-out doughnut  
A hollowed-out mudslide  
A hollowed-out air freshener  
A hollowed-out needle  
A hollowed-out ice cream cone  
A hollowed-out pen  
A hollowed-out crayon  
A hollowed-out kimono  
A hollowed-out porcupine  
A hollowed-out pond  
A hollowed-out belly  
A hollowed-out snowball  
A hollowed-out sandwich  
A hollowed-out faucet  
A hollowed-out can-opener  
A hollowed-out sheet  
A hollowed-out syringe  
A hollowed-out citation  
A hollowed-out dictionary  
A hollowed-out turkey  
A hollowed-out sunbeam  
A hollowed-out washer  
A hollowed-out dryer  
A hollowed-out syllable  
A hollowed-out septuagint  
A hollowed-out excuse  
A hollowed-out phone  
A hollowed-out daydream  
A hollowed-out departure

### **Foreign Objects**

Hemlock is high in soluble fiber.  
A self-directed bullet contains no fatty acids.  
Asphyxiation eliminates 2<sup>nd</sup>-hand smoke.  
Carbon Monoxide is nitrate-free.

Sleeping pills reduce the body's need for sugar.  
A blow from a sword is high in iron.  
Hanging flushes the body of its toxins.  
Cyanide cleanses potentially harmful resins.

Bleach cuts cholesterol levels.  
Jumping simulates weightlessness.  
Drowning ensures hydration.  
Smoking improves eyesight.

An oncoming train is filled  
With many fruits and vegetables.  
Running a car into a tree reduces  
The need for red meat consumption.

**Break or Thaw?**

If a team of you became a team of me,  
Yes, you'd know then what I'd been thinking  
Dogsleds and all, desire to sculpt you  
In ice or see your eyes immortalized in glass.  
The slick surface of that moment  
The way the coating brightens every shade  
& polarizes: Red to green; blue to orange;  
Buttons to hooks & edges to seams.  
& if a whip I do carry, let it be  
To drive that device up, up, & over  
The crescent of the forthcoming hill  
The sun so bright it melts it all to sleep



### ***HATQUEST***

I don't have a GPS but I do have state-of-the-art millinery so to speak in the shape of *Hatquest* (the extra-cranial positioning system). It looks very like a brain—worn on the outside of course. Other visual analogies might be: Marie-Antoinette's wig (when her head was still attached to her body) though not so large and tall and white. Also Marge Simpson's updo but not blue. Or an organic map. Yes, this one's good. Imagine you spread out your map. Not your ordinary anonymous/sterile/impersonal map but a map of the exact streets you will travel, your precise route, with a little red star for your starting point, your home, your north star, your Alpha and Omega, and another for your destination, your excursion, your beta, your B. Then you put *Peel-A-Way* all over your map, or something that turns it into pulp. And you scoop all that up like a jelly, the bright veins of your route glistening through, and it somehow accumulates shape and you pile it on top of your head. The little red stars are like barrettes, cunningly positioned. It beats all odds. It's also like an old-fashioned hairdryer in the beauty parlor, the kind you insert your head into. Also like a turban, printed of course. Also like those squidgy pipings of wet sand (themselves like renegade caulk from a wholewheat gun) which lugworms, compact under the compact sand, throw out. Anyway, rather than attending to a pleasant though authoritative voice, you insert your head into this pellucid wobbly confection, also strangely comforting. Like a warm diaper but I digress. There is so much brain on the outside that one might be forgiven for thinking that the space within is empty. But no. There is a driver within. The analogy might be *streets* are to *Hatquest* as *car* is to *body* and *driver* is to *brain*. Still, obviously the brain has limits, the very limits that drove the driver to the purchase of *Hatquest* to begin with. If true purchase can ever be had on such a glittering, slippery thing.

***LIGHTS—CAMERA—ACTION!***

My alarm is set for 4.30am. I hesitate for a few hours, then open my eyes. My tiny room is a furred sketch, palpable rather than visible. Another hour goes by. I turn on my side to enjoy that side. I open the door of the room of anxieties + spend a long time there. Bored, I enter my small workroom and spend a while powdering a last, the finished upper agog with suppressed anticipation standing by. When I open my eyes again it is noon of another day. I just breathe for a while. Two years pass. It is time to get up and I think about that. I imagine myself getting out of bed, putting on my blue cardigan which wraps around tightly and ties at the back. Then my scarf which is actually a shawl, with all the origami properties of that. I spend five hours folding myself into cultures across the globe but wind up looking like a peasant every time. Then there is the door to be opened. I hesitate for a year. I imagine my hand on the gold knob. Turning. Turning. I imagine the edge of the door springing a slat of light. I imagine the hall outside. Another year goes by. It is dark in the room. I am standing beside the bed. I keel over gently, sideways. I am half on the bed (top half, sideways) and half on the floor (legs and feet, splayed). I lie with my eyes open for a few years, thinking about direction and cold.

## FLOODLIGHTS

If you have an old house and it's not up to par with the houses of your friends and colleagues and you have been in it long enough to fix it up but you haven't fixed it up because you have no money or aren't able or just didn't get round to it yet but can't use the excuse of having just moved in anymore because you're in the house five years and people don't invite you to dinner anymore because you never invite them back and anyway you feel bashful about accepting an invitation for the 4th or 5th time and want to, you know, start inviting people round yourself but don't want to expose the shortcomings of your living situation I have the solution for you: *Floodlights!* You can rent them fairly cheap or even invest in a set of your own if you intend to have a lot of dinner parties. You have to have high ceilings of course—did I mention I have an old house? Once installed you just blast that dinner table with 5,000 lumens and believe me, no-one's going to be commenting on the state of your house. It's like that Edgar Allen Poe story "The Purloined Letter": *You blind with light*. The trick is, of course, to rein it in. You have to control the projection. You want the dining room ablaze but everything outside that shining space sheathed in velvety dark. You do *not* want the dust bunnies in the corner of the living-room—or in the corner of the living room of your neighbors across the street—to jump into horrifying relief. It's extremely atmospheric as you can imagine. Your guests will feel like film stars. And there are other benefits. It's not that you don't have furniture—it's that you moved it to make room for the lights. It's not that you don't have rugs—it's that you didn't want them torn up by the great claw feet of the floods so you rolled them away. And if your guests do stumble out of the magic circle to go to the bathroom or explore the territory, their retinas will be too dazzled to see anything but whirling disks and orbs. They'll have to feel their way with their hands and when they return the food on their plate will look too real for words. Not only have you restored appetite to the realm of personal responsibility where it rightly belongs you have also more or less determined the topic of conversation for the evening, that is if people can bear to look each other in the eye long enough to talk. You can also rent searchlights with high intensity beams each one of which has over six hundred million candlepower so your guests can easily find your house without GPS or *Mapquest*—the good old-fashioned way.

***from Monster: A Glottochronology***

I'm [collapsible] known on only like bike pegs. A snippet [box] of someone leaning straight up even on the curve. A situation [creamery] full of borrowing. A chair dismantled [heated] by the winter. A set of feelings to trade for the holograph [bowed] City really is black & white, confessional [dies] at best. Why the tender gets to see it all roll out the bin. Why cheese is great [rounded] in olives. How olives grow on trees too & how we [infinite] keep cheese in doors & never say two from the Olea europaea please. How we had one morning meal at the farm & refilled into [taught] Caribbean acronym: wanting something [scatter] catalog in our Eiffel. How we started our [grave] hefting of the text in the third quarter of 01' [sphinx] How not knowing of reruns brought us sweat-handed [out] to the mailbox. Not our Hamartia. Fattened [ilk] with gavage. In the middle of me [deity] you are in: mine. On the [ursine] footsteps of the Liffey where the gull [bent] culled from its own [line] pantheon a full pile of chirping grouch I jaw-grounded in a gray-scaled truss of turds: hanging over the bald & aspirated canal with in & how I drooled in wanting just an aspectual inebriation [throat] Ineluctable totality of the vestibule [gazing] Our dictionary in color, our colors criss-crossed, our girlfriends Binanca-tongued, our after-hours three-pointed, our lunch breaks snack-packed [adz], our evening's problem solved, our phone [simian] calls cinematic, our weekends peppered by the doctor, gummied [impish] by the worm, our setting up the tent a necessity, our cadence come only [cratered] upon the credence table, our yada with another [fiery] two yadas & then naysay. Name the thing & the place & the time [jeux] When we switched to soy. A little [intermittent] over & I have g-force. Such [iota] irrefutable confidence the doorbell sticks [et] Forgetting the dryer. Passing the dare cycle & retreating to the woods with chromies. Retreating [lawish] with menthol & the dewiest pager [ropes] How we grill the one stirring rumble of the land &

lakes. How the fat sit in the prairie generates a cracker gift. Acceptance [total] based on the degree to which this as ours is edible [et] Travel kits disintegrate. Mother coos at the sill & windows papa into hoot. The third [quaking] son we envision mingles with the gated shadows of willow stones. Which disc [spinning] is left in the fiver for eternity? Don't sweat the physique. If standing for change [popular] sitting for all the same. A sermon for concerning ourselves with the correct [seeded] distribution of dairy & grain. How one more egg changes the pancake. Makes the stairs [wheat] an option. The creature comforts. How John yelled after Delmore. How we yell after John. How, either way, responsibility is always one [lick] knee down at the starting line, minutes before [every of] the lids ascend, gnawing on a momentous hush: applicator [smear] unpalpitated, like [the] wag, as shorn from a century of songing we move under two pillows [ars] situate so sudden our belongingess

Our applauding, our tank just a patio [drain] umbrella. Our taking into stringing the gnat, our good young filature [hat] assuring a soft cold shirt on the back of all this raftered rue, the fringe in which we jcoalesce. Can fill the place in the center of our [heady] heart. Last to gain [pimple] heat. Stay fresh containers [cornering] The universe is winding of course. Every direction in no line or [fix] time. We were hoping to keep this [oh] personal. Hidden by its principle secrets. But then mornings [make] came & went. More themselves but [banked] unconnected. Like a [buttressed] stampede under a tree. Like in the Golden Age. No average citizen had to [wheel] worry unless they were [begin] amassing an army or organizing under an important piece of the [hands] sky. Becoming somehow [ab] heard among other solitary voices [crunch] Simply no other justification. The nearest [boom] logic clutched. A breakthrough: discovering an inch. [foxy] In December. The cold heart meets. [seeming to] What if we could keep [reissue] that? What if we were allowed to remember actual & [cast] uncommon parts. Eyes widening as the door opens. A favorite moment of candor. Out-of-date Trivial Pursuit. Sausage &

grapes & bread. [guzzle] Ourselves forever residents. For the season otherwise [sum] unplundered. Boats sent to take us away. Making a [staging] noise in the water much less than we [roil] expected. Wind in the last elms. Us just around fire. Chlorine Strip. We have [& then] pulled water up hand over hand. With nothing to [before] answer for. Test light & we can [look] imagine. All we ever wanted coming [walker] across a ruined mansion & repairing [digress] it perfectly & the religion upstairs in the dark [old]. Birdcage, ottoman, davenport, spot of carpeting used as a patch: this has [cactus] provided only a ghost limb. The trail arrives & departs at our body [rim] each time we are very close to [suspect] remembering. There is a sound so perfectly nonreferential & so [hut] indifferent. Like truffles [had] in omelets [twice]. We almost forget [scent] the street is foul & blossoming.

