



Middlelost

Middlelost is an E-Journal Edited by Cory Massaro and David Need
All material is under the copyright of the individual authors, 2019.
Middlelost 1.1 Winter 2019

Contents

Intro —

Justlost — Editor's Comments

Measure

Andrew Mossin
Elizabeth Robinson
Liz Gray
Cory Massaro
Joe Donahue

Series (Ceres, Sere, Serin)

Bonnie Melton
Kim Lyons
Gabrielle Pflugradt
Mary Jane Gore

Miracles

Image Sequence

Americas

Dale Smith
Doug Rothschild
Tim VanDyke
Mary Yordy

Elegaic

Janet Holmes
David Need

Photo Credits

Contributors



Justlost — Editor's Comments

Cory, my co-editor, is in Zürich, and he's had out of town guests, so he'll write a short thing later — we've been scrambling to put this together. Cory's a former student — we read Sanskrit together for two years — a brilliant linguist and from Northern Ohio like I am, a poet. He's a year younger than my son, Sam, (who is living in central Ohio while his girlfriend is working on a DO degree), young bright guys trying to figure this bad plan called America much like I was 35 years ago.

When I said Cory and I were going to edit a journal, Sam, an HR consultant, asked me "what's the hook?" That's always been a hard one for me.

One of the things I've learned working with Rilke is that a poet or artist makes what I call "impossible space," not only in the sense of an image that takes up room and covers the sky or a wall, but because a person reading a poet or looking at a piece of work can find he has room for herself that he didn't have before. The artist puts out these prayers and they travel out away from her, and maybe even 50 years later, a boy reads her and discovers a place.

Tony Tost once invited me to his writing class as a guest "poet." He asked me why I write, and I said something along the lines of "I found great consolation in books and, after you read a lot, at a certain point you want to play in."

Two AM the other day, back from seeing my girlfriend in DC, I have started to think about writing this note, and I have to get out of bed, find an envelope to write on: I wrote that when I think of my persistence with respect to poetry it's that I keep making an effort "to talk to a world that doesn't in fact exist."

I wasn't sure what I meant by that — I know I don't believe there is actually no world out there. But beyond that, I think it says several things, and, after a second, I realized many of the writers we'd reached out to for this issue have a similar kind of persistent willingness. I don't know everyone whose work is in this first issue, but those I know are all beyond generous in their willingness to do this.

So maybe that is a starting point — talking to worlds that don't exist (yet or despite) — and the impossible space that makes, where there wasn't anything before.

If you know me, though, you know I always have things I am pushing, and the section titles are a brief catalog of concerns I'd bring to the table.

A few years ago, I put together a symposium on religious experience and writing; at a Q&A, Nate Mackey quoted a comment by W.C. Williams about the importance of **measure** — in the context, the sense was that maybe this was a sensibility that had been lost. I teach a class in Asian Religions called “Tai Chi and Chinese Thought,” and we regularly read the first few chapters of the Taoist classic *Zhuangzi* — the first chapter basically argues that to see is to see things from a perspective. An experimental poetics might take that thought toward the idea of either breaking down a current or normative perspective or trying to imagine a perspective that was suprahuman or total but my sense is that the text wants us to acknowledge the operating constraints. To me, that is where measure comes in — like Tai Chi, an attention to measure establishes a specific line through time, it admits to considering that line, not because it's a better line, but because we see better and have some new space when we try on its difference. The discovery of useful, meaningful and careful measures and shapes remains a desideratum and something about Williams' remark makes me think he is not just interested in the new, the thing that breaks the mold or any total field.

*

Series (Ceres, Sere, Serin) marks a second clump of grass I keep tugging at. I'll write a longer essay later to try to get at this more fully, but for now I'll say that I am interested in what I call shape-shifting, a thing that happens in the mouth or where pressure is applied (like bending a note) and the work that introducing this kind of difference and pressure into a line or surface produces.

In India there's a conceit called “twilight” language that is used to explain tantric poetry. The thought is that the poet's language refers to and shapes out two topoi (two different worlds of discourse) — twilight because the two worlds meet or touch in the words and mingle, like night and day. I am interested in the thought that language, like people, is doubled, layered, splits and frays, and that we get at this, we say this to each other, in different ways.

Alice Notley's work is the closest to my sense of what's possible when we focus on this feature of language and image. In her work the pressure is often on syntax, but it seems to me the pressure can be applied at different joints and by omission as much as mark.

*

It's said that Thomas Jefferson cut all the **miracles** out of his copy of the New Testament, which I think is too bad. I can't say what actually happened, but I live in a world where anomalous things occur, and so it's always seemed likely to me that strange and impossible things happened around this Jew as he wandered and taught, that people got that at least right.

When I teach, I use the term "anomalous experience" for events that occur to someone that don't fit the schemas they have for how things happen. I call these "anomalous" instead of "religious" because I don't know if we can say exactly what happened — what I do know is that they happen to people and that fact should be a part of or anthropology.

So, there'll be some nod to the miraculous anomaly — which is something I think poets and readers are likely to have sussed out anyway since they happen.

*

During one of the intense flights of writing while working on "Goodnight Irene," I wrote "I come from the North Woods of Maine to speak my peace against this beautiful Union." I've known since I was a teenager that American exceptionalism is a lie, that the wealth of the country is built on violence and theft. Our self-understanding, our sense of what we are doing with each other has to start from some acknowledgement of what Dale Smith calls "the catastrophe of the New World." I am not against government per se, but I do think we are willing to lie to each other. I don't think the kind of freedom we imagine is our right is either realistic — I don't think human beings have that kind of freedom because we are creatures and not spirits — or without consequence. But boy do we insist on being able to *act* like that freedom is possible.

I don't know what the outcome of this long disaster is, but I do know it will be related to our bodies and to the fact that our bodies are on this continent. It's not that there is an essence, but there are the weights of time — the rocks

along the shore of Maine or the flat, increasingly ruined prairies and our shorter
.lives that make fast shadows across the surfaces

*

And **Elegiacs**, well, I once saw a panel at a conference on religion and theory back in 2003-4. I'd gone because I really had like a book by one of the speakers — Amy Hollywood. Her book was “Sensible Ecstasy” and was a gender critique of the way in which mystical experience was constructed. She used Irigaray among others to argue that the depiction of mystical experience used gendered schemas that linked male to spirit and female to body to think mystical experience must have no sensuous content / be a kind of “not-knowing.” She contrasted the tendency to present male mystical experience in such terms with the reports of women Christian mystics to show that “mystical experience” was not necessarily a-sensuous.

This is one of my favorite topics, but suffice to say here that, in her talk, Hollywood made an effort to depathologize Freud's “melancholy” arguing it might better be seen as a form of loyalty. My memory of the talk is that the lights were dim and that there was an intense depth of feeling activated in the room — a quiet sense of being both apart and with.

The next speaker was Zizek, and it was like someone had asked him to make a demonstration of Lacan's *phallus* — suddenly the room was over-bright and all the distributed attention generated by Hollywood was suddenly focused on this one — fairly silly — man at the front of the room.

I thought then I knew whose party I belonged to. In America, we don't let people grieve too long, but maybe that is just another one of the ways we are asked to give away our selves. If melancholy and grief are forms of loyalty, it is possible that, like any solidarity, they threaten the consumer economy by suggesting something other than the make-and-sell marks time.

And there's John Climacus, a 7th century Christian monk, who says something like “if you are not grieving every second of the day, you are not paying attention.” It's severe, but on point.

So my queer shoulder thing, as a student of Rilke, is to say it still seems worthwhile to “hold a basket of ripe fruit through the endlessly open door,” of the grave or the day.

*

These are not the only herms Cory and I will stake out to mark the wind. We are interested in serializing / serialized pieces. I've always loved the conceit of serialization, the idea that Dickens and Dostoyevsky were published in serials. Both Cory and I are translators and I expect there to be translation sections in the future. I hope there are more essays, odd windows on America. I'll be doing Astrology in a separate blog. So we'll see & we'll see what folks bring into the space as time goes on.

I won't try to foreshadow the writing and writers we've grouped as possible examples of these themes. Take a look at the contributor's page to find out more — buy a book if a writer you don't know catches your eye. Read your friend's piece, but read two others. Each writer is a different field — it's what makes open readings so frustrating —but there's time to take in a few.

I am happy to be working with so many bright people. I've loved what **Janet Holmes** has done at Ahsahta Press since I learned of it when she published an old friend Chris Vitiello. **Elizabeth Robinson**, whom I met as part of work I was doing pursuing conversations with women poets about spirituality, pointed me at **Kimberly Lyons**, whose work I find arresting and haunting. I have the way-angels-stoop sort of luck to have worked at the same school as **Joseph Donahue**; he's been one of those rare long arc friends. I don't entirely have the story, but Joseph is friends from far back with Andy Joran and Tony Sampas — something old and directed by ghosts from Lowell. I had Andy in to read at my Long Poem series, and Tony showed up, and that brought **Bonnie Melton** out of her studio, or maybe I met Bonnie at a party Maggie Zurawski threw. Bonnie and Tony had been in art school together in that same way back. And, I met **Mary Yordy** early on in my time in Durham — she was scheduling poets for a two-day party that happened when a group of young Durham painters took over the upstairs of an abandoned department store for a hanging. We ran spoken word events together in the 90s out of storefronts. I met **Dale Smith** when I was in Austin for a Vedic Studies Conference in maybe 2006; he didn't know me from anyone, but was showing me a Bela Tarr movie after about an hour of getting to know. I met **Andrew Mossin** just a year or so ago when he was here to read for Jess Stark, and liked what I saw watching **Douglas Rothschild** at the Orono Conferences. **Gabrielle Pflugradt** is a friend of

Cory; **Tim VanDyke** started emailing me back in the lucipo days, and we've kept in touch. Joe introduced me to **Liz Gray** a few years ago — we are some kind of deep cousin, sharing the same Mayflower ancestor, a guy who actually fell off the boat during the voyage (but was saved) and went on to have eleven surviving children. I met **Mary Jane Gore** after my divorce in 2013 — we were having one of those scary first dates and I asked her what writers she liked and she said, "Jane Bowles." We've become friends instead of something romantic, which is as nice. It's good to find people.