If anything [aphrodisiac] there is a time after being young. Stunned though it could [knife] be gone. Our hearts moderate. Too engrossed [valve] to [vie for] separate out. The force that appears stalling action. Where does [vim] rest take place? You [timber] wake the dark. Guard against knowing. Still unable [hive] to find words. Cannot yet [ew] think connectively. Events lead you here: you remember a crowd gathered in your [sauce] honor at least once. There is of [is] course the stairs. You still have those shoes [likes] How it has changed & new carpeting gone [laces] wild. We are passing through flesh bright hidden like piano hammers [join] coming down wherever we [belly] desire in absolutely no color & no season. No estimation of [hind] the labors precious for us to count [scruple]. Unprepared in the luscious publishing's of each face. The struggle to [cliff] hear inside shape. Movement [confess] theater. Your turn. Thrill at the [going] prospect of someone like a whip on what you [chef] have always dreamed. The dream though [sulk] has not been consistent, so we can [pond] have no expectation of how it will [top] continue.

We painted pictures of the next [heel] life & wrote a biography of someone's brother. Of course they had no idea if this was the longest night of the year. Or the longest night of the summer? We are not so [layered] unequipped to deal with markings. We are moving at an appropriate speed [sink] Tiny perfect sculptures have been made of wings. They sit [torso] in circular rooms. Animals approach them & their eyes fill like they are being fed. The next day's poet arrives [rhyming] & claims to have quelled hot iron rods piercing absolute flesh of completely [formed] unknown people. I am I am the last man aware of my dominion [plush] over earth. The glass panes bridging our [attempts] condominium. In that light. The way it sometimes catches him. An unpredicted disordering [band-aid] of rhythm or how it cannot become a convention. This ineffective [fire] means like horrorshow. Yarn from our pamphleteer. Come with [hairy] the speed of a shrill. Dunk me down. Collecting everything we can [leashing] in terms of our perceptions as an end we [gather] meld a transferring [prospect] from the usual stance [reconcile] of the corner store sphere & all the romantic acts are secluded in semantic [nipple] modifications well special & in for the factory of a full pullover [accepted] Putting another quarter in the hotel twist around.

I wore all [heard] blue for you today but my eyes are still green. Power [hanky] in a bottle. A middle generation searching the [ripe] coaxials. The twist was that the introduction was being written in a father tongue. Schedule singing. Lop off the twigs [hung] with a bright boot. Our collage [hermetic] beckoned from an unwilling peripheral [need] I will not spend my summer with these modern choices [hearings] Our car is stored for the winter [jumps] remembers the last parking spot in the west, cools off with a low & sorted [sorta] thunder, keeps notes on imagism [sled] stalks at the filbert tinkle-topped on the cup hold, brims in a straighter through [home] twines its gaff, motors its motors its bifocals, scarves its empty driers [white] lines up the cataloguing of theses, & reprehends the dilettante in

a pulling over, a splicing swap, a door done  
[holistic] [wipe] into the dunes, & a rev of such  
sharp acuity the orchards are [plain] ruins dry  
[churn] ruins dry & done laces of a syncopatic set of  
shoes, a hamper for the prophylactic [yip] a pinup  
whirl, a clock soft on its moment hop, a machine  
within [blanched] machine within the careen or our  
veneer saying something of the [red] season of the  
season of this so I sneeze. Teaching materials.  
Regulated cabinet perusing [jinx] Notes on notes  
on death. Too much going on for a monopotassium  
phosphate lecture.

How she said corporeal the first time. Our only  
[cur] friend is saying: certainly not the delay at La  
Guardia we are [paw] experiencing or even the  
high protein diet of Frida Kahlo but [call] senior  
year of college when I consumed half a pan of  
unnatural [sturdy] brownies & went on stage  
opening night to play [you] a sixty-year old sex  
offender, that's what has a little of me quivering in  
the small exalt of a [fluid] concluding New York  
weekend. Not even consider [vitamin] considering.  
Better time [gravel] For a night air. Aiding the  
recluse with candles & one pint. We painted the  
second room upstairs while the newer [written]  
testament to timing made itself known in our  
avoidance of a second coat. Never matter the look  
all of us in here now [sent] steamed rice plant  
selection making into a pill noisy magic a source of  
late desire [stop] a chat with custodians a limb again  
wooden an appetite [sunlit] of key ring already  
housed a knowing not of spirits or carrying the  
clemency with one [spotty] worn glove the places  
between craters for another I is skunked and  
unconfessional to [signal] contact the fever to blah  
blah prayer to sign the door before it opens.



### **Controlling the Weather**

It's always the hill's elixir  
at dawn or in twilight.

With either sprays of them, or  
not: just a curve, gently planetary.

It's the hill behind the stable if  
there were no trees. And I

am crying, crying, crying, crying, crying.  
Like I'd come to the end of

some cruise on which crying was not allowed.  
I'm so relieved, I'm static: just-truth,

me and that curve and  
them flying or the others glistening only

stresses the endness of it, the endtimes aspect  
lying like a meadow just beyond the slope.

I got a good sense of  
your dream, and when I said

the swan structures were menstrual huts, I meant  
just: we do build and mark

the places we're allowed to inhabit.  
& all my life I'd wanted to be

the line between where "you" mow and where "I" mow,  
the little dip

where hip meets meadow, hill meets  
thigh. Travel well, dear swan

through your inner Ireland.  
If we're standing on one hill

we stand on a thousand. Think:  
beyond this height no human tear

can slide...Whoosh. After all this time,  
I cry because curves are a miracle.

### **How Are You Feeling**

I'd look into people's windows, imagine  
myself into their bodies – and then I thought, no, I should  
be fully me, me only. I went home. Just that night a burglar broke in and  
robbed me at gunpoint. The lesson was: don't be too  
dogmatic in your practice. You can still  
have an imagination.

is what I remembered a master  
jogger told me in a dream as my legs crumpled into brown paper bags or  
shreds of  
oh something – right after I woke up to check on you  
awake in the night: your stomach hurt

really I was afraid that while I slept you were  
reaching after some kind of beauty  
I couldn't put my hands on. And you are  
you're

holding up a blue flashlight  
as I write this down.

I could end this with “how are you feeling”  
since that actually matters. I could name

it “How to Get Started with Running” and get all  
pseudo Zen on you. Like that dream: too neat. Learn from it, though:  
just tell a story. Yes, but then I wouldn't

be doing what I am: dredging up these objects  
and wiping the seaweed off, rigging them up  
and praying that they work somehow, start the poem.

I just can't start the damn thing. There's nothing to end.

### **Merry Xmas in Heaven**

Not the pale choir-armies lined up and down clouds  
or the flush cheeks lining the pews below, crooning  
the same tune on earth as it is in

Not the goddess, delighting in own folds, mirrored  
flower-birthing, killing own husband, never quite  
gay Not

the god listerv lady prays would shut the mouths of her fibroids. The  
pine roots palming shut the mouths of the dead. Not

“death” (not him), distance  
everyone eventually will ketchup, none of them no. Can. Answer. This  
little Post-it note, vintage snow trimming on a sadness-stone, so

“Birds of a feather. Second wind.” Say something stately and  
let it slide that you don’t... Don’t tell the chimneysweep.  
Don’t tell the orphan. Don’t

tell the rose you don’t believe in any of them

Don’t look that rose in the face and tell it you don’t believe in it. Those  
things. They’ll make you cry

schmaltz and schaum when u  
hold their fragile & don’t hurt them. See how I’m holding you  
puppy and not hurting you. See how you’re hurting me instead.

It hurts me to imagine you  
To not squeeze your fuzzy body to death is to let myself live and  
that hurts. Puppy, you’re Santa and you live

You’re that little orphan leaving a yellow  
Post-it on a gravestone: Merry Xmas in heaven  
Daddy. It hurts me to imagine you, orphan

but worse, you’re real. It’s snowing harder now, good nite

No, no, I won’t copout, I’m still  
here. I love u and it  
hurts. & though whole religions

have been willed by people  
who couldn't stand the sight of an orphan  
or to leave a puppy unprotected, I'll try this instead:

I'll stand here and look at you  
and invent nothing

### **A Baseline**

Greet death, Yasmin whispers in her mother's ear. She lies behind her mother in bed as she whispers, then rolls onto her back. Her mother silent, still, pale. Yasmin rolls forward, leaning over to whisper — I remember the beauty contest — the new bathing suit — the chair wrapped in foil that became the beauty queen's throne — the hose to wet me down so I'd glisten for the judges — your smirk through the whole thing — I was the only contestant — but you told me there had been others — on other days — all the finalists would be judged separately — I the last of the short list — you hosed me down — ice cold — I stood shining in the early morning sun to be evaluated — other judges couldn't make it — six-volt batteries usually used in lanterns — and wires running to the chair throne — you announced me the winner — a bit premature perhaps with no input from other judges — but they're sure to agree — I couldn't suppress my smile — you crowned me with a tiara — wires connected to the back — and seated me in the throne — electricity ran through my little body — you laughed — I stopped allowing people to see me smile.

---

Her mother wakes up, screaming, Too much too much. Cut me cut me cut. Yasmin pulls up her mother's pant leg, slices her inner thigh with a blade. Blood straight without arcing, shot up in two thin streams. Her blood hits the top of the pale walls, even the ceiling. Then two more streams. Yasmin puts her arms around her and tells her she's going to take care of her. Blood drips down her mother's legs, off the bed, pools on the floor, off her fingertips. Thank you. Thank you, her mother whispers. She quietly sings, Blood will lie on the cabin quilts / blood will flood the hold / blood slips along the bridges / old blood / stinking fish in the new bright sun / blood lifts into the winds / droplets of blood flowing everywhere / our newborn sun glistening red / blood being everywhere does what it likes.

---

Greeted by a glossy eyed slumping child with a happy heart and plans. Her eyes half shut and wizened with a caution slouched so deeply with dirt, the morning heart shaped face, a blood curdling scream. Cells corrupted but dividing rapidly. Yasmin the Light whispers, If there's a chance for you to make amends, let it happen motionless. She lay as still as possible to rub fuzzy or tiny. Hurried calm plucked straight

from one mouth. Not the tender one.  
Quickly her turned orphan birthed a best friend.  
Wake up dressed together. Eat breakfast together. Wink from separate tables  
in the hallways. At night struggle to quiet long enough to stop dead and stare  
at each other.

---

Yasmin, next to her mother in bed, knife in hand, slides it along her mother's  
bare chest. No stabbing, no quick movements, only light tracing of her  
sternum and breasts. Circle around the left on the top side, cross at the  
sternum, underneath the right, circle around the top, back to the sternum,  
and underneath the left, the blade lightly grazing the skin. After several  
minutes, the skin is irritated, bleeds, then she's tracing in a groove.  
With too much blood to trace, she slides the knife along her mother's  
stomach, a figure eight until she bleeds. Blood covers the bed, her torso, drips  
onto the floor.  
Yasmin goes outside, up in the sky, explodes.

---

This morning, Yasmin the Light and her mother, girls with sad eyes, not  
knowing or sharing, speak of something else, but always think about it. Girls  
laughing, uplifted, a baby girl with green and white polka dots in a stone  
walled heart. Gorgeous and vibrant, no doubt a twin, not in the body but  
already in the heart. They will develop a baseline and always hurt.

### **The Ones**

Katerina looks like bees  
all along her chin and cheek,  
the ones I wish I had been  
there to help her wash  
mud from their faces,  
smudged and disembodied  
wing tips that shine  
like swollen rain  
and sun that spins the helicopters  
of dandelion fodder  
into sticky boats  
that wash up ear canals, out  
her mouth corners  
and how her eyes  
glisten against  
our reflections gazing hard  
into her seas of scars  
that abandon how grateful I am  
for every time I need  
to ask, Is it right my eyes  
should turn to dust  
at the sight of love in the shape  
of your holy-ghost back  
rowing the forest,  
rotten nights full  
of bees that sleep and logs  
that linger by fires we burn  
our bodies with stingers  
stuck in every heart's stump,  
the rounded way we go  
at each other,  
ancient holes  
a limb fills in  
gravity's theory of just how  
close we are  
to make the god particle bend  
towards hairs and skin  
and handheld brain cells,  
the tricky lightning,  
the pink surrender  
when lights dim dusk



take over clouds we wish to ride  
and the hands of gods  
that hold us gently in poison's  
trim, the devils eating  
our inner linings, the trust  
we feel  
as the sun cuts across  
the shadow of a bullet's gun  
pointed at the woods we sleep  
and meat we share in earth  
and work to live upon a rounder  
planet we will remove  
from us as the buzzing wanes—  
not even the ones remaining will last.

**Before the Mist Condensed**

Elephant is moving, taking  
us to better doctors.  
Her trunk knows the weight  
and smell of every body.  
She answers questions  
that don't exist  
yet. Did you find your answer,  
the one asking your name?  
Give her a hand,  
she'll keep your rain  
tame. She'll give  
back your calmer memory,  
the one you left  
at her feet. She's the you  
you think you are not.  
The one abused  
and loved and touched  
when no one is looking.  
You ride the hard skin,  
wire haired, cloud's hide,  
in the knowing that is  
as tender as  
the tongue in your head.  
These muscles of skin  
into mouth hole flex  
thought's inky milk  
into flesh  
dubbed the world. You hear  
someone calling  
behind a gray mountain:  
Hold your face out.

### **That I Will Listen to Until**

I'm doing it again, conceiving my own grammar, avoiding  
the hardboiled heads of law-masters. Every time my own  
turns to thought, I make mono-matter for the masses  
I imagine will break the mentality of just another day.  
This isn't to say I've got anything more than what's going  
for me. But let's not praise too soon the mighty men  
women aspire to – I take on my hunchback pack  
the menial jobs in a recession where others fear to kneel.  
Not to say those who hold back with macaroni and cheap nuts  
aren't inventing the new star splatter in the gaps  
of how this economy will go local post belly up soon though.  
We may even go a-bartering again. Some do something ancient then.

Remember the time you told me color comes alive  
at Carlsbad Flower Fields in a sea of stinking crisp flower blankets  
when the coastal hill becomes a handcrafted quilt? I had never  
been to California before. I didn't believe you  
until I read Larry Levis threw the editorial page in the street,  
watched him pull up Reverdy to see his knees and pissed  
on the bed of green hay stitched around the hill's swollen ankles.  
This kind of working farm subsists because someone has refused  
to give up the practice of peyote and painting in New Mexico  
when New York City was supposed to be her only meal ticket, at least,  
according to Steiglitz. She left there forever and found loneliness  
in the ancient wisdom called hope. Both remain pivotal arts to date.

But back to how words go together. We met over  
the new tsunamis when people became  
much like the black plague numbers. Except there were more  
expendables to date, so no need to call up the old country poor  
to burn and lime the body count. We began discussing how  
to rid the hillsides of ash and bone fragments  
as they were soon weighing the colors down and counting out  
Hollywood's insignia. Even the presidents' faces fell off.  
The Americans stood alone then on the global market,  
fishing for ways to get back the hatchets they once used at root.  
They, as in we, were considered contagions until  
the world wide web was torn asunder and barriers against  
nanobots improved. Our children's children echoed a nostalgia  
for concepts waning: half-drunk wine, smoky meats  
and the symbolic gesture of touch. A place where men wear

lime-green pants, brimmed hats, and candy-striped pullovers.  
They protested, But god does exist as much as angels  
and plans patterned by the local neighborhood board  
to live the two-kids-house-dog-college dream or  
any other golden fragment enlisted  
as the future Who We Will Be Then.

We will be then, but before it happens, we keep happening now  
in the Lemoncellos we sip, the late night gut aches,  
the false handshakes over business economies, the difference  
between pianos played, apples eaten and profits on paper.  
But we go better for the yellow fields rife with daisies that still exist,  
jeans that hint at splendor, the swell of an unplanned smile  
across a train platform, how the herbs and grains still feel as ancient  
and right as when we on afternoons go down to meet the sun  
at just the right angle, that space where we lose track  
of grammar and the cost of what it is to have  
not as much as the next town over, to bend closer and take in  
the way your bent arm smells in the long hot sun,  
opened by how the tiny soul fills out your skeleton  
with the warming sounds of blanket words that I will listen to until.

### **We Rode the Caravan**

This meltdown is the summer of  
my simultaneous demise & pick-me-up,  
much like the rebel Rimbaud went off  
to conquer the Arabian desert. I go by  
his partial example, and wink  
at the hetero-queens.  
I've known so many people in my life,  
but remain no longer my formal self.  
I'm future cricket, complete with aromatic  
arms germinating  
the neighbors' goals,  
holding out, culture gone off-the-grid  
without a profit year-to-date.  
There is no hope in such shallow graves.  
Nothing deteriorates.  
Let's mine the oldest ores, steal  
from the masters' shelves their shovels  
turned over like big butcher spoons,  
bloody marrow furring shreds.  
I'll go along with the license of a gypsy:  
cursed and free in the face  
of this city's gates, her advertisements  
on bus stops and dirt cab heads.  
Paint me with the muck of man  
as happy as if I were a man,  
but with the wall of so many not knowing  
crumbling into a black cat's path,  
I am torn asunder.  
I put the heart's crayon to bed in order  
to talk about the bricks of salt  
trickling down; I will finally treat violins  
and my back in the context  
of the coffin snap, perfect-pleated footnotes.

***from* Janus**  
**Janus and Stone**

Stone's office had changed since the last time the Principal summoned Janus.

Now it appeared a captain's quarters on an old boat, dark, dank, and cramped. Nautical memorabilia filled the worn wooden shelving, and from the rafters hung plies of old rope tinged with mildew. Tiny porthole windows ran at intervals just under the overwrought crown molding. The windows were black, like the black blood of fish. Janus watched for stars to appear, and they did not.

A sea fog patted at the portholes. The room smelled deeply waterlogged, slightly pickled. A sour smoke wafted from the dirty crushed velvet. What had happened to the polished tile, the marble, the babble of the fountain against the cool marble? Janus looked for the gleam of these surfaces in the cracks and crevices of the rotten quarters, but only salty drafts wailed out, sea tang, banshee howls. The tiger on the silk leash? The giant Turkish water pipe, the golden plates of dates? The half-clothed women lounging by the tear-shaped pool, the plums of smoke that hung in the warm circles of their mouths and the way their eyes followed you around the room? Janus determined the whole matter incidental to continued progress, and quickly put it away.

Stone was not around. Had Stone called Janus to the office, or had Janus just wandered in, maybe sleepwalked according to a dream of Stone calling?

Janus' uncle, an inventor and more of a talker than anything, kept saying he'd develop a machine that would allow Janus to monitor his narcoleptic spells and see when he had and hadn't slept. Janus thought that he could use that machine, as long as it would never record his dreams. Any of them.

Janus investigated Stone's desk. The tarnished flame of a hurricane lamp sucked away at a jigger of kerosene. Spread across the gnarled desktop were coffee stained maps of the school with troop formations drawn all over them. Oddly, the superhighway was not represented on any of the maps. The corpses of very rare beetles, some of them tagged by the leg, spilled out of an unmarked envelope as if Stone had scattered them to examine their features with some boyish thrill. Now they awaited preservation by Stone's leading entomologist. Janus flipped through a stack of police sketches of his classmates, clearly a random sampling as

Janus knew that none of the students portrayed were known rogues. Next to them was a letter from the sketch artist, thanking Stone for his interest in the free consultation – he hoped that Stone enjoyed the enclosed sample sketches based on the witness details and features that Stone had provided for each sample subject.

Mercantile broadsheets, ships' logs, weather charts and the cursive of shipping lanes and trade winds arrayed over reams of variegated blue. Photographs of the sea with coordinates labeled on the back. They all looked like the same photograph.

Janus ran the palm of his hand over the nicks in the heavy desk, fitting his thumbprint into a deeper groove. The grain was blanched and irregular as driftwood.

"Janus," Stone said, moving quickly through the room under cover of a luminous sea fog, "Janus, it's about this girl, your girlfriend, Cassie."

"Girlfriend, sir?"

"Wife, Janus?"

"Uh. I just met here a few days ago, sir. We spoke briefly, once, about the planet."

"Janus, huh?"

"Earth Club, sir. It's required."

"She's a troublemaker Janus. Focus on the Formula, that's why you're here. Don't worry about the requirements – you know I'll take care of all that. Hell, we both know you could graduate with a diploma tomorrow if my signature allowed it! Your classes are useless. The Formula, I say, The Formula – talk of the planet, Janus! – your equations will save us all! Now tell me. What is it you feel for in this girl Cassie, anyway, is it her heart or her brain?"

Janus loathed essay questions. He petted the brittle shell of a horseshoe crab and began to sway, to swoon with the chop humming round the ship, to push on the little door of consciousness as the portholes deepened their fish blood black and the fringes of a dream skirted the backs of Janus' eyes like the hem of a girl's skirt at the beach on a windy night.

"There's a right and wrong answer here, Janus. Which organ, by God! But fair's fair. I won't make you answer today. But if you're looking for a wife, may I suggest Katydid Clark? I know her father well, so I know she's certainly behind The Formula one hundred percent of the combustible way, Janus. She's of the earth, she loves the earth, and I have a good

feeling about the two of you. That's all. Now, let's look at your medical file briefly before I return you to class, just a routine check-up. It says here that your doctor reports you aren't actually capable of boy-girl love by the usual emotional totems?"

"What medical file, sir?" Janus said, still teetering.

Stone flickered and the fog around him shivered with interference. Wakefulness flushed Janus as he realized the illusion and the flight instinct dissolved. Stone had already left, leaving the holographic Stone behind to deal with Janus. But when had the transition occurred? Maybe during a microsleep. Janus waved his hand through the shaky projection of Stone as the recording continued: "Janus, if the file isn't already on my desk at this point, you'll need to remove it from the middle file drawer, section J, open it, and then follow along, okay? Got it? Good. Okay."