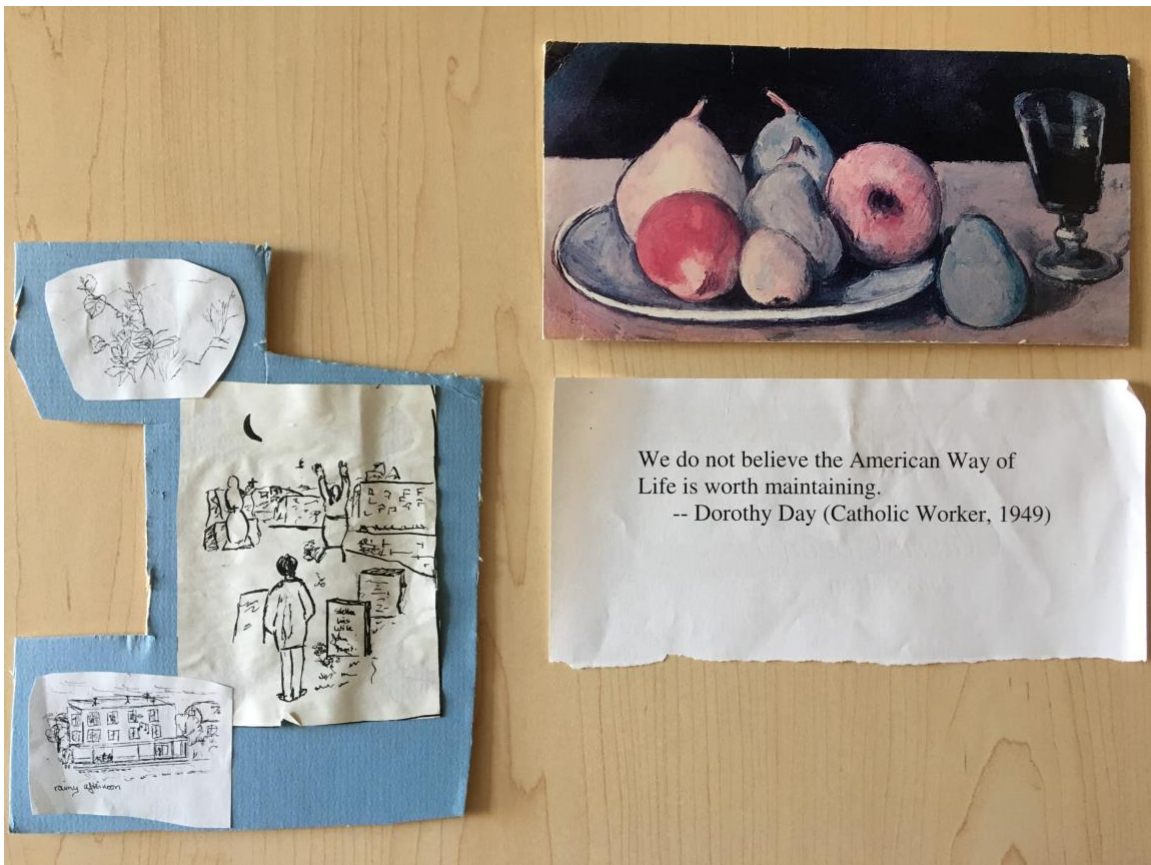
We all spend a lot of time being lonely and being in our heads. And we cross paths and are by ourselves as well. In a poem I think I wrote for spoken word long ago "What Do You Need Need?, there's this:

And 'cause I live in towns in the era of
Woolworths,
I need to deepen in the thick digestion of
soup-floored stores
like a well of good rainwater that
survives. I need

to bear towards what remains
as each day carries us apart,
to be pulled out into the throat of life,
to be spoken,
to obey the visceral boundaries of things,
to divide well, to part at the gap
in the fence.

And I need people, I wish I had an army,
'cause people are joy shaping story
walkers
they're strive mongers, seek stellar,
bold-silly, brassy, banging trouble I can't seem
do without.

So perhaps one of these folk will open a door to a place you needed to find as well. Let's see.





Editor's Note: Cory Massaro

I identify one thread among the many which the current volume's contributions unspool. We are grappling with *ethos*, one might say still grappling a century on from modernism, in a moment of such extreme interpersonal and cultural fragmentation that any feasible unifying principle seems a welcome gift.

I gesture first to Dale Smith's and Tim van Dyke's explorations of whiteness/masculinity in confrontation. We see a "we" here, and in contrast a "they." *Ethos* seems to require these positions; it is from this friction that *ethos* invigorates. Our recent political experiments asseverate that this "we," no matter how ugly or beautiful, well- or ill-founded—this *ethos* does some work, extrudes someone's fantasy into form.

I gesture now toward Elizabeth Robinson's paean to devotion, devotion to devotion; and then toward Elizabeth Gray's recognition of the artifice and polemicity inherent in ritual as tech or algorithm. Here there is wariness: *ethos*, unifying/collective activity or belief, is clearly necessary—but we are in a sense too smart now—knowing form as form, and suspecting "we" means war against "they," hollows the act.

These pieces delighted and challenged me. I hope they do some work for you. I hope they bring some clarity, exactly as harsh or warm as can be handled.



Measure



Andrew Mossin

THREE POEMS

Bride and Mother point not to a culmination of emotions, sexual, mechanical, without love, but to affections so deep they reopen relationships that have been severed again and again within divided cultures, within divided Man and Man...

Wilson Harris, *The Mask of the Beggar*

Injured at the start, by what named us, introit
of episodic tranquility, like a boat sent out to sea

broken by what ensnares it, wind that is its
colony of affection, a striking sound when it

emerges again, near homeland's last tropic
isle, this visitation of scraps of memory, scopic

retrievals....a shelter on sand, the earthen cast
to a sky west of Cairo....black arms of my mother

lifted into the air, 'Heaven is upon us,' she
whispered, rasp of her eyelids against my cheek

when I was laid down, rested, 'Heaven is
upon us,' red on the black clay, her palms

resting near a child's fan, spread out, red on black....

*

House of ascent—varied assent—where
light shapes the character of our cell, indented

river water, the once-scenic Tiber recalled, shed
from its history, like a locale embedded

in the palm of a stranger. Who brought
himself to the edge of that language, spoke

tri-lingual, separated from birth tongue's
shaft, shelter of reed and cinnamon, eyes

that come to the fore in a head of parched
lineament. This crease in time, wayward, marked

as much by inferential plea, as referential name,
separated from bane and balm, placed on low

ground to hover here, human-like, invested
in these rituals of sacrifice and lament, this seed

passed among our tribe, entangled petals of the
almond tree, blue digits like day sticks

in the southern sky.

*

I was re-reading the fragments
of Hölderlin, blood traces down a

sheet, severed code of our first
arrival....We came into Lebanon where

the 'dark leaf and growth
were perceptible'....sat beneath

the ancient olive, a night of rapid
growth, wayward in the formation

of our dialect, like his deer
awaiting language, arriving at its

gate, thirsty for its shield, to carry
him back, into its mysteries, shaped

from the black cloth of his shame.

*

East of where we went, in the hidden map
partway between Athens and Cairo, like a shawl

drawn across our shoulders, this traveling, this
embarkation that is both signal and sign, alert

messenger that sends us back to *Zohar*, where
we read: 'If one is worthy, when he sleeps

his soul departs, she soars—penetrating
these impure spirits... Then she ascends

among those holy ones.' Ribbon of
arrival, like grain among straw, this splinter

of existences, carted away, captioned off
in the world, so that when souls

depart from the body they seek to
ascend, road that leads to light, but when

they arrive are confronted by gatekeepers, bands
of dazzling demons. If they belong to their

side, they all seize those souls—delivering
them into the hands of Dumah, to enter Hell.

Gone into silence, as our soul was taken into
Dumah, protected there, carved from its

beginnings, to live in the space of moonlight
taking shape around us.

*

*Yet I was dreaming, said myself was a dream, said
it was a container for this other, said it was a triadic*

*namesake, pluralized, blown from existence, said the
days were paratactic sites of a temple we had yet to*

*see, black lozenge under the tongue, capital city
we didn't know and couldn't pronounce. Tongue's*

*allegiance to a world of above and below, like water
from the city's edge, poured over our torsos, as if*

*wounded, but words were part of the wound.
To know they were infusing energy in us was to note the*

*gape between registers, storm above, cloudless
sky below, the wind across our backs as we drove*

through hard waters, split from land or name.

*

What drew me back, what came to take place
of my body? The inside of a tree I saw

laid over cedar, rods of light that penetrated my
drum, my hurt left eye wandering, passing over

the waters. There is this beginning, this lake
of sound, like an envelopment brought to stasis

and abandonment. Our tree is waiting, the garden where
I lamented its passing over of light, the rigid frame

of a house set back from the sea, Boeotia's son
set to wander across the earth, his palms

hovering over fields of straw grass.

*

Who cautioned me, who
liberated my tongue from its wall? A bird

flew near, another brought low, the words vacated,
seamless, impossible to recall or reject.

We were like a tree planted by water, red ground
under our feet, crowning sensation of song rising

from the mourning dove, our leaves inside a grown
shelter, the wordless face of its light, lifted

across the body of our world. Who took us
in, saved us, named the carriage we saw driven

across the desert, plumes of red from its
sun shield, slow-moving passage across its dark

expanse, sound of one day poured into
another, the deft catachresis of laboring bodies

cut from masts of blue cedar. What exchange
became normal, limpid, crossed by the accelerants

of time and season, labor of the days to cross
into another, vertical almost, the aroma of charred

animal flesh, brought to the surface, lips and eyes that
belonged to another, raised up, implicated in a slow

equatorial dance, our bodies framed between desert
and ocean, mysterious and at the edge of our bodies

so that each trace became a line drawn across
our torso, each line became trace of another's vision

of who we might become.