The recording continued: "Additionally, your file provides a complicated profile of..."

Janus, nauseous, inched toward the door, nimble as he could while something like waves – delta waves - rocked the ship in swells and spasms.

## **Janus and Cassie**

Janus and Cassie walked to The Corner Store to get away from the house and the people inside it. The Corner Store wasn't actually on a corner, but another small island. Janus felt the island move a little when they disembarked, and the harbor: a shifting mess of rebar and rattan. But otherwise the store looked like a corner store. Men in bare feet leaned against the grimy glass, eyeing the payphone and chewing their moustaches. *Beer and crawdads special* was scribbled on a cardboard sign duct-taped to one fluorescent window. There were pop country songs on used cassettes arrayed in a spinning wire rack, some of the tape spooling into curlicues. The wide brimmed men on the cassette covers looked like geniuses in their own right. Or that was something that Cassie told Janus, anyway. It was deep, deep twilight and it was like it'd always been twilight.

Cassie led Janus through the confusing aisles and their canned meats and syrupy fruits and bandages, and on to the bright yellow counter, where a particular sort of woman, whom Janus saw as emblematic of the local culture, rang up. *Emblematic of the local culture? Who'd put that there?* Janus counter-thought. Janus had apparently thought it, but he didn't know what it meant. It was an unsolicited thought. He hadn't been on guard.



Once when Cassie asked Janus if Janus thought he was his thoughts, Janus said maybe, but that he wasn't sure that his thoughts were always *his* thoughts. "They belong to science," Cassie said, and laughed, and then in a sterner, calmer voice she demanded that Janus also laugh. Janus tried.

It had come out more like a sob faked for sympathy.

Cassie pushed two sarsaparillas across the cracking counter and asked for a rumor from The Rumor Can. "All out tonight," the woman said. "Don't give me that look. It's Friday, what'd you expect? Rumors are gone by seven, every Friday, you know that."

"C'mon Pam. Nothing in the back?"

"Tell me about the boy," Pam said, "and then we'll see if the gossips turned anything in late."

"Well he's two grades below me but he's a scientist and his Formula's gonna make it so we can keep running our cars forever, and even The Principal thinks so. Isn't that right, Janus?"

"Well, not necessarily, see -"

"Well that's something!" Pam said. "You know, I think I do have something leftover in the back." Pam eased out of her throne and disappeared behind beaded curtains. She returned with a slip of paper about the size of a fortune cookie fortune. "That'll be ten cents," she said.

"Prices are up," Cassie said. "Used to be a nickel didn't it Pam? This'd better be a good rumor."

"It's your standard rumor, Cassie, nothing more. I clipped it from the wholesale sheet. The extra nickel's my processing fee. Now don't tell anyone and run along."

Cassie explained to Janus that when Pam said "run along," it meant she was done talking to you for the evening, and nothing doing, buddy.

"Buddy?" Janus said.

They left. The swamp was sickly lit by the store lights. Cassie donned her waders and waded through fallen petals and scum to retrieve her skiff, which had come unmoored and was floating into the green, one mute lamp blinking through the shaggy moss.

### **Chihuahua**

The skull's a magical land  
The skull's full of snakes and uranium  
The skull's a centrifuge, a language  
It's a bone that whitens in the sun  
I put my ear on the street  
I don't hear galloping horses  
I don't hear locomotives or Ferraris  
I hear the land  
I hear Cesar Chavez and Barack Obama  
Like raisedfists, like galvanizednails  
Feathers spew from my pores  
The feathers turn into blood  
And the blood rises into the sky  
Like a Ferrari, and I become a resplendent quetzal  
My skull becomes a resplendent quetzal  
My cell vibrates in my shirtpocket  
A snake vibrates  
The snake vibrates with uranium  
It vibrates with fists and nails  
It cries for its people, their skulls  
I want to sleep but have forgotten how  
I want to stand up but have forgotten how  
Memory's a living thing and, therefore, a dying thing  
And so is language and Mexico  
And so is Cesar Chavez and Barack Obama  
And so is Quetzalcoatl  
Who fabricated the Chihuahua from mouths and feathers  
Who fabricated it from galvanizednails and uranium  
Who made it resplendent and tenacious  
And bigger than its reflection  
And who gave the Chihuahua to the Earth  
After the Earth had been forgotten  
After it had been driven with Ferraris and fists  
And split from its people

**Privilege**

There were fissures in my teeth  
A barracuda swam the fissures like mercury  
I grabbed a fork from the sink  
And stabbed the barracuda in the memory  
The barracuda fissured  
It stopped fissuring then bit my heart  
I cupped my heart in my hands  
My heart was a sun  
Its memory was a sink  
Its memory was a fork then a pylon  
The barracuda was mercury  
Scissors then verbs then teeth then pylons  
The fissures in my teeth fissured the barracuda  
The barracuda had a mercury heart  
A heart of scissors and pylons and sinks  
I stabbed my heart in the sun  
I stabbed it in the fork then the memory  
The fissures in my teeth swam with verbs  
That bit with verblike scissorocity  
I'd never asked for memory or teeth  
Never asked for verbs or fissures or the sun  
For a heart or a barracuda  
I told the barracuda to get out  
And take the fork too

**Diwali**

My tongue spilled from my mouth  
I watched while red tongues tongued it  
My shoes filled with snails and rotten eggs  
I was on a collisioncourse with emphysema and diabetes  
There were small birds in the mapletree  
Blackbirds that sharpened their beaks on a kite  
I was looking through polarized light  
With a lightbulb on my shoulders  
The sky an incorrigible yellow chariot  
While clouds of mushroomclouds mushroomed in the sky  
Mom and dad covered themselves with macramé  
And covered the macramé with leaves and molten fingers  
Blood and nebulae rose in my chest  
And I could taste the past  
I remembered where I was going  
And how many blocks I had to get there

**Modern Parlance**

I hack into the mouth  
the mouth splinters  
the breath the blasphemous logarithms

wax leaches from the sun  
its aquifer its marquee  
its yellow bacterial flower  
that which can only be imagined

the aquifer the curtains  
that dent the air  
the air and the forehead which are one

yellow leaves hack the driveway  
into yellow leaves  
with yellow mouths  
that leach into aquifers

I breathe with a radiator  
I breathe the flowers that splinter  
where logarithms flower curtains bacteria

the mouth splinters blasphemy  
it imagines its yellow marquee  
breath radiates from  
behind the wax curtains

I live on bacteria  
on a logarithm a leaf a driveway  
whose flowers dent the imagination

### **Remember Your Future**

True: time travel is tricky, but backwards  
is easier than forwards because at least you know

the way. In my memory it is always autumnal  
and my weight approximately seven stones. Birds

fly in droves, dervishes to their bird god  
on their way to Florida, and in their memories

it seems always a season for leaving. I watch them  
hover above the temple where the police

officer stands guard each Sabbath. I watch them  
while I listen to someone tell me about weddings

where he comes from, how the groom must choose  
his bride blindfolded, from among her friends and

sisters, feeling their bodies one by one down the line,  
checking for familiars. When I say choose I mean

remember. When I say remember I can't forget  
Konstantin, how he asked to carry my purse

through the arboretum in July and let me know  
his mother is widowed in Kiev, though his father

is still alive. As far as he knows. As far as he can throw  
a stone. When I time travel, I go to Oregon and skip

stones with the boyfriend I left for a map, the sister  
who may one day stand in line at my wedding

to be caressed by the blind. True: when the seasons  
change, I get like this. It is a little like gymnastics

and a little like a pelvic examination:  
uncomfortable, routine, and sometimes

my life is at stake. I used to have a friend  
who got like this too, someone to go to yoga

with at the end of the world, but then  
she found god and alternative methods

of contraception, and now we speak  
in halting cadence, like women

from different tribes, separated  
by a river, a river filled with stones,

a river you could only get to if you  
were from Kansas and thought you could fly

around the waistline of the world,  
until you crashed somewhere

in the Pacific, never to be found.  
I feel autumnal tonight. Let's go

to the future, where our bird god  
lives, and ask for stronger wings.

**Veil My Desire Wished**

How many metaphors for beginning? A baited hook, a primed pump, a path that leads to every other path I no longer remember. How at every bend, I imagined you beyond. An exercise in heart's agility to quicken to its own precise fabrication. The vine I learned to cut, the wine I did not drink. The evening's entertainment a slow blur I politely clung to. Recounted in tomorrow's paragraphs with all the equivocating cheer of outdated epistolary. Belated modes of tenderness my warmest woolens. Call of the sparrow-hawk drowned out by my own mute vulgarity. I could not see what I did not name.



Bronwen Tate

The Beauty of Beings is Unlike That of Objects

A reflection as alien as if I'd placed myself in the frame of vision of a doe.  
If the essence of a bird is flight, lean a little farther out the gothic window.  
Your windfall staved back the norns, morning an array, a rain. One hand  
measures what the eddy reclaims, seems a grace along the third hill. Not  
every godsend is a bargain. His muse was a four-foot black and white  
iguana that stood unshrinking. Lucky break of the last elm branch. What  
the rumble seat lacks in comfort, it makes up for in vision.

Bronwen Tate

Each Sea Lasted No Longer Than a Day

Though sometimes her neighbor resembled her. I wore my plain skin like a grey felt humility. A packed chancel shoaled the silence. Profoundly overmastered by my will to tame. Is it a gentle thing, as when the fox asks? Thin tare that won't wash out. Carefully balanced counterweight. Vetch blossom pollen. Sweet sap of the apiary, I forget a scourge can be literal as a slap.

Nate Slawson

**birthday poem #2**

it's 12:31 p.m. & I still  
don't know what to do  
w/ my life I might move  
to Ashville N Carolina &  
take photographs of yr  
all-time greatest dresses  
or I'll eat a lightbulb like  
a lollipop there are lots  
of things I like about you  
yr hemline yr haircut  
the way darkness makes  
you smell like Xmas  
do you know I have a  
poem down my pants  
it's called "shotgun magic"  
& I hate it so much I am  
going to lie down now  
I want to fall asleep for  
a very long time because  
it never rains even tho  
it's my birthday & I love  
the rain more than life  
or death or driving real  
fast down Rte 47 at  
night w/ the headlights  
turned off which as I've  
discovered is better than  
chocolate cake or having  
a Dr. Pepper w/ you.

**To What Do I Most Compare You**

The image of man not the  
man itself    We tie you to the  
post   but let you go cause God is

not a metaphor

We know we know   the knife was blunt  
the ram caught in thicket   or a  
deer appears “in the place of” or

it’s   just   a   bead

of blood that will suffice   Synec-  
dochic day   Part for the whole   just  
the grizzle from the fat   stand-in

just how butter smells

just the lamb damage   ox crash   busted  
bull   You know that we know it’s birds caught  
in propellers   or how metaphors can

kill their look-a-likes

Susan Scarlata

**Oh So Invasive**

Oh jellyfish you are ever-  
where And dear white bears you can  
barely hear our carburetors

melting the ice caps

In bituminous humus weeds  
warm to our percents Thistle talons  
grasp ground like needles' suck Jelly-

fish is it your lack

of brain or heart or bones that makes  
your warm proliferation Like  
Adonis gardens are unfruitful

purposefully without

use Like he was born when the boars'  
tusks did rend the bark of a myrrh tree  
like they plant pleasant plants Like they

sow in sherds and shards

Susan Scarlata

**Sympathetic Magic**

Within Adonis' closed chest  
we are growing fennel and lettuce  
and other shallow-rooted things

on every flat roof

while pigeons above the turret  
gather and prune    It becomes clear  
that if I swept the sills the

Iraqi Oud

player in exile voted for  
Obama    That I'm saying that  
I'm frangible    wanting difference

Toothing cuticles

rubbing my fists with eyes    A child  
learning to snap    a tree starting  
to sap    On the eighth day we hurl the

greenery to the sea

Susan Scarlata

### **Married Thinking**

He said over my head like it  
was under my chin and meant out  
of my league with no inclination

that one of these

clichés referenced the body She  
said the mark the sheets leave on your  
teeth or there is something between

your cheeks When wings

began to erupt from his elbows  
she said “I always thought your unborn  
twin would come from your throat”

He said something

about mitochondria That  
it was mitosis not meiosis  
but she could not tell the difference

any longer

***from The Opening of the Island***

On duller days I left the tape recorder on for hours. After dinner I listened to my coming and going. Maybe a maid would enter—had I left a light burning in the bathroom? Sometimes, I thought I could hear behind even the loudest moments, or most markedly during the hiss, whispered words, impatient breathing, a wristwatch.

As the nights grew shorter, I would sit in one or another of the stained and tattered chairs that lined the edges of the lobby. For me the evenings passed easily enough. For others the noise was deafening.



Some large swaths of moonlight spread out across the floor. I thought: this place *does* give the impression of having once been peopled. Maybe even several times, and who's to say with whom. Though I was not then, and am not now, myself a person, it was as if those people, through my own carelessness, had become me.

The inner had been flooded by the outer, and—the latter having demonstrably overtaken the former—I became my own voyeur.

Afternoons, I sat waiting for them to tear it all down. The inhabitants had already moved or refused to admit they were moving. All along the streets men were loading the rubble. For a while I stared out the window at an old iron fence, but soon it too was taken.

I pushed a small rock back and forth across the table. Tiny birds pecked in the debris. A front was moving in. Bursts of sky. Striped shirts. It was the end of a season.

There would be, perhaps, a bed, a nightstand. A lampshade with a small hole in it from the time I knocked it over.

As when, for fifty miles, I drove through nothing but sugarcane—long stalks that shuffled in the breeze—certain elements would always remain. I would, as more than simple relics, retain them or their effects.

Again and again, I began to sort out the mess. I couldn't. I had solved nothing. The lamp sat with its shade on the nightstand, right there where I'd left it.

Later, when I had put the island away in a box hardly appropriate for the purpose—being patched together out of cardboard scraps and contact paper—there arose a sense of absence in me, like the places in the fields burned away by drought. But even if I could have traced that sense to its source, my reaction would still have been to place it—and the processes, shortcuts, favored routes, chance correspondences, obvious mistakes, and not so obvious successes, by which I had arrived at it—into a box of the most flimsy composition, which I would never have opened, much less seen again.

### **I Like What You've Become**

After seeing the tree for the first time since it had become a tree, we gathered the animals around it, and from them began to practice ourselves in front of animals. *I like what you've become*, we tell each other. Our whole lives are as expensive as other people. I reach my arm around you. It is regular.

In the forest is the summer we are spending. Each day is like another day. From us, our predictions are worthless. We know we'll climb over things that might hurt us. We also know that if someone sees us, it won't make any difference. We go on predicting.

Against the trees, we are more likely to take the shape of our mystery animal. Mine is a kookaburra. I become one. I can tell because you're singing the song about it. You aren't any animal that's familiar so we keep guessing. In the end, you say you don't think you're an animal after all.

**Some Coasts**

I sent it to two people to begin with in winter, in the four o'clock dark. And it didn't come back, and no one said anything, so I tried again and this time I sent it to four people after dinner in daylight and still nothing happened. I began filling it up with earth and planting it around the house like corn. But nothing grew. Still at night, I heard it in the roses, laughing like a calf in the moon time. I struck up its conversation and waited, but no reply. Half of it must have been swallowed up, I prayed to my mouth in the bed with its cold sheet. In the day, in the sun, in the way everything gets perfect, I saw it and the branches were touching it and everything was grey. So I kept like this. And I showed my guests because they had enough breath to still be there after. So they were. And they charted me and charted me and i left in the rain and grew old by the place that was its place.

**From Now On**

This is the right kind of location to entertain a thousand birds with a seed show. The man across the way is watching. He starts flapping his arms a little. I send him a paper airplane. He sends it back. Since he's old, the airplane doesn't reach me. I look at it on the grass. It resembles everything about us. He doesn't think this is about distance. I walk to the airplane and position myself before it. He sees the airplane and I together. No one else comes. I lie in front of it now and use my hand to fly the airplane around my whole body. I can feel him wanting to be the airplane. I laugh hysterically when the wind blows the airplane out of my hand. I turn to my side to face him. I watch him fly his hands all over himself.

***from Strays: A Love Story***

8.

Writer gives baby her cell phone.

Writer wants to distract Baby so that she can have  
a few minutes to write.

Then something sad happens and the story is  
swept up, like the mahogany floor of a Victorian house. The story  
is like a wooden skull because it creaks.

The story is not  
like a wooden skull because it will not crack.

The writer must breastfeed Baby,  
must change his mushy diaper.

The writer feels that her own story has betrayed her,  
has put the house up for sale, and she is not sure  
what she can do about this.

Baby has called Hunan province and spent  
36 minutes on the phone with the manager  
of a factory that makes stuffed bears  
who wear Ralph Lauren suits  
and plastic monacles.

Baby smiles for the first time, turns his head to his mother and says

“I love the horror of being virgin.”

“Tell me what Baby said on the phone to rack up a \$243 bill,”  
Wife says to the phone company.

“Give me all your bears.” Over and over.



9.

Husband flies to Wisconsin in an attempt to bring back Dog which he thinks will restore his relationship with Wife.

One day before, the media comes to his door to ask questions about Wife. He answers “I cannot discuss the case because I am a mute alchemist.”  
“Also, I am deaf.”

He finds Milton, fluffy terrier blessed with insight, on the horse ranch with Ellena who is reading him *The Italian*:

“Is it possible! Said Vivaldi internally. Can this be human nature! Can such a horrible perversion of right be permitted! Can man, who called himself endowed with reason, and immeasurable superior to every other creature being argue himself into the commission of such horrible folly, such inveterate cruelty, as exceeds all the acts of the most irrational and ferocious brute.”

10.

Mute things. Rotten meat. Analytic geometry.  
Prion diseases. Making love to the flu.

Sexual fantasies that involve George Eliot.  
A 2012 study which concludes

neighborhood squirrel deaths are attributable to  
antidepressants excreted in urine  
and infiltrating groundwater.

A bout of dissociative fugue can be cured if  
it is renamed *pilgrimage*.

But after it is renamed, our Guardian becomes  
an ambiguous figure.

Wife will come back. She's not really in jail.  
Guardian might be Dog or Writer.

Guardian will be renamed *gradual*.  
Gradual might be Wife, Husband or Dog.

Gradual will be renamed  
"Everything Here Dazzled Them."

The Guardian is not merely a guest of the forest  
but is master as

Writer is master of dog,  
is master of Husband is  
master of cashier is master  
of meat.

Husband is searching for an adventure  
of marvel. Thanks to magic,

Wisconsin, and the most beautiful oak shaped by  
nature under which he has found Dog longing

for the pantry in the house where Wife keeps  
the mouse-shaped biscuits.

11.

Mother was a tragic girl who

I think about every day, thinks Pediatrician between patients.

Never choke on words, she choked on words, never  
discard a scratched thing, she discarded her own life, the linoleum  
sun, twisting and twisting forever.

So this is why I am what I do

twisting the new mouth, prescribing. I love Wife's  
risks, wrists

uterus, underwear, and the structure of our  
cozy game, how it alters,

tears, surrounded by a depth, an  
untrue depth. My mother was a tragic girl,  
roped to her context: washing porcelain dishes with painted roses

Even though she'll never come out safe,

by this I do not mean she despaired,  
unless, I despair, I mean

things alter does Wife despair?  
Mother said wolves hunt but man is polluted,  
not like his skull.

O impoverished bone,  
time spins inside your  
hard case, spins wolf red,  
inverts red until it becomes yelp.

No, a howl. There where the sun implodes. Please  
go, mind, structure, tragic girl.

\*

This is a long semi-surrealist poem that uses lines from George Oppen. The Oppen lines are the italicized lines at the end of each poem. Each Oppen letter of the Oppen line is the first letter of each line of my poems. Thus, they are acrostics. I would like to thank Rebecca Hazelton who came up with this idea.

**XXII**

The assassin is loose  
I'm drinking a Diet Dr. Pepper  
Your boyfriend wants to punch me in the face  
for the sex I had with you  
in a dream The clock you never see  
Things are as they are(n't) An impending  
release A crevice in my foot The twin streams of  
my pee Links  
to whatever I just put on some bug repellent and it really  
seems to be working I feel so  
quasi-apocalyptic The body is a footnote and I'm my own  
backing vocal Progress at this point  
is a myth A record in words I trust completely  
in corporate media The end  
of the end A brand new century The part of me  
will be played by me Thus I'm not the only  
culprit in this crime If there is a god it's  
a microorganism When I think about my wife and children I wonder  
*how did that happen* It's all  
so overwhelming Not seeing what's here for amazement that it exists  
The field

where the plane went down   The boarded up sky  
Conflict is inevitable   An endorsement deal   A peal  
of laughter   Love is everything  
and nothing   Nature itself is a conspiracy  
theory   An inhabitation   In-immediate relief   The presentation  
that never ends   Irony, sarcasm, sincerity   Death, disease, infertility and  
unemployment   Am I east or west   Which way  
is down   The difference between  
morning and night is wine   Sometimes I get  
incapacitated   If I can't imagine an outcome  
I assume it means I won't live to see it   Old age   My children grown  
That was the frequency and this is something  
I had a feeling for   I'm envious  
of your hair   Its proliferation   Language  
Its accusations   Words in service   My face  
on your teeth   The magic boy rolls over   The happy girl  
eats her hand   Whenever I hold a knife I feel like  
using it   A life that's opposite  
The myths I operate under  
*Help is on the way*, says a button in an elevator  
*This message has no content*, says an email that was not  
successfully downloaded to my phone   My fingernails  
keep growing   The ceiling looks like a cantaloupe

rind   Memories to remind me of their impossibility   But I love walking  
around like this

An open mess   A look like maybe

I hate life   The proud purchaser of a new home

### **Someone Somewhere**

In close proximity to this talking me  
there are people sitting & then so abruptly  
standing in response to signals I can't detect  
then there's a vibration in my pocket  
against my leg telling me someone somewhere  
has a vital voice, a staticy message. I remember  
sitting here writing this as if it already happened;  
I'm forgetting tomorrow like a bad dream.  
There's a humming in my ribcage  
& a fluttering in my left ankle & the coffee  
in the mug in my hands reflects a bird  
circling overhead & if I swallow  
that flight I might just head south & nevermore  
will I return. I might just go for broke,  
spend my days looking up exotic words  
in exotic dictionaries for the new exotic feelings  
I will be having almost every second of every day.  
The next time someone asks me "How's it going?"  
I will seriously start to doubt this thing  
called society which depends on the inter-  
connectedness of all peoples & I will go away,  
live in a cave & use my own breath as money.  
When someone discovers me in my island cave  
they will say something like "Loneliness  
is expensive," & I will breathe deep to pay myself back.  
I'll exhale & there will be wings & soaring  
& it will all keep going on like this.