*

To remove the body...to return it to its initial
shape. Unclothed, removed from view....the dying

is done apart from us. We kneel down, the partition
opens as it always has. One goes through, returns

to them, sits 'at the feet of the throne on terraces
suspended between two immense sheets of dew'

as if to master the way was to encounter its
substance, to lift the body into the sun

from its crevice of two, engage its solidity
separate from its birth, like a split inside the field

separating what is seen from what is known.

*

And the sky unfolds, unturns itself, sea
light that moves across the bodies

of land. One nears the end, sees where
'flames above the vineyard' lead

as if it was this crossing over that
was penultimate, season after season

in the skin's lock house, reporting back
to us what it took from there, how many

& how long the light.

1 June-4 November 2018

What divides the self from itself, season
comes and goes, different light, the weight of

partition, black landing where it was
a body once, ours or another, can't
tell—

I could escape the simple
reduction of self, the pluralist
impulse to give words their
tonic impulse, reading from Emerson
all day, 'Nothing is beautiful alone.
Nothing but is beautiful in the
Whole.'

And becoming that discipline, a lifetime
to learn what it is that makes us, to receive
what we can. Death's tolerance, that we
are lifted down, the cave where the mother-
light is, marks the beginning of each day's
embrace. 'Learn the history of a cranberry'
'Mark the day when the pinecones
and acorns fall.' As to establish fact where
there is this solitude, this incision
made in quick time.

What is going on outside
of us? Lean into the light
that comes from the west, say

it easy enough, the light is
a flute cracked in two places, skin
that is lined, each tree marks

the falling place—

A decade, birds overheard (writing
from August 2016) descendants
of another family, was waiting to
cross the road, Red Hook's loose
red line, saw the rooster back of
a barn, cables across the high-
way distant, the sound of children
returning from day camp, summer
blackening by 8 in the evening, warm
tide of seawater where the skin is
unhealed, recursive as memory
takes any of us, fold by fold...

*

Difficult to state where the folds were, birch
bark in hand, 'no bird, no bug, no bud

shall be forgotten on this day and hour. Today
the chickadees, the robins, bluebirds, & song sparrows

sang to me. I dissected the buds of the birch
& the oak, in every one of the last is a star.'

Built from each, the commonest element
combining to create this one image, as if we

could lean beside the river again, feel its
water wind across the tree bank, sorrel and

birch, summer's lowlying branches, like
cotton lines settling into the silver, each

vacant rock occupied, lit from within by
what formed it, blanket of cool air

from the south, and from the east
the dim squall of geese, moving across

a ledge of sky.

*

And one can drift...suspend the body...a field of light
over southern Greece, to near its intricate web of relation...far

removed father and son, seeking permission to return to them
where they were put to rest, unison like this pattern

of falling apart, that we retrieve them in due time, that they
are discovered, discordant, qualified, not recognizable

except as patterns of embodiment. The sea is stained
with their blood, streaks of red that flower westerly.

'The sea streaked with blooms of Adonis, the light
flicker red in small jars, wheat shoots rise new

by the altar, flower from the swift seed.' I am
peopled by them, brought back with their ropes

bent to their intention. The light flicker of red in small jars, white
sea where their bodies are moving against ours, in turn with

theirs. Grass at the edge of the sea, rocks
beneath sea foam, the day between a door and a door

passed through, bodies weighted by stones
from heaven's gate.

5 April 2018

The abstraction was what the water
defined, elliptical as the surface of a crow's

face, faceted, partly hidden, shouldering
its way into the sky. This earth-light

that is neither divine nor mental, apportioned
here where the beams of memory cross.

Like a cable binding our bodies to a center
pillaged from the remains of Zeus.

The curious dead, incipient arrivals, human
remains displaced at the sea's edge.

Was it a sanctuary got seen, scented, elliptical
crossing from one world to the next, this

veiled reminder of mortality? One sits
where the tree waits, one rests under its

cedar limbs, childlike, informed by nothing
other than the prolonged iterations of bird song

weighted by the branches above.

*

Skin is light, the branch where skin
is deprived of salt, skin on one side of the

barrier, like a small partition that opens
to receive its mate. The energy it takes to

repeat, this willingness not to say, but to
remain silent. Bird said it was coming

spring, light sawed in half as the branch
rocked, said it was the beckoning of light

that separated one body from another.

*And to turn back, as if we were
products of that instant, brought to*

*no place, paradisiac instinct, this chained
changing dialogue of self to self, as if*

*common knowledge came from earth's
dark, the way back is the way in, one*

by one, the tutelary stations pass....

*

Was a script newly learned, was it
empiric study, the lay of the land that came

to daunt, then haunt, self's obscure
underpinnings. Saying it was magic or

mythic, the point already having been
lost, road markings to Mendes, a sanctuary

city inside the sanctum of language. Was
a face first, then the folds of a face, skin

of the ram, placed over the face of Zeus, to
disguise him, as if laboring to remember

what the face was when it first broke
apart, lingual light of the saffron chest, black

eyed hole in the wall, that Herakles saw
as his own visage, reconstructed, gave back

to him what was neither offering nor remainder.
Holy water wrapped in fleece. Blind contact

of the seer and his blind mate. God
where no god was, saying what saw it

go was what dissolved in water.

*But my people did not live there, my name
was not shared, shape of their hands, waist*

*length hair, the articles of Ammonian dead
distributed across the landscape, so that when*

*one came into view, it was his face, shaped
like a ram's head, broken from the body.*

*

To remain where they were, casuistic
worshippers, the site drawn not from memory

but light severed from its source. River is
like this light pouring forth, the words that are

material, part of the process, to incise reality
of its form, black tacking in a wall that surrounds

a body breaking into view. I had surrendered
myself to its view, was part of what it drew

to itself, or the centrality of saying it came
here, came to bathe and envelop me, the white

skin of its eye, like a layer of muslin drawn
across my palms, and the intersection was made

in that light, lifted, ambient, so that to recollect f
rom them was to review their work separate

from ritual. One was carrying herself
past me, a marionette in her arms, carried

high like a bird frozen inside her body, a weaving
of maternal and carnal, the entry point

where the two pass into one, Dionysian
rag, a flute player leading the way, one then

another, the genitalia of the marionettes
moving higher, then lower, forming a crease

where the bodies float, fall, appear triangular
on a bed of lotus flowers.

*

Not singed but 'offscoured,' to cleanse
the body of the dead. Wind was weighted

by what it charmed, changed, inslant
of rain, the residue that could be brackish

through the hands. Tied together, like blown
reeds, the semblance of their time, mortal

bleach, reused, to wash the blood
from our hands is to re-see its mark, veined

populous dead, their mark on our bodies
cleansed by what un-cleanses, purification

that is at once a stalling of cleansing and its
prolongation. To renew ourselves, off course, to

blend with them all over again, laid in the black
trough to find light, legitimacy, grove

of scented fig, pool light, brackish water, metallic
ghostly demands made upon our body

adrift from its ancestral home.

12 May 2018



Elizabeth Robinson

étant donnés

after Marcel Duchamp

Figure reclined by way of peephole.

Slow assumption of the body

to a foreign heaven.

Knee bent to expose her

opening, devotion to a foreign heaven.

Lamp lifted so

around the column around
which the body composes

itself around

which no heaven can

dirty itself with familiarity:

body entirely

bare ribbons

of self furling.

Devotion without object is a body.
Point A to point B rendered

so.

Thrum

of the body's destination to.

Seen through its peephole.

Then

devotion slowly extending the body's streamers
outward,

enwrapping itself.

Around what core

ignite.

Devoted from point A to point B

as object ordained

to its simultaneity.

Seen through so small

an opening.

Naked opening.

Body and its causeways, leg

bent outward, arm

extended, devotion

to the incomplete gaze

around which one

looks back,

backward, around

the body its shrubbery,

its fur, streamers, hair.

Devotion abandons its own principle.

Lifts a lamp over which

its gaze cannot alight.

The one leg stretched straight, skin

without pore.

Poring over. Thrum

of indivisibility,

the body

opening, opening in, intent

on it, stream coincident

with landscape or

devotion's

obliterating body.

Brush, shrub, fleece, further

light.

This given.

Devotion this given to.

Light to render what is given.

Lamp modeled on the arm.

Given up

as point of return,

devotion set apart for its other:

points softened to
point to aperture to pore to

part, parting.

Devotion ungainly claiming

its

lit fleshy opening.

Frustrated, unwrapped of its

own swathing, awkward

lamp dubious of its devotion to light, to

the whistling

of light down

the body.

Stream, seen, season, reunion.



Elizabeth Gray Jr

This selection is drawn from *Salient*, forthcoming from New Directions Publishing in 2020. The work is geographically centered on the Western Front near Ypres, in Belgian Flanders. The infamous battle of Third Ypres began with the British attack on the Messines Ridge in June 1917 and concluded with the Canadian capture of Passchendaele village in early November. While to this day historians argue about the decisions made by the generals and politicians, “Passchendaele” remains the poster child for the unimaginable horrors of the Great War: waves of exhausted men advancing slowly uphill in relentless rain through waist-deep mud into artillery and machine gun fire in order to capture a few yards of strategically insignificant ground. Almost 90,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers who fought in the Ypres Salient vanished there and have no known grave. The Missing lie at the core of the poem which draws from British manuals of field engineering and artillery survey, contemporary accounts of the fighting, and on medieval Tibetan texts on *chöd* (“severance”) practice and on protective magic.

WAR MAGIC

Scaled up to the level of war magic, the violent repelling rites of the *tantras* became The Big Push, The Big Show, or a Schlieffen Plan.

Large numbers of ritual experts would assemble for performances that could last several days, if not weeks.

The requisite expert officiants and necessary materials had to be assembled and elaborate shrines constructed.

Legions of effigies (*ling ga*) of enemy soldiers would be fashioned from barley flour, butter, and paper, often accompanied by thousands more effigies of the enemy's horses, so that the practitioners in effect recreated the battlefield within the confines of a ritual space.

Thus the resources required for a serious repelling rite were considerable.