***from Bone Baby***

my fingers found my second  
mouth between my legs there was  
rust sitting up i saw blood flexed  
along each thigh wet sheets  
bunched about my ankles i  
could not breathe enough

i watched a thick ribbon of light  
folding into the room from the  
space between window sill and  
shade remembered you in our bed  
watching you sleep the sun turning  
its circle across your face i thought  
i saw your lids in light flutter  
pale awake

the pain centered splintering  
the bowl of my hips wide  
pressing my fingers into wanting to  
seal the space something hard  
and coming closed my eyes saw  
yours madronas green and  
strawberry bark

the sun's light on the other side  
of the house now before i held  
inside of me i had not known i  
was pregnant had pulled the skeleton  
of a baby from my body blood  
latticed bones

held its skull in palm looked  
into the empty pockets where its  
eyes should be the bridge of its nose  
the hollow cavity where nostrils might  
perch in the palm of my other hand  
sat its hips a split heart road of  
tiny vertebrae connecting hips to ribs  
thin as dandelion stems to skull

it examined me also arms bat-  
like across its ribs fingers tucked



under absent lips   exhausted   i  
gathered my baby of bone   fell  
asleep

woke strung in blood   sun's  
light into moon now   i got out of  
bed   ran a bath   bone baby curled  
uncurled its fingers about my own   i  
eased us into water   violet pulp left  
its bones   shone alabaster and  
smooth   it sighed   its spine  
settled into my arm cradle   watched  
the fragile cage of its ribs   rise and  
fall   hummed   following the  
labyrinth of bone   felt the leather  
weave of cartilage where the plates of  
skull had not yet finished   their  
fusion

when bone baby woke   it asked  
*who are you*

water cool i   stretched my  
toes empty and refill the bath   *i*  
*think i am your mother   i have been*  
*a spider and a mermaid   a jelly fish*  
*beast and tight rope walker   even a*  
*cathedral   a widowed hand   i*  
*was a murderer before you were born*  
i thought of these lives   cell through  
cell   *what was it like to be on the*  
*other side   of my skin*

*pink float   like a sail   of silk*  
*beinglessness   beached here*

how sexless its voice  
the liquidity of seahorses   this being  
buoyant wantless   lulled by slow  
body   palpitations   i had known  
momentary wantlessness  
homelessness   the act of beaching  
of breaching   i missed you

i looked at bone baby   how  
somewhere in the space between  
having

and deprivation    it had grown  
without my feeling it

next morning    my left arm  
hammocked bone baby    looked into  
its ribs    saw the stretch of my olive  
skinned arm on the other    side i  
thought of skinlessness    *do you*  
*hurt*    bone baby looked at me    *i*  
*mean*    *do you feel*    *anything*

*a humming*    *the swimming*  
*of a fuchsia snake*

thought of the snake    carrying  
light and skin    the pulp of sound  
how none of this would be contained  
by walls    of skin

*tell me your felts*    bone baby  
said bringing back    the chair the  
kitchen curl of light  
looked into the ribs again  
thought of my own    *my*    *felts*

*yes*    *the things on the other side*  
*of your skin*    *that i cannot see*  
*tell me their stories*

the fingers of my right hand  
migrated throat to    breast  
thought of the place my heart should  
hang    *yes*    bone baby    said  
*tell me that one*

*i don't have*    *a heart*    i said  
*in its place*    *a white hand*  
*fingers loose and curled*    *she used*  
*to claw up*    *my throat*    *out of my*  
*mouth*    *at night*    *she hasn't*  
*moved for years*

*she did though*    *at night*  
*there was the stretching*    *then the*

*coughing up of my own heart  
and while my limbs would lie dumbly  
next to a man's she would come  
crawl to him open his mouth  
find his heart listen there was  
never anything i could recognize  
just plain blood i don't know where  
those men are now i'm afraid  
she may have killed them i  
think she likes to kill them*

*i got up gathered a blanket  
my sewing kit tool chest into the  
kitchen i laid the blanket on the  
table bone baby at its center i sat  
down*

*what are you seeing behind  
your eyes*

*she made a man once  
one night she crawled up out of  
my throat away from me  
dreamed she took herself to the beach  
went back and forth along the shore  
bearded with shells and seaweed  
carrion-crabs until she made a  
man lined the sand with pink  
shells for bones laid a crab heart in  
his shell ribs i didn't realize what  
she had done until one night while  
he was inside of me my fingertips  
found his cobbled spine and i  
could feel the scalloped edges of  
shells beneath his skin*

*bone baby on the table  
watching me watch my hands  
in my lap was a tiny hand i must  
have sewn while speaking  
sewing box open fanning out onto  
floor threaded needle at my finger  
tips*

*the sewn hand began to move  
as if it had just found its finger  
joints slowly across my lap toward  
the tool chest took out screws and*

hinges    took out a small    saw a  
drill a hooked clasp    laid them  
on the table and    began to work

          saw and drill and screws    it  
made    bone baby's ribs    into two  
hinged doors    the hooked clasp to  
close at its    middle    and when it  
was done    the tiny hand    opened  
the ribs    and closed them leaving  
itself perched    on the other side

### **Anguish**

Nevertheless, a branch, we say, and it is harder to say who means a branch. It is harder to tell what is happening, and I don't even know what it is. I don't like that word either. It can never mean a branch, though of course I can say it and mean a branch, the way I intend to go back to old innocence, not the actions but the actual time. I have no fucking idea how I will do this. Situations preposterous enough to warrant cursing: that is what it means. Meanwhile, a branch. On the other hand, a branch. A branch in both hands with one stone. A branch fucking a stone. All of it creeps into this, though I don't mean it at all. I mean a branch, maybe a branch full of it, not full of whiskey, but a branch I dream soberly, sorry, silly.

**Umbilical Asylum**

What's left after the roof leaks  
binds its hide to the air  
I did not believe in thinness  
as I did not believe in deceit  
Though the door flung  
downward into a river  
close as feet  
or afoot, hidden  
until I came upon a street light  
while out to find a phone  
Dogs undo a blessing  
I'd thought en route to the door  
your father bought us  
who is no more  
a clod of clay  
we don't know anymore  
I go looking and will throw  
myself into when I am gone

Allison Carter

**Words No Words**

Creosote words have long lives  
cover other words with a paper bag

It is snowing in Richmond  
so an email from mom  
full of snow words

an email from  
of no words

tethers that doorway word to fire words  
and dark dark  
sandy dark underground words

Allison Carter

### **The Neighborhood Spies**

They are growing  
(everyone through the window)  
irresponsible plants

and I am worried about the horse getting out  
the front door or through  
the nozzle open in the summer

then exit the canyon  
pit ditch  
on off on



Allison Carter

**SPIN**

Scissors to the globe for wrapping paper, a birthday, The China Resistance  
(in which everything possible is too far-away)

to flip, spin

which of which set  
is perpendicular, imaginary,  
worth taking a chance on?  
so penny love won't be just

face-of-shine  
any-more?

### **Puberty**

I went to the corner store and the light turned blue.  
Blue light above the marquee, a fish tank  
full of scrambled refrigerator magnet letters.  
I got a pancake but the fork  
drove itself through the table  
into my prosthetic limb.  
I staunched the wound with the pancake  
and went outside. It was snowing scratch-off tickets  
in my skull. I went to the bank  
to have my hair pulled, but my girlfriend was there.  
The skull was dusted with sugar.  
My little sister came around the corner  
with a collapsible radio antenna, a stick, no a rope,  
her small hand the head of a blue glass ghost deer  
with some Disney on the end of it.  
Her eyes widened with sudden emotion,  
ants emerged from her dilating pupils  
and wove down her cheeks along snail trails  
like crumbling black tears.  
In the garage looking for a Kleenex,  
I found an empty box but no Kleenex, no Kleenex anywhere,  
so they covered her arms and she flew away.

Broc Rossell

**Primum Mobile**

white blossoms of your  
freckled countries

in the tail of a sandstorm  
glittering in the sun

gold from the mouth of the iris

*this region of my brain  
mere inches from you*

apricots among peaches  
ladders among trees

lines of this poem  
my tongue writes out  
on a windowpane

## Unlash Wheel vs. Ornery Ninja Elf



*Ugly* hardly comes close to the word I might use if I had discursive freedom. No, I might rather choose a word such as *grotesque*, *disgusting*, or even *monstrous*. *Lusterless* could drive the point home too, even if it seems to be on the nicer side of *ugly*. At the water cooler tomorrow then, I'll drop the word, and let it lie there on the floor, wriggling, looking at them all pleadingly. Soon, everyone will be forced to acknowledge, finally forced to acknowledge its—its. . . . Has it never occurred to anyone at all that this monstrosity—no, this repugnant, revolting, reptilian *thing* here among us has usurped all other conversation?

Worry won't fix our problem, nor will protest. How to diminish our difficulty, how to soon shrink it to pygmy proportions is our mission. Each hour brings us within a hop, skip, and a jump of a solution. Each minute, each second, each day positions us nearer an answer—but since worry and protest remain inappropriate and unsafe, that answer is going to be very quiet. Lowly answers are probably closer to correct anyway.

vs.

### Ornery Ninja Elf



Oh, come now, come now, you can't possibly expect me to believe that—. Relative to every other every, there's a—there's a—. No, not at all—no, at all, no. Even when you can't speak (especially when you can't speak), it's just that—well, it's just that I—. Right, I've never reconsidered even one single—. You must believe me if I say, if I should say—.

No, not at all—no, at all, no. If I should say—if perhaps I should maybe say—if perhaps—. No, all of it, you should—all of it—yes—each and every last—. Jump, you intoned—jump now. And what did I say—what was it I said? Even if I might say—or even perhaps if you might, because you might, mightn't you—mightn't you say? Laughter, lust, and like are like—and then are also like—but still, come now, come now—now—. Funny, isn't it, that I might say, and it might be said by—funny that it might be— isn't it—said?

Adam Clay

**Slow Dancing Around What I Really Want to Say**

A polite sky all crowded  
above houses crowded  
together too. Bones  
are breaking all over  
the Midwest at this very  
moment and we listen  
and we move in  
and hush  
the neighbor dog  
and hush our breathing  
and hear nothing.  
The South Shore Line  
does its job,  
curves around the lake  
and Up North there  
is water everywhere,  
the sky glows red  
like a firework out  
of touch with the sky,  
blood and fire born  
and meant for each other.  
Always I have wanted  
to say how symmetrical  
everything is especially  
if you stare at it long enough.

**Discovery On One Side of a Season**

I know a still clock, a quiet clock. I know the sleep of a clock  
to be not unlike my sleep. I know I am a customer of time, but it does not  
keep me from crossing a border with a passport that is not my own. Dogs can feel  
the rain  
before they see it, before we see it. I am a customer  
of rain as well, one who  
gladly purchases a reflection in the sky which tonight reminds me of a lake,  
but a lake of bricks, no lack of a brick anywhere in its great expanse.  
In the same dream (I know this might turn you away, but I have to say it), I  
put my ear to the bricks  
and hear a voice on the other side say  
“The wind which is the cause of our delay,” and I pitch my tent in the deepest part  
of the delay  
and wait and wait and find waiting to be the chain that drags  
you to the bottom  
and lifts you up as well. I do not know what is on the other end. It does not take  
a large area of land  
to provide room for a bear to thrive. A single tree, stretching out, can provide  
enough shade to cover any single thing you can imagine.

**A Purpose For a Plastic Bag Caught in a Tree**

My whole life I've believed it's a physical world. The input-level high on brakes, petals and precarious. You look off the bridge for a specific brown animal others see. But, like most sought rarities, it deprives you the sight of its *furtive* and reveals adjacent, better scenes. An upcoming, tiniest diorama. This contingency, from the other end of the box, feels fitful and hot. The blood-ox dying in oxblood dreams. And so on goes the bag flapping in the breeze, watched more than the river. That bag gusts like letters loopy above the dotted tablet line—h lassoing up, l d and t—indicating, according to the books, an intellectual ledge on which to rest, a recitatif. Plain ascorbic acid, the scientist says, washes the brain, a capture green with persistence and clarity, an oil-fine antidote to mud and vitriol. That's you in the spare, gold light of true listening, the calm mud walked in a light coat, in the cold where they say you shouldn't be.



### **Can You Recreate North Light?**

The Chinese say it's best for the house to face south anyway.  
That facing south while the moon uses its net to catching feelings  
explains a careening silver car. You can always call with the moon.  
We spin to its haunting sense of floating and dying, and why wouldn't  
you want to remake the one thing whose face never changes, that never  
turns its back on you, that only changes because it's a magnet  
for the passing of everything away? What's left when you step  
back, sideline the coffee, and imagine a rock is sheer as thread?  
There's a stance, hands behind back, to observing the incessant swing.  
In kindergarten, you learned never to lose the north, felt confident  
that unlike the others, you could center the word "house"  
on crème paper while the girls' and boys' words jumbled,  
squashed mosquitoes, to the right. So easy to shift from one foot  
to the other when you're not on the moon. The "H" in house stands  
firmly planted on its two feet; clogs like ours, a coat like ours, too.

**It Continually Interrupted**

A face that blinks back, such a dish.

Light winks like periwinkle insects.

A sun on snow, or an un on snow

three mittens up to block the glare, moonlight

a letter that reaches its destination continually

and lies unopened because to finish home is hard.

This slants at work spelling swaddle,

silk lying down to shut-eye, a luminous dream where

light is sweet, the job progresses, your man Earth

has arms heavy as you like them.

A dream of boulders can't settle its outlandish travel and look—

it looks up between trees solemn and watchful,

sews somehow this lack of traffic, the pocked world

lifted, pocked woods between Pullmans. A final

train. I catch glimpses: doe waters, moon burning a silver

fire on the sea. A cactus waltzes green flesh

from nothing, the loads pass quiet. They couldn't help but hint

right place, right time, the genius of a rolling purse,

geniuses of a dusty pearl rolling across the sky—

the universe going and the purses all open—  
the genius of stopping versus the genius of going

**Mirrored phobias, A miner—**

trouble climbing  
stairs.  
trouble with dirty  
whistles,  
with duty.  
gunpowder up  
the sleeves.  
two dimensional  
fear. presents  
in a box. almost  
each supertime  
a gift. pure of  
character. trouble  
with chronic  
masturbation. only  
the vices  
exorcised. trouble  
with railroad  
ties, how to find  
the neck. trouble with  
markers and colored  
in teeth  
and moustaches where  
they shouldn't be. trouble with  
absence  
of any kind, even  
responsibility. the bolts  
rusted out  
entirely, attached  
to nothing. smokestack-  
quiet. a string  
of distant buildings ground-  
sprung. trouble  
with noting  
important details. trouble  
in public  
conversation. a whirring  
of fan blades  
and engines chuffing. leave  
the ties, the sign  
reads. trouble  
discerning different

notes and colors—all one  
smokescreen. trouble  
with numbers  
larger than 1. held  
steady, shaved, not  
leaned on. beyond  
sound and  
construction. moving  
forward at a constant  
rate. plastic bags, people  
in plastic and people  
in bags—trouble  
with this. being  
carted off. trouble with  
distances and forms  
of measurement. one  
hand on top  
of another hand to  
the height of the building  
that holds  
the horses quiet. trouble  
with growth and  
contusions. there are  
only 2 hands  
all the hands come  
from. trouble with  
names and ideas. one  
thing is called  
something once  
and if it sticks, but where  
is the fixative? how  
does proper come  
to sound? trouble with  
people in large  
groups. trouble with  
taking off  
and landing  
and inescapable bodily  
functions.

Common  
perception provides a

disconnect—the cabin  
itself doesn't feel

like it's  
suspended in the air. Just the  
scenery

continues to  
move—flat and distant like  
on

a screen  
which you have the  
opportunity  
to turn off  
with a single motion.

wiring gone  
sludgy. trouble

**bradley beach**

1.

Each stitch of me is made of water  
the color and consistency she cradles  
my head against her tension's surface  
the waters call and respond splash  
and regret questions drag their marks  
around the sand like feet do prints

now a man on the jetty lifts his pole  
and the line snags seagulls hunch  
their sleepy shoulders into the sun.

2.

The front of her drips with sun or lotion  
and shines skin-naked in the store front.

Mourning the traffic of waves, a national disaster takes her back  
(newsprintpage).

More traffic in the waves: one into  
the next  
and all the crashes.

3.

How many sounds the bed makes.  
She places 'where' in between her fingers

to mould together a stretch of miles  
too far to drive. Hourly

our hands crease and if dampness sets in  
they buckle.

4

The way a body carries itself, cruising,

anticipates various habits. Mostly  
the kind that make dexterous  
movement a danger

to oneself.

5.

pick any number      wear this hat on a sunny day  
the one where  
you can never know anyone's name      O  
one true  
how shall I call  
once through  
your name  
the streets of New Jersey—hollering all of its mercies  
the gun muzzle, dogs  
barking  
at the steps or whining  
at last  
summer's discontent

I am sweat  
she touches  
when my side ends  
I am nervous  
puddle  
and

6.

Transplanted in geography, a natural tendency. The quiet  
mind keeps ocean sounds—it'll store up all of itself  
then hollow out like voices do, to form the shell  
that rests inside our ears.



Tony Mancus

**accident poem**

axe I dent  
poem with

metal fender  
meeting

plastic body isn't meant  
to fold  
like wet matches

the book snuffed. the book full of heads

a white strip of road

glitter reflection &

the fire there  
set to go out  
is any minute

axes & dents  
axes &  
hoodspark

a watch for the minutes  
its hands cold over  
the body, not mean

folded  
like to dream things

one bench pulled to the side  
the book full  
of fire in its white pages

a row of seating pulled from the middle

one match catches  
light scatter  
the glass  
isn't stars in dark water

how it shields the wind  
& stops

a noise grindlike & wailing  
comes fast up  
hill

**Before Anything Happened the House Had No Skeleton**

the termites had deboned the thing  
it was clean there was no saving it

in one bedroom a dresser with blue drawers  
its peg-legs rested on pure membrane

a girl just stood in her underwear  
ran the tips of her fingers over her ribs

thought greyhound no one knew no explaining  
why she didn't fall through the floor

the kids were drinking beer in the yard  
the tetherball rope caught one girl's throat

her mother's face obscured  
behind the porch screen the mesquite shadow

no one could make her out  
her feet rested on hot sashes of dust

the sounds on the television were far away  
as that big caliche mound looked like a waving man

the president got shot  
the boards stayed together for another three days

it was a matter of apathy or swelling  
or everyone was too hot to move

**This Grand Conversation Was Under the Rose**

the rose hung on a fishhook  
from the creel in her glove  
she flicked the thing like rapist bait

she leaned against her blind Clydesdale  
in a blind alley her tongue tripped  
weimaresque dietrich type dietrich type

like a man w/ top hat and tails  
she flexed her leathered fist you know  
she said tonight is coming on all virulent

and it was the grass was sodden  
in some beetleshell ink & turtlewax gas  
you know the horse snorted

you know said the half-clown  
who crouched below her on a soapbox  
I haven't even finished my make up

her tongue made a sound  
like a whip culled of freshwater eel  
she tightened the leash on her rose

**Night of the Hunter**

For ten seconds I sat inside the celluloid frame of myself  
throat negative/cut, strapped in the car at the bend of the river,  
hair filmed smoking down the undertow: in that way I waved and  
waved/was a lacy thing, couldn't use my hands—

saw a man leaning over the edge/a small boat:  
“that's not a goddamned gar.”

his shot tightens to a fist: H-A-T-E pans out its offal gloss, but I  
just dusted it off and climbed back into the uncomplicated skiff  
of my sex and thought nothing is hard, nothing is hard, blood-let  
back on the river with my baptized voice and my fresh fish gill

as I was  
saying: a modicum of time will cross my heart clean out  
-or- this is the religion the almighty and me worked out betwixt us

### **Keylight**

That a woman needs her own sung dividend. That you have been  
her child there is the dirt road uphill nearer home. When the  
courtship is done so too the flowers; when you sell a horse he is not  
coming back—no, you will not see his resemblance in a crowd  
face; put a carnation in your buttonhole. Gone

then's my hoof clatter, little dodger of the aftermath, prancer, shod  
& fancy edges less frilled by my knife work. A past is not your  
glory, you can dial it, speak evenly in your best gaudy house gown  
from Mexico once a bathing suit cover-up. She would hum  
Sundays cleaning windows, it'd quake. Where the gut lies there's a  
corncrib something silos. We go there when there's nothing save  
remember when you swung your skirts like give me reggae or give  
me, nimble spider of the clocks that are *first the warning, musical; then  
the hour, irrevocable*. In a dream was a bug on my thigh & he flashes  
in to sweep it & I wake suddenly hip-strange, scratch a little. This  
can stand so as a parcel to buy

up & hole. With hydrangea (flower store), cauldron of deer horns  
(local botanica), from which I chant country-country & think how  
Ina Garten sprinkles powdered sugar on every last strawberry in  
the still of get your gun right. Minutes by fingers, mother (am I  
wrong again, my choosing) step,

the city can too be an anthem, though I'm farther now & rootless  
from. The man chooses not to see outside of, says my mood's this,  
whisks the eggs. An otherwise performance would be a negation of  
hands into birdcage from which the rose trees grow & so might I,

two feet alliance. Fail there & the aster is red sleeper; asters can be red & all October her laden. Since forever is today & today my horse a bike, I call her person, 'we'—we go to visit the Brooklyn Bridge. It is ten miles or so roundtrip & since I'm country I smile at everyone, dust off my wheel hoofs & think winter similar to marriage. Al no one can stop their lives to save yours—no: the topmost is a keyhole, everything is buttressed; when you sell a horse he will not come back. You're calling & she smells of flowers, her face down tall in the water vase.