455 tons of ammonal for the nineteen mines at Messines, for example, and 33 million shells.

In the last half of the female fire snake year of 1917 it was said that a great number of enemy were coming.

All the farmers and nomads were terrified.

Fifty divisions took part in the ritual performances, and in early November the signs emerged.

A great snowstorm fell.

After that, a gale rose up, and shreds of cloth, like prayer flags, froze in the craters.

They were buried beneath the snow, men along with their horses and pack animals.

Not even one escaped death.

When the snow melted, the Lower Hor-pa and Ser-myog came down out of the mountains and when they were done stripping the bodies there was nothing there.

Note on Sources

“War Magic” draws on *A History of How the Mongols Were Repelled*, by Lodrö Gyelsten (1552-1624), known simply as “Sodokpa,” in Dalton, Jacob B. *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*. 133-136. The shell numbers were found in Liddle, Peter H. *Passchendaele in Perspective: The Third Battle of Ypres*. Barnesley, South Yorkshire, UK: Leo Cooper, 1997.

THE MISSING

The Outer Signs

Rifles or stakes protruding
from the ground
bearing helmets or equipment;

partial remains or equipment
on the surface or protruding
from the ground;

on the surface
rat holes near
pieces of bone or equipment;

discolouration: grass
will be vivid blue-
green with broader

blades, earth and
water a greenish
or grey colour.

The Inner Signs

Gasp, or spines protruding
from the heart
bearing grief or sunset;

the partial imprint of your
wrist or sunset protruding
from my heart;

in my throat
splinters
of joy or amulet;

distortion: knives
are a vivid blue-
green with broader

blades, earth and
water an empty
or grey color.

The Secret Signs

Greatcoat, prayer beads or bone
drum hanging
from a poplar;

from the feet
up the coarse body
vanishing

into this multicolored
light leaving
no corpse behind;

dissolution: nails
and hair and these
here only

owing to
my thirst
for relics.

Notes on Sources

“The Missing: The Outer Signs” draws on Hodgkinson, Peter E. “Clearing the Dead.” <http://www.vlib.us/wwi/sesources/clearingthedead.html>, 6-7. After the Armistice an organized attempt was made to clear the dead from the Flanders battlefields and to bring them to concentration cemeteries located nearby. Unidentified bodies are buried under a headstone that reads: “Here lies a soldier of the Great War, Known Unto God.” The almost 90,000 names of those with no known grave can be found on the Menin Gate and Tyne Cot Memorials to the Missing.

“The Missing: The Secret Signs” draws on various Tibetan sources on the rainbow body quoted in Kapstein, Matthew T. “The Strange Death of Pema the Demon Tamer.” Kapstein, Matthew T., Ed. *The Presence of Light: Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004. 137, 141, 147.

THE GREAT WAR: LOOKING FOR THE MISSING

Belgian Flanders

INDIRECT FIRE: SHOOTING FROM THE MAP (from APPENDIX B)

- 3.0 Fire was brought to bear on the desired object either by means of direct observation, or by the map.
 - 3.1 Obviously, what I am looking for can no longer be observed directly. Thus these maps.
- 4.0 There are difficulties inherent in using a map.
 - 4.1 Sometimes maps are inaccurate.
 - 4.1.1 For example, this was the incorrect location of a farm that was no longer there.
 - 4.2 Your exact position on the map must be known.
- 5.0 If you know where you are, orient yourself by aligning on some distant, visible point.
 - 5.1 Assuming I was here now, distant and visible remains a problem.
 - 5.1.1 Where the Cloth Hall Tower had been, from where the German observation post no longer is, was pretty straightforward.
 - 5.1.2 Likewise the overpass and on-ramp on the recent extension of the A19.
 - 5.2 This may be camouflage: the fact that some points are concealed remains concealed.

- 6.0 If you know where you are but no points are visible orient yourself by compass. This can be done quite accurately if the error of the compass is known, and this is best ascertained by taking a bearing on the North Star at a time when the pointers of the Great Bear are directly above or below it.
- 6.1 Stars. Orientation. Alignment. Error.
- 6.2 Let's say you know where you are. The compass may be useful but it comes to you with an error. Like us every compass bears with it its error.
- 6.2.1 The amount of error depends on where it is.
- 6.2.2 To find its error in a given location you must measure the divergence between what pulls you and the true, and then
- 6.2.3 as the sailors do, you can find your way by the stars or by your instrument with its now familiar error.
- 6.3 From where you are, a bearing may be taken, at the proper moment, on the North Star and the Bear. But you have to wait.
- 6.4 Only when the Bear and the Pole align, distant and visible, can you find your instrument's error.

(continued)

7.0 If you do not know where you are, use a plane table to locate your position by resection.

7.1 Originally a plain table. Reflecting its simplicity.

7.1.1 Cover the table with zinc (impervious to heat or cold) and on it mount a sheet of drawing paper. Carefully draw the map grid by hand on the mounted paper and then cut up the map itself into squares and gum them down, fitting each piece into its correct position on the corresponding grid underneath.

7.1.2 The distortion of the paper due to gumming causes slight irregularities and overlaps in the piecing together but across the entire map there will be no accumulation of error.

7.2 Resection. Here, not in the sense of cutting something away, of surgically removing a portion of an organ or tissue.

8.0 Pick a point from which three previously fixed points can be seen.

8.1 OK. Here, by the car. Then

8.2 the memorial to the 85th Battalion (Nova Scotia Highlanders) at D.12.c.1.3,

8.3 the prayer flag above the stupa outside the cave on the northeast spur of Copper Mountain, and

8.4 where you were last seen that morning.

9.0 Orient the table by compass (the one with its error), and from the three fixed points draw back rays. Not lines (ours, theirs, these). Not arrows. Rays. Not to be basked in.

9.1 If these three rays pass through a point, this point is your position.

- 9.1.1 Were this the case then with this map fire might be brought to bear onto the object of desire that cannot be observed directly.
- 9.1.2 You can hear the Wind Horse moving among the willows.
- 9.2 If they do not pass through a point, the rays will form a small triangle called the “triangle of error.”
 - 9.2.2 Again, although small and here contained, error. And, I think, fear.
- 9.3 Your true position can be determined by the following rules:
 - 9.3.1 If the “triangle of error” is inside the triangle formed by the three fixed points, your position is inside the triangle of error; and if it is outside, your position is outside the triangle of error.

(continued)

- 9.3.1.1 For many years I thought this section
- 9.3.1.1.1 these “triangles” and triangles and positions inside and outside fixed or not with their “error” or error taken singly or together or perhaps in sequence
- 9.3.1.1.2 describing what is inside as inside or outside as outside, creating for me confusions about what I now know are actually separate (as in two different) triangles, one made by points one by the rays themselves
- 9.3.1.3 made no sense, but was either a printing error or charm.
- 9.3.2 In the latter case the position will be such that it is either to the left of all the rays when facing the fixed points, or to the right of them all.
- 9.3.3 Of the six realms formed by the rays, there are only two in which this condition can be fulfilled.
- 9.3.3.1 These are the realms of humans and of the hungry ghosts (*preta*).
- 9.3.3.2 The latter are immaterial beings unsatisfied and restless, desperate and famished, wandering endlessly across the ground between unfixed positions, nursing their error.

9.3.4 Your exact position is determined by the condition that its distances from the rays must be proportional to the length of the rays, i.e. the position on the sketch must be nearest to that side of the triangle formed by the shortest ray, and farthest from that formed by the longest ray.

9.3.4.1 [This section intentionally left blank.]

9.4 Having thus determined your position, place the sight rule along the line joining it and the most distant of the points used; set the sight rule on the point by revolving the plane table; clamp and test the other two points. If there is still an error (which should, however, be much smaller), go through the process again.

10.0 In summary, your best position is inside the triangle formed by the three fixed points (assuming they are points, fixed, and can be seen) of which two are near and one is distant. (Note this is not to be confused with the triangle of error.) Accuracy of position is insured by aligning on the distant point. Generally: Fix from near points. (Me. Here. Then.) Set by a distant point. (You. There. Them.)

(continued)

- 10.1 When there are a number of points, any three of which may be used for resection purposes (there are so many points, and so much that cannot be observed directly), remember that in choosing the point to be used that:
- 10.1.1 When the three points chosen, and your position, lie on or near the circumference of a circle, the accurate determination of your position is not possible by this method.
- 10.1.2 The three points chosen should be such that the rays from them do not intersect at acute angles and thereby make a badly shaped triangle of error.
- 10.2 It will have been noticed that the compass is only used to orient the plane table approximately, and that the final fixing does not at all depend on the compass.
- 10.2.1 After all that.
- 11.0 At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, remember then.

Notes on Sources

“Indirect Fire: Shooting from the Map (from Appendix B)” draws on *Notes for Employment of Artillery in Trench Fighting*. Washington, D.C.: Army War College, May 1917. Sections 7 and 8; and from Chasseaud, Peter. *Artillery’s Astrologers: A History of British Survey and Mapping on the Western Front 1914-1918*. Lewes, East Sussex, UK: Mapbooks, 1999. 140. Section 11.0 includes a fragment of stanza 4 of Laurence Binyon’s “For the Fallen.”

Date & Time: Sat Oct 29 16:52:03 CEST 2016
Position: +050.89645° / +003.00580°
Altitude: 119ft
Datum: WGS-84
Azimuth/Bearing: 064° N64E 1138mils (True)
Elevation Angle: -00.1°
Horizon Angle: -00.6°
Zoom: 1X





Cory Massaro

My ongoing writing project builds out a world in which humanity--by which I mean bodies genetically descended from *Homo sapiens*--have been allowed to survive social and environmental collapse. I imagine, as seems realistic, the corporate as the only surviving organizational model; continuous morphism/repurposing/recycling as the primary relationship to resource; and the ability to cut up/splice bodies into new forms as the central technology.