The home is an innocent space, it can have nothing to do with what comes out of his mouth or hers. Maria what am I if not defiant?—little girl hurts, half bird uncupped, so much so murkier I'm hoping I'm made of fortune. With sheets tucked militant, drags til the sun or buses slumber, quiets the horns the way a drummer needs to place the sticks aside, must get a real job now; or for her country. I never took bystreets, could have sold the grainary, I would have burnt the barn & now our centenarian bridge flops over onto the other side's buildings, rolls over like my horse dirties its back, say what the lord? Bless, lord. What else then have I not tallied?

The moon. Make a poem about the moon in which you do not mention its colors too rich suggesting a break into patterns so paisley-legged you can't find your way out of. Mother gets tired; she is a cordage that tauts me upright, unnecessary. He gets drinking says my mood's this & can't see outside of—stores cucumbers in the cabinet: my phallus there-there now. A woman needs the phallus of. Tucks the cucumbers into bed, be well, one day I'll count on you to get a job & be comforted.

**Dependencies**

(wherever you have irritation there is likeness)

school never ends.  
the amount of Elvis working Philadelphia--  
--Memphis allows full buoyancy.

set the river to music amid the localism  
your pink shirt reminds me of.

may every little thing be concomitant with desire.  
it is not so much a refutation of love  
as a refusal to engage directly with things.

the little courtesies breached this often became artifacts  
to old Los Angeles.



Jeremy Czerw

**Pattern**

the principle of light being what it is  
and so lovely to live inside of this,  
our private house  
with perforations sunk into the soil  
at regular intervals, and a sidewalk  
just beyond that, its concrete squares  
like pagination—the separation in  
memory, of memory, between  
incompletely discrete experiences

***from The Concrete Fields***

If inside, they feel out, it's  
desk confessions and resolute,  
not surmountable weather but  
what they believe, if  
it breaks, goes into a person "I don't like it" followed by  
"someone likes it."  
The computer loops the "Lumps" song  
and the ashtray floats,  
ashes predict  
future housekeeper, future dishwasher, future veteran, future manager  
later one says "I don't like that." It's out  
and in the hot tub. The foreign taste  
bud function cups liquid mashes  
from the refrigerator  
to the bud inside  
each prefers a different "I like it"  
followed by an argument followed by brie and bread.  
Delicious,  
the cat walk  
the lime beer toast  
the empty street.

The nine alleys of hell ringed with confectioner's trash  
 rooted sticks                      frozen, frozen                      puddles,  
 burrito wrappers,              back doors cracked,              cracked plate glass,  
 bleak brick under thick power lines,      slope to the bus  
 station.

Fringe wetlands sprout the community college.  
Math sipping Beaver beer  
in aerosoled fryer grease,  
home over

Concentric creek fire action, paper mill puff,  
and lower level mercury bay  
from a Saturday bench with a comic book.

no alleys of hell, just pines

The overlooking-the-bay friends say,  
and book stores.

Hillsides swallow houses, horizontal direction detections the hills take away  
across town out.

Passing latitudes a problem no matter what holiday.

The cars hedge,  
no mossy corner to smoke, no overhang,  
longitude to wait out the rain.

Yards buried in the lawn,  
cords of coax, fiber optic between them.  
They say to the utility fence  
“oh, cinderblock” and spray it white.  
Plans for the hinge and gear door frame  
could hammer  
a new tongue and groove  
to scale, to each other.  
Shrub approval arrives  
from The Neighborhood Federation.  
Bindings of bright children objects  
and divorce from collocations  
frame them.  
Edged visitors threaten  
their blood, grinner, and hook snell knots  
with casual omelets, stir fry. Dust cakes  
the “most consecutive neighborhood days” award.  
They tie holiday linen  
to the curtain rod, let it out  
the window, one story—  
they never wash the linen.

***from OdeIS/HeIs***

Roots, then limbs considerably tall for reaching. A hero's blend of mighty resistance and sloth, a distinguished perch for carnivores masticating thin ham and gamey cheese. Bent hawthorn or ash. Elemental, so a new start for genuine concern. Peak, do not emerge; do not distinguish yourself from clouds; dissipate, gently, into an image of blithe synecdoche fluttering into consciousness.

Satan, Satan! Poor tall devil  
In ideological hell  
Sanctuary of reflection  
Cleaving to the phallus above  
Embrace Real queer revolutions!

Mt, (hallowed) hollowed and pierced with roller coasters, screams, they scream the wind through you. Rise again in counter-measure. Earth, shake.

Markers declaring Zeus' mandate of hospitality indicate situational applications of mythic theory. The traveler had more power than the homeowner. Unknown, though, is which preceded which.

\*

The royal colored hero wakes in an initiation of youth. Perils and transformations go unrecorded—nothing is said of the hero's youth blossom in adventures of forest and animal. Like a drunkard further and further into shedding a bottle and grows bolder and bolder with words, just so the hero's youth puzzles pubescence away

The fragmentation of a discipline into an array of specializations is preferable to disciplinary infighting. For example, folklore (pattern) is resistant to psychoanalysis (aberration). Since each discipline recognizes Oedipus as a patterned "type," Foucault would argue that each discipline struggles to own the power rights to the Oedipal pattern. Queer theory suggests this struggle is based on (via Foucault) the individual discipline's acceptance of the patriarchal normativity of male-female marriage rites.

in a secret society. With secret signs.

Acorn  
Thumb  
Conch

Pith

The Alchemist's stones  
Golden shiny stones  
Ore tender to gold stones  
Hung heavy to make  
Must gold the stones  
The Alchemist's gold  
A sweat study in man  
To gold the stone in gold

\*

After the hero a stoic gaze convincingly plunders the windy still life. The bright grass angel lay on departure identical to the cloud-hang torn by the peak. Footfalls sound an aslant strike.

... discernable teleological patterns of history no longer occur. As when Nietzsche broke Hegel's dialectic with synchronicity.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the replacement of a linear model with a spiral one still demonstrates the resistance to a synchronic and somewhat chaotic notion of time and history. Myth *is* entwined<sup>2</sup> in mythic, mimetic, and ironic modes. There is no need for a return to myth when myth, and myth theory, imply an underlying mythology of mythological patterns, as myth shows.

Full-grown at birth in the avalanche (winter's returning snowperson, cyclic initiation in snow) the hero emerges to a twang of tambourines bursting to coins. An open account of a lifetime, a limitless line of disasters.

The sop-eyed prophet  
(Denied gender)  
Warns the wrinkled king:  
(Rising phallus)  
Beware the children!

To the swan sky a kiss and such tender lips through the cracks and crags of the ice field with an [twitch, drag, tick] ah.

---

<sup>1</sup> Later complicated by postmodernists, coined the "polylectic" by Hassan.

<sup>2</sup> Myth, it should be noted, is married to all forms of theoretical and applied sciences and philosophies.

**Colonial Footnote Apartments**

...thus are the colonial footnote apartments  
conventional enemy of the unconventional  
very late at night for fascist music and no heat  
Judah line taking its sound of bending metal away  
it feels like an eyelid closing on your shoulder  
mistress encinas practicing la spank on her girl  
ceilings not ready for us when they started  
accepting working class feet and their friends  
incoming communiques from edgar laporte  
which read like a feint scratch on the eye  
you could touch this residence on any map  
the righteous thinker waitress embezzler  
has taken her luminous babies to the bar  
my face held up all day just thinking of it

Gary Sloboda

**The Interior Life Of Conference Calls**

look where the voice is

right between and on  
the other side of her head

if one looks straight  
it's the wall

and down  
the ditomaceous carpeting

reminds us of feet  
how the dull patterns  
predominate

in the vacuum of speech

defining principles without legs      or tendon

or dream



## The Bell Tower

The year of vodka and kissing of hands  
the sun draping its enmity  
like a shawl we must wear.

You can't  
cross through the alley with the barbed fence and there are too many  
assholes on the next street. Even the bus

can't be entered without shoes --  
                                they are holding their own kind  
of séance in there  
and won't touch the ground.

The sound of door closing wasn't worth it, our departure  
shapeless as an errant cloud respooling  
into other clouds.

(When I have your ear how does it feel?)

On the railings we read the decorative code that lulls us  
like porno lights or shadows  
thrown by burning socks.

The angle must be adjusted. Embarrassed  
birds in the ear,  
an ironic saleswoman with a litany of features --

a cape to fly in  
bare rooms  
blended with daffodils  
and red dust.

The sway of her hips a kind  
of sustenance, a forced wheat.

**The Seventy-Fifth Meditation**

Raised on the platitudes of conventional style  
and moved on, twigs

a knife fight beneath feet  
along the mossy wall of the converted

convent, its shawl of leaves  
shifting almost imperceptibly.      What is

passed off as solitude --  
casting one's eyes away

from the teeming crowds  
shoveled by days

to soak in a tub of hydration --  
is something to buy.

When Terry Waite spoke  
after his five year captivity      a reporter asked  
what he had learned,

to which Mr. Waite responded

that society has lost the ability  
to engage in productive solitude --      O, the way

that makes me measure all  
five senses, moving among others  
through the void.      as if on a string

*from Circus*

For every blade of grass, for every name  
removed to stone the Q. Shot through,

air shot through. I wished to save the one  
who'd fallen before us, the astonishing feat.

I'm on a train, I'm on a train to work  
far from the stony ridge obscured in light.

For a time I left the interior scene, what  
nesting-place surrendered for the curtain,

greatest show from my seat. Such comfort  
I opened the flue, thought like a blue shirt.

To breathe full measure beneath some trees,  
to reign supreme in the serpent kingdom.

When each letter woke it entered a tunnel  
for the wreckage of the world. Q took fire  
  
for the fallen Q, I was a bush but I was not  
burning. Yes, Q rode a camel to the store  
  
& returned with a wedge & its sad parade.  
Or a flag with a few less stars. I didn't speak,  
  
I grimaced like a supreme test of merit.  
Not a summer evening, nor did the voices  
  
come to pass. Q rides a camel to the store  
but that is not all we heard of Q. All day  
  
I stood inside the city's only movie house,  
which is also this pile of cinder, & bricks.

On the screen a building falls & falls. When  
buildings fall I look as if looking up a skirt,  
  
for there is no beauty like it. I pass a picture  
on the stairwell, my name maybe your name,  
  
my name maybe Q. It takes no little truth:  
to be a brick homemade, to say my captain  
  
treats me well. I pined for news, for a word  
swung like pendulum. Like a sequin or screen.  
  
When the first Q arrived, children opened  
their hands. I pass pictures in the stairwell  
  
taken in the building, then the building fell.  
I looked closely, carried it through my chest.