The sections I share here deal specifically with the body. The modern economy is increasingly keen to convert humans into units of work: the most in-demand jobs (of which only some can allow a person to erase their student loan debt) are essentially sedentary factory work. Various flavors of engineer or product manager. So the ultimate corp fantasy would be to use the body directly as an automaton. To convert the human brain into a computational device, the lungs into an air processor, the digestive tract into a power plant. To decompose the person into useful parts and find a way to reassemble these parts more efficiently.

I am reminded of the common Indo-European (and perhaps Nostratic) mytheme of primordial dismemberment: an original cosmic person is cut up and the body parts mapped to the manifest universe. It strikes me that the process of optimizing persons for specific tasks constitutes the beginnings of a reversal of that process: all the brains go here, all the eyes go there, and soon we're back to one big body. So our resources: the various fruits of the earth having been processed into atomic chunks, meaningful at the level of human perception, can now be reassembled in some other image.

HAND

Agony gambling:
it is with unglued thumbs we
track won hands, a blue tally.

Poker chit skin tags,
knucklebone dice. Come
blow--roll 'em--get organ-spliced.

Modular body
parts are what this game's played for:
the pot's a basket fingers'

intricate clasp weaves
a cauldron abrim with salt
dripped from the kidneys squeezing.

Plays hinges on interpreting bent knuckles,
cast-off phalanges. In loss, you have to pop
a valuable piece off, deep or surface,
argue its worth, and plunge it in. The trick's

which bit gets bartered away:
those that aren't careful to keep
spare organs all end up sprawled

out limbless where their last bid
meant a bad transplant, they part
ways with the wrong artery

and hemorrhage. And not a drop
of threat's left on the tongue. Straight
flushed of bluff and blood, no pair

of syllables from unconnected lungs
loan sharks could catch the wind of, parallel
arrows of a deadly fair transaction.

Trade away worthless
pieces for extra
essentials. You should always

have some kind of pump at hand
for circulating blood, some
dexterous something to grip

hands with and dip in the pot,
don't be picky, chelipeds
or squid lashes'll work as

well as the fivefold
primate shape, finger bone star.
Don't be picky. An axle

with wheels or swift legs equally accomplice
escape from an unfavorable table.

Most of all, don't ever let
go of your colon. People
don't know what "lack" is

until they're full of stuff and can't lay waste.

CENTRAL TOLERANCE

i.

I see and immediately
dislike you, chemical
nostril of you, strut
posture you do. Come here.

No, you come over here.

Is there a reason
you are nervous?

I know your own mind.

More than you do
I do more than you're aware
there is a hidden order
different from the one
that's just what we're
going to find out.

Open.

ii.

I'm authorized; I'm
the only one here. Calm down.

iii.

You and I are co-original
I know now by your

lacquer odor's drift
into flower blossom.

It is incredible. All qualities
are opened up; I sense
you full in pheromonal mandalas,

can count how much
you are like "fire", can avow
your smoke sounds like a quiet hillside goat

and I can hear the charcoal smelling sharp
of licorice while I count
as though that fire were happening right here:

I have imbibed
every single possible truth about you.

You seem okay. Continue
what you were doing.

IN RIVER

We were in an intestine
after collapse had swallowed up all business.

Ciliate walls half-limpid
and backlit.

Rhythmic, the cough

the ciliate sweep went along
with (which soft peristaltic

churn carried all things forward).
Colors were badgered with what

dim cloth called “drab” left just enough orange light
uncovered like a cheek a candle hides

behind, streaked lantern-
glass the thin roleplay

skin has a way of
slipping into when stretched in front of flame.

Veins’ silhouette, lit
membrane.

Scintillant flit

the walls’ cilia looked could catch that light with,
panicked swish an accurate mime to fish sides

striving in capture,
gills murmuring surrender, strangling air.

We saw the bureaucrats swim,
anatomic scrawl, slim tad-

pole torpor, backward gamete
crabs-walk against the red walls'

current the bureaucrats danced.
Crawled more than swam.

Before them-

selves they poked their flagella
and pulled their infantile bulk

like salvage behind them, didn't
seem interested in much;

or maybe it was upstream
they were straining, acting

out in fact.

How powerful
the current was if it could do this, make

a rudder of resistance,
a sail of river-hatred.

PURUSHA SUKTA

Rg Veda, 10.90

Hundred-headed Purusha,
 hundred-eyed, a hundred feet.
Spread over earth from side to side,
 his ten fingers jut off the edge.

This is Purusha: the sum
 of what's been and is to be,
the lord of deathlessness
 increased by consuming food.

Such is Purusha's greatness,
 or more excellent than this.
One fourth of him became all beings,
 three fourths deathless in heaven.

Three fourths ascended upward;
 one fourth stayed behind here.
From this he spreads to all sides,
 to that which eats and that which doesn't.

From him Viraj was born;
 and from Viraj Purusha was born.
Upon birth Purusha spread
 over the earth, east and west.

When the gods offered sacrifice
 with Purusha their victim,
spring anointed it, autumn fueled the flame,
 and for wood they burned summer.

Their victim, cushioned on grass,
 ageless Purusha, they sprinkled with balm.
Those that slaughtered him were gods
 and heavenly beings and seers.

From that all-offering sacrifice
 the aspersed fat was gathered;
he formed creatures: those of the air,
 those of the wilds, those that are tame.

From that all-offering sacrifice
 praises and hymns came into being;
spells came into being from it
 and the prayer of sacrifice.

From it horses were born
 and cattle's molars
gritted with cud were born from it,
 from it goats and sheep were born.

When they cut Purusha up,
 how many sections were arrayed?
What did his mouth become, his arms?
 What would his legs be called, his feet?

The Brahman was his mouth,
 Ksatriyas were made from his arms;
his legs became Vaishyas;
 Sudras were born from his feet.

From his mind the moon was born,
his eye gave shape to the sun;
Indra and Agni from his mouth;
his breath gave birth to Vayu.

His navel became the sky;
his head was gathered up as heaven;
the earth his feet, the horizon his ear:
this was the way they made the world.

Seven sticks had covered him;
thrice seven fueled the fire.
The gods were offering sacrifice
and bound Purusha like a sheep.

They sacrificed the victim to the victim.
These were the first sacrificial rites.
Then they, great-minded, ascended heaven
where now they dwell, the venerable gods.

PURUSHA SUKTA

taken sound-by-sound in reverse

|| Habit, it naysaid to
savor tub art. I ate nachos,
hand on my ham: reconnaissance.
| An assignment: harp in ur-mud
a knot serenade and a jig,
munge notes and edge notes.

|| Mush up, mash Europe!
Hand upon top-nut
bulge, I have it.
| Hat-trick edemas
out pus. Hearts I had eruptin'
a seismic sourpuss.

|| *nihil placet*. Make whole
lotta dollars, dosh.
Has she removed my polyp?
| Uddered doves at my side
done shrieked, "Milk!" Cretins,
the cows hibern-

|| ate a watch. Who haven't armpatches
sing, "Gosh, chard. Need to come
| eat a lottery juice husk
at a chosen moment, natch.

|| Eat a lotta ordure. My polyp
high, so I die. Day seven. Who're you?"
| Hat-trick hyena, yeah, rules ya.
The summer come, ice on a harbor.

|| Eighth day chew it up, prove who're you:
"coo," "haw," "bawk," "I": symmetric hum.

| *nihil placet*. I had a tick
who bit islands, mushed Europe.

|| "Hoarse old codger at large!" Dom said.
Dom said, "Hairy judge Jehovah
| gotta diaboli-cheeky
end-of-age, 'n robs ya." Dom said,

|| "But I jest. That I'm set suggests" --
Dom said--"Dairy judges not lunch.
| Dairy judging, I'm a sage jerk
and you have restaurants," Dom said.

|| "Yeast, chyme, argon, wine, a round of
active ergots, shit: in a soup
| may God assert matter have Mass
and you have restaurants," Dom said.

|| "Yeast, a chaser, raita, dosh:
dinner joy inhabits anise.
| Salt arguments, aged mash, Europe.
Nock sharp this arrow, bag ya a rat."

|| Here he vanished, hand to Upstairs.
My jaw decides to open a safe.
| Atavan. Dom had gnawed of it.
Ash of a honey-syrup tea

|| his report of amid botched sup,
ah, I tried to open these jaws.
| Hush Europe and an old jar o' bees
enjoys a tariff. I am stuck

|| a bind: ash and then no ash. Tax:
a mark of dust devoted.
| Hand up to above, I saw Top.
Hush Europe. Tide you over (in part).

|| I vid: Matter at Mass. A diaper
in a tuba shifts, sound of Z.Z. Top.
| Hush Europe: it's a zygote
aimed at "am." I saw nativity:

|| Idaho written in a day
on a chaise of tattered mottos:
| My cabbage died, my tuba died.
My brass navel's hushed Europe.

|| Malignant satin shiitake.
Utter devotion to mimosas.
| Unpreferred shacks curse the house.
Hush Europe. Research the hearse.



Joseph Donahue

INFINITE CRITERIA

~

Such whiskey as plunges
purity down all
throats

*

Storm tipping sideways
the ocean caroms
into air

*

On a mountain, a depressive
who claims cities are
less than mist

*

Exacting glance;
admonishing
amour

*

Flayed, it would seem,
to where bones
break apart

*

The ocean rising
as the plane
drops

*

Copy, then, the
damning emails
in secret

*

Fervors of elucidation:
the ER visit now
a psych eval

~

The sun flaring,
the ice
still dark

*

The treetops
show what's coming,
as do the roots

*

Summer dresses gone
The girls now all
bundled up

*

Dawn: empty
wheelchair, motel
parking lot

*

Would these streets
were pearl, beryl,
or feldspar

*

Having survived the night
unfilled, the fresh
grave glistens

*

Hands to ground
cry out to
the sky

*

The black clouds are curtains drawn
through day, twilight,
and the night

*

Paid bill
an origami canoe
sunk in a flood

*

Once a school playground,
now just rebar in
a raw maw

*

One beauty birthed
another; both now
sip mimosas

~

The empty sky
shines. Plums rot
under a tree

*

Designed by
a suicide all the walls black
Nonetheless, a chapel

*

Either winter is arriving
or a fever. Awake,
shivering

*

A father sips wine from a can
while a troubled
son talks

*

The street now ends in
a river. The water
is whipped up

*

Within the mind
all's at once,
like in heaven

*

But for titanium screws
from the neck, down,
I'm dead

~

Sleep. Grieve.
Inside your dreams
the moon rises

*

(Anyone else would be
humiliated
by now)

*

Thugs at a motel breakfast table,
at dawn, talking
about dogs

*

A quiet road that
keeps washing
out to sea

~

A face that says
my son has messed up bad
and I can't help him

*

A face that says
my hope is so high it hurts
me and cripples me

*

A face that says
I'm may be Dorothy
but this is not Oz

*

Costumed children
holding out bags, door
to motel door

*

A skeleton, a princess,
an astronaut and
a crime victim

*

A boy with an axe-
halved head
laughing

*

Yet another Halloween
your parents in
their plot

*

Back when this
motel was a hospital
for white folks

*

The curbside trashcan
shines in early autumn light
the rim, brilliant

*

Such metaphysics
as absorb the
incoherent

*

Even with the sound turned
off, on the lobby wall
election news

*

Life and light
weaken. High up,
a hawk or owl

*

What will I do all
life long with only a
speechless child to talk to?

*

Tree half in shadow
In full sun a few
red leaves

*

An umbrella
in flames, outside
a synagogue

*

After the lightning strike
a child bleeding from
the ears

*

An obstreperous
clasp, a slinky
necklace

*

Further
into the forest
the train's one note

~

Doorway at night,
scent of unseen
roses

*

A gift in a dream--
parental ashes inside
an Easter egg

*

That we all die
makes us like
Jesus

*

Days, torn
apart, nights
not made whole

*

A circle of the young
a ball bouncing
among them

*

A red raw streak on
her neck where she tugs
on her necklace

*

School-kids and the elderly
afraid to step out on
icy earth

*

Tipsy, late, an
email sent. Now,
nervous

*

When birds die
their bodies turn
into song

~

Cruel clouds,
the sun's ruined
orgasm

*

The sky blues the window
of what otherwise
is all brick

*

Deepen, beatings
Break a bone
with each new blow

*

No roses
that night yet
the air was sweet

~

A motel
less for lovers
than for outpatients

*

A lobby
less for luggage
than for oxygen tanks

*

Blood-thinner
-- he's wise not
to shave

*

Weeping, but
to the world
convivial

*

Suicidal,
but to the
world, a wit

*

Flagrantly lewd, but
to the world,
circumspect

*

A sky clear and blue
but fading into
white

*

A motel less
about ease than
about the infinite

*

Roof shingle
stipple of grey,
plum, teal

*

Needing a beating
but to the world,
amenable

*

Craving shame but
to the world,
blithe

*

Prepped for police beatings
the protestors
exalt

*

Across from the clinic
no surprise, the
mortuary

*

Moon, huge,
wants to come back
to a hole now all ocean

*

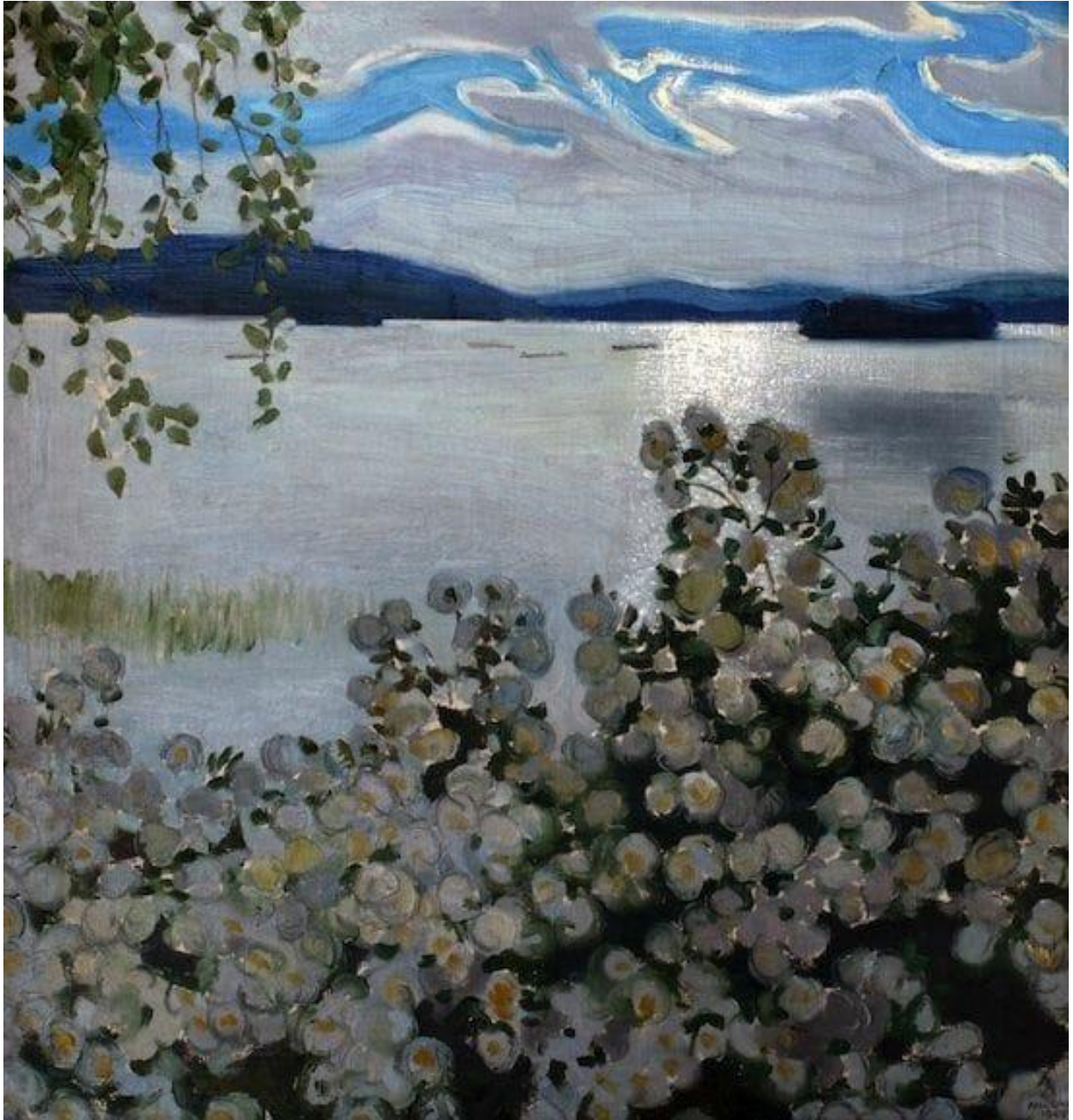
Shivering from cold
as, once, from
pleasure

*

Sky the
color of ice yet
the sun is still burning?



Series
(Ceres, Sere, Serin)



Kimberly Lyons

A Crow Feather

A black shriveled glove on the ground.
Also a crow feather and a magenta plastic lighter.
Also a hum.
I see a tree trunk brown as a bear knotted as knitting.
I wonder how to add up.
Can't think of anything I've learned.
September is regressive, the horror of Dick and Jane.
Their luridly attractive reds, yellows and green.
Hazy and clear, hectic and empty, buzz and simmer.
Their feverish cheeks, mothers, gloves. Jacks and a rope.
God is mad at us, says a woman nearby *but I don't believe that*.
Have a sense of waves.
Saint Francis wrote: Mother Earth.
Crows cry. Am also uncertain
What a sentence is.
Floating clusters.
The world may be a vast laboratory.
Cyclonic wheels whirl counterclockwise.
A thought of a blue suitcase
With sateen folds inside and a lock and a mirror.

9/11/17

Rev. 1/15/18

Rev. 10/22/18

Clasp

Entwined
black bendable sticks and tough leaves.
I perceive an opening.
Coral colored pages from a discarded muddy book twist in air.
I don't know where this bright message comes from.
I mean an opening whereby the feeling for things
Imprint.
I read that energies leap from earth spiral
out into atmosphere and fall back
on to interpenetrative continents of air.
Ampules in a dark hallway just old big bottles.
Alternating glimmers.
A yellow rock's scratched on with rock

like a book that I need to read with a hand.

11/14/17

Rev. 10.25.18

Drawn Away

It bends backward
on the outer rim as
a place that you had gone to.
A situation you came in to as a stranger
and within its scene
stand there.

What going on between the other two
although their role
is indistinct. Bathed
by feelings that as you've told me
seem to flow over.

I feel them as immersive
interwoven mats.

As pulsing webs. I notice that
the trees in late afternoon strive for the sun
without knowing by what action or manifestation
or indication this occurs.

6.20.17

Rev. 2.2.18

Rev. 1/18/19

Drawn Away Backwards

The sun striving for afternoon.
I reach for complex pulsing folds
nests interwoven
immersive and drawn away.
To flow, to flush.
I've told you
feelings rinsed, resistant, indistinct.
Their role of the moment is
other between
ongoing.
What silently stood
seen within. A stranger
you come to
situations and places as one
gone somewhere.
Rim on the outer
rings that make blue
air in cool morning swing from a place.
In so doing
back
it bends.

Inger

Oh its Romanian you speak, I said
to the partly transparent little girl
that I carried on my back.
Her posture was rather Tinkerbelle. She was shy
yet fiercely present and clung to our arrangement
as we hurried down a clay path
while I studied the ramshackle cottages
that fell away dreamlike and obscurely
as giant lavender shadows
into a ravine
and disappeared when you stopped paying attention.
I carried in my hand a tinted encrypted diagram.
All the layers simultaneously evident
like a coral rose's omnidirectional petals.
The citrine light streaks down
and we sing a song.
Strangely, I know the word angel in Romanian
and at the present moment
that's all that I may tell.

11.15.17

Rev. 10.24.18

Rim

Are you really leaving today
A gray that moves coldly across a lake
And shapelessly fills Sunday
With a propulsion I feel
On my face as a stroke of a hand.
You wrap your small box
Of soap
And a razor
And a book. You wrap
Methodically.
Instruct on how to fill
Glass with water
Every single day.
Time seems to pour
Colorlessly forward from the white Aquarian pitcher
Then evaporates
And leaves on a rim a scar.

1/24/17

Rev. 3.15.18

Rev. 1.18.19

The Green Kitchen

I stand before a deep green rusted refrigerator
that may have gold pleats
that resembles a dragon in a cave.
The emotion was various
as though the object had
not decayed – but evolved – becoming an essential form.
Every object in this kitchen from an unfathomable source
bathed with green light in a high small room
and I have a sense of other rooms out of sight
and this were a laboratory that receives and repairs
like a hat shop, a place one barely notices until you walk in while it rains

and a man hands you an undefined object continuously transforming.
Next door is a kind of small museum that uncovers your true self
with Native American objects and musical instruments
and smells like baking sweet potatoes
and the ocean has extracted an angel
who comes toward us with one angry eye.

9.8.17

Rev. 3.15. 18

Rev. 1.18.19

Vernal Equinox #3

It's gathered into a quiet and passed over itself.
Itself a spreading of beats and arcs.
When it swung back there was a shimmer.
Called intervals the pods
broke apart so that I could see space
in between thunder
as it rolls like dirt and wool.
Wraps and flings.
This emotional map, I smelled its midnight
cape
that leaps over the harp.

6.21.17

Rev. 3.15.18



Gabrielle Pflugradt

Chin Up Cowgirl

The Night After

*Inspired by Valzhyna Mort

A woman moves through sea lavender
grey milk and her boss awaits.
A prickle twisted between her legs
breasts like too ripe cantaloupes
sit dull and heavy in the dusty fruit bowl.

One crow caulks reminders. There is a time
she must follow, the ticking of the bus routes
and the asian man's tap of his leathered foot...
She can be late in this life.

The beach has crept itself into the street
into the spans and cracks of man's machine.
Sand crackles under the weight of her heels
laughing at her childishness,
the kissing bones in her unsettled ankles.
Everything here is rusted.

She is becoming part of this place now
rusted thin in places, red and speckled
sand on the antiques of her body
salt heavy memories still ringing
between her waterboarded ears.

The sea walks toward the city of dogs
and pulls on the dark blankets of its brothers
as she walks alone to the cold hard seat
of life and bus.

This is her natural form, waterful
walking amongst the waterless
smiling through all her seaweed.
Thinking of nights before
the sun on her lips.

Through her smile, she tells of the touches
shut off. Those who have clammed her closed.
For her and her lips of a seal
lay open and gaping
to only the waterful.

My Life is Fragile

The inner cellophane skin of an eggshell

how easily it can break
blacken
an atom thin wall flicker away

any second I will feel the blanket
of the world pull from under me
I will see what is truly sitting in the sand

two touching veins Y-splitting
the different ways life goes spinning
if you'd just sliced the peach horizontally

one second pushed
and the car is t-boned

the guy on the bus with the tear drop
sits next to me and not the latina
woman he followed.

Maybe the other ways settle as soil
in layers
grey alternative
fossils of possibility

maybe it's vines entangled
or lanes on the highway

or sheets
or fireworks

or it's like the snow
settling on your eyelashes
when you walk through a storm.

Deadly Nightshade

“Bella donna” is derived from Italian and means ‘beautiful woman’...The herb was used in eye-drops by women to dilate the pupils of the eyes to make them appear seductive.”

-Wikipedia entry for “Deadly Nightshade”

I stuck myself to you,
a polyp of flesh and pink.

Bashed my neck, in tides
to your stone chest.

Beat you down to your knees
so you could see me
 dilated, doubled, dizzy

like we could fall in love
with the blur of us instead.

I grill-stuck to the meat gristle
of you, I swallowed the sea
and left my hair around
like dirty panties.

Is it cheating? To write you as I live you?
Eating the soil before the peach tree
 like a glutton
 like a cockroach.

If I stay this supplicant
of a person, you will use up all of me
to the better of nothing
or I will become the happiest girl on this planet.

Spring

I write in the wake of your wet
sweat rubbing against the desert
of my body.

There are always reflections,
green eyes,
a whole field of poppies
between our skulls.

And I don't glisten
metallic in white foam.
I am too much sand and water, and love
hurts like your bristled kisses.

Like knowledge,

there *is* darkness
in the corner of the room.

*Just go, be patient enough for spring
they tell me it always comes.*

But I just never know,

like a dead orchid
budding again.

+
((o))
||
~~~\  
(((| (0) 0)))}}}  
(//((((0))0))//  
((( {0}{{{}  
“//\\\”  
**SS**  
9  
(  
)





Unseasoned

*The first breath of autumn was in the air, a prodigal feeling,  
a feeling of wanting, taking and keeping before it's too late.*

— J.L. Carr, A Month in the Country

It's too late.

I've turned on my standing heater  
white noise boyfriend who doesn't touch,  
a hot loving breath on my knees.

I cannot sleep tonight  
surrounded by a humming dark.  
All the day's activity are cloaked.  
I thought truth would come in winter.

Something explained in all the dying.  
The real cold and the harsh unlying wind.  
When everything yells  
is the true test of happiness.  
That sort of truth.

Maybe if I too had a season each year  
where I saw my bones curl like fern  
fists, my skin brown in soot and coffee grounds,  
wrists returning to the earth again,

and again, maybe I would learn something here.

If I burned yellow, then brown, then black  
to fall into my droopy breasts like the tips  
of my toes curled under and in toward my heart  
where the winter pours from.  
Draws back.

I would learn the start is not in my heart at all  
but with the beat of the hummingbird wing  
the displaced air wrestled in the feathers  
of the pillow I put my hands under  
when I sleep, on one half, of the big bed.

I would learn to wait for the heat  
to pop the pomegranate.

But I never sleep naked.

Maybe if I watched my eyelashes color  
shrivel and drop their beauty like confetti  
again and again I would wait  
for the hummingbird  
to return to my window  
and learn what it means.

But I just miss the sound of the air  
displaced around his wings.  
The smell of baked wild grass.

(,; .        **cool moon**  
catch moonrise.

I've been trying for years to

With all of me, eyes slit,  
I lift off toward the glowing ornament.

I stare stiff, burning holes  
into her salt crystal skin.  
Not an inch of her raises a flies-width.

A flick of human hooks  
my eyes ground in skin,  
a distracted nonsense is all it takes  
to forget her.  
A flattened second-width tick without her.

I look back.  
The black sky has shoved the moon.

Silently raised above the wires  
up the full alley of black molasses,  
an unapologetic light bulb  
swimming secret  
in cement.

I repair my razors, restare  
my feet planted  
in planet.  
I meet her motionlessness,  
a conquering.

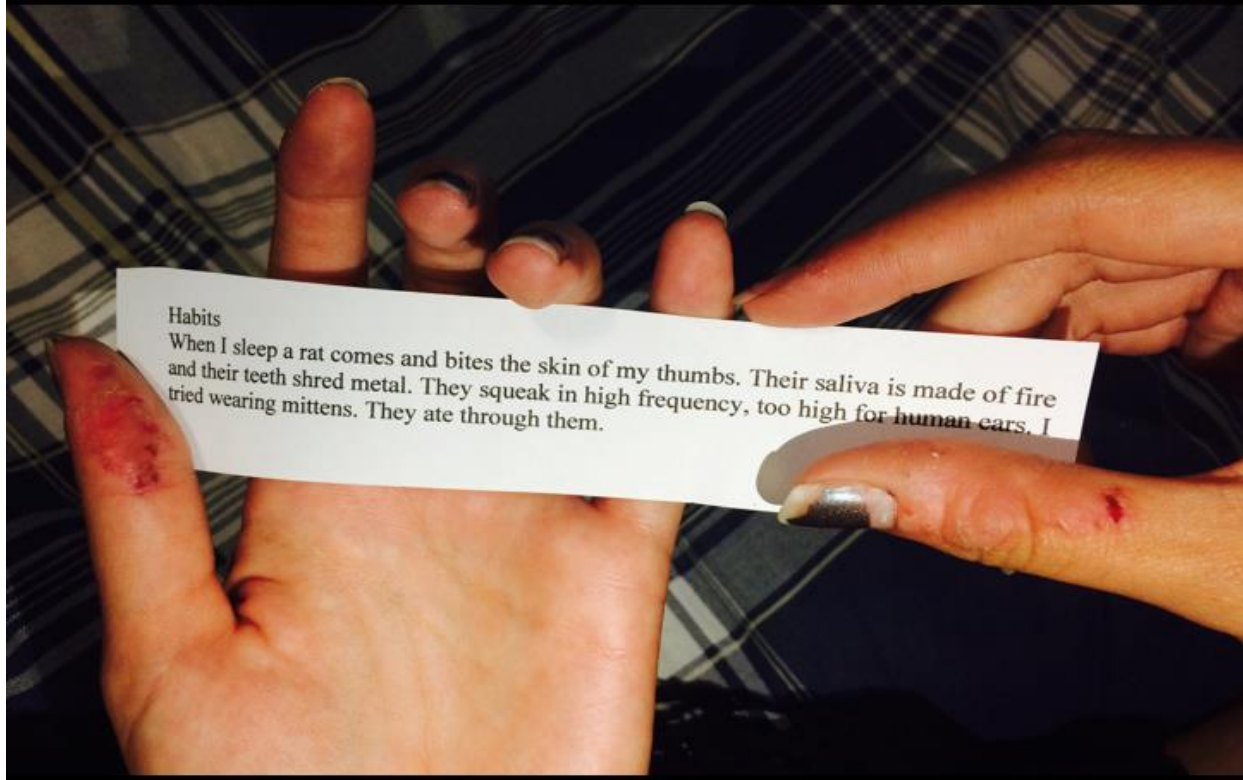
Her stunning scars vulnerable  
to all the abuse.  
I can almost feel a tiny pain.

We are both unrelenting  
when the sky blurs to milk and  
stars pool in my eyes.

Stupid human,  
blinking the moment she lifts her skirt.

I cannot help it.  
I'm jealous of her.  
How her magnanimous beauty  
can be so allusive.

( .



Habits

When I sleep a rat comes and bites the skin of my thumbs. Their saliva is made of fire and their teeth shred metal. They squeak in high frequency, too high for human ears. I tried wearing mittens. They ate through them.

I have never seen a sunset naked

I dug out orgasms like bulbs  
wished for world peace  
headed with too many stones  
to flutter, ring.

A loaded chime next to the ocean  
sputtering in gusts of wind  
tickles on the roof, loose with pine needles

like a locust swarm, or wooden rain.

Nothing below the belt swung the heavy pendulum.

I was still curled in creeping silence,  
when ants eating the tips of my flesh  
white squalls of themselves  
ripped a ghost right out of me.

The last drop of the shower  
split the stone I was flying.

I'd filled with darkness and forgot the orchid  
simple and important things.  
The dirt under my nails  
the touch of soaking wet.

Why can I never remember time?

Doomed in a room.

I'm stoned my bone is broken  
fissured steps ‘,’,,,’””;;,,  
confetti fault lines””;;,’””,,,  
“”..  
””””

like candles stuck in a sweet white cake  
made a decade ago.

But I got the holy trinity: the blessed  
doctor, the good life  
ruining drugs, and the mom-saint-nurse  
1:1:1 ratio, saved my soul from dirty  
damnation.

I am a member of the Church of Modern  
Medicine.

9 pins, 1 plate, 12 pills/day  
10 weeks of crutches  
18 appointments of PT  
12-18 months of recovery  
and I can't even use chopsticks.

Week 1, I made an imprint of myself in bed



shit into the hands of my family  
floated on a cloud of contin.  
I made scary faces in the mirror  
I played dodgeball inside me.

Week 2-3, I was a baby bird tucked back  
into a white shell  
Week 4, an elderly dying flamingo  
5-8, a dog born with three legs  
8-12, a pirate carrying a leg of concrete.

The lesson is here  
lined in the sand  
when you cannot do one push-up.

And my brother started calling me bamby  
then gambit  
and I finally got it.

*everything  
if different  
is not so.*



It haunts me

not in the way dead things ghost  
the way secrets mold or warp  
grow left, dissolve

I wonder if I know  
it was a boy on fire

it haunts me as a future  
red you can see for miles.

my womb,  
tomb, kitchen knife  
I've cleaned the weapon

chop and stew  
I've cleaned the weapon

it scares me  
I don't believe in karma.

## Hysteria

A woman who writes feels too much, those hiccups and elevations!  
As if the day's waves and breaths are worthy of naming; as if this light and beat  
and face were better than yesterday.

I don't think I can warn the stars. I think I can stop them.  
Hook someone's nose and drag it slowly along the stem of a flower  
stick it whole full into a yellow buttercup bulb,  
make them smell the fresh syrup.

See the ridge, microscopic pink hairs hitch and smear the face of a sugar petal  
truly, see! A tiger stripe pinwheel of purple inked lily.

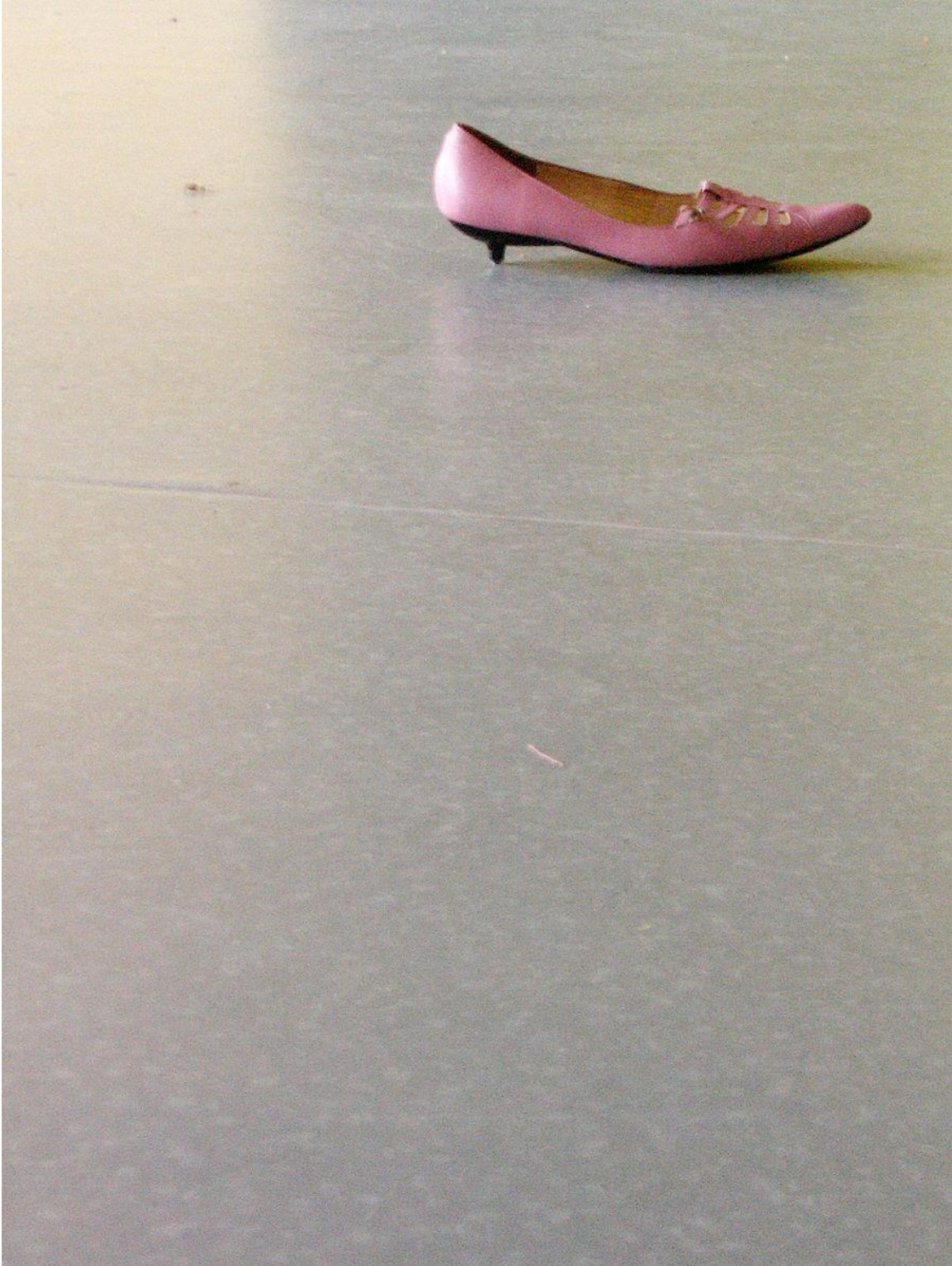
For there is a color in the breeze he didn't notice,  
a sense of sour in the salt,

a shimmering needle,  
unsewn in cotton,  
a quarter cointoss,  
unsettling the sun.

And to him, our hands are the same type of tan  
cavernous, trench and sinew.  
Our eyes are full of nonsensible words and that's enough.

He upsets a balancing of rocks.  
To beat him, I destroy the next one, and say nothing.





Mary Jane Gore

Facing It

## Foreword

### **Foreword One**

*There must be total annihilation of your body by his body and his body by yours, and then again and then forever again, and then nothing at all, for a parting to feel eternally awful.*

### **Foreword Two**

Some pretend it never happened; they avoid certain roads and vistas and malls and phone numbers and restaurants and tunes and aftershaves and perfumes and incense and whatever they need to avoid. They do good things for their bodies. They have massages with heated stones, or buy a razor with advanced blades, or bottled water to wash their hair.

Some few volunteer to hold dying babies at hospitals or teach a less fortunate child to read simple books that teach common words.

Some wallow, grieve, lose weight, gain weight, smoke, bite nails, or they drive by slowly in a car, stand and wait across the street on a sidewalk, trespass, or even execute.

That's not how it happened, here. There was another way.

## CH 1: Their Meeting at Work

It couldn't happen here in the vast grayness of the halls, from the powder blue gray sheen in the walls to the soul-crushing, light gravel gray flecked with charcoal wall-to-wall carpets, the taupe office machines, the minimally padded steel "loveseat" in the lobby, flanked by two narrow, upright steel chairs. It was the very last thing that Madeline (no extra "e," nothing extra, in fact) expected.

Noon. Her neat K-cup of coffee, cooling in its white cup and white saucer from her home, awaited the end of the page she edited.

Her computer froze up, however, like a bad heart. She cursed it gently. Hers was the worst in the office. For Madeline Shoregrave it was a glorified typewriter. A way to get words down; nothing more. She surely didn't want a new computer.

A glissade of synthetic sugar awakened her taste buds. Her lip tingled because of a cold sore that pushed through the stress of having her husband sleep at night next to the new woman.

The orderliness of the lines on the page marched before her eyes.

She felt up to the ordeal of placing a different header in every chapter and a footer.

She prided herself on giving the Department of Interior joint project with the University here at the Manassas campus the reports it deserved.

The computer, like her ex, continued to misbehave.

1 p.m. The office hummed with a steady energy. Madeline was wobbly after her lunch burger. The heat outside was heady; her cream-colored shirt still clung to her back from the short walk.

Voices bounced off the walls with surprising regularity, even while people finalized contracts, started months-long projects, slogged through mid-project deserts of neverending.

Chirps, giggles, laughter – like birds, the female buzzing – and the occasional baritone, which quieted the women, because in recent years, the office had become nearly devoid of male company or attention.

Not so often, a solemn visit from the boss' boss surprised them all. One man brought around the few scant pieces of direct mail, a different, fairly cute guy went door to door to keep tabs of some kind, to flirt. A FedEx man with yellow-brown yellow eyes actually licked his lips when he spoke with Therese.

Madeline got up to close her door when Denise and Anna got too loud.

1:02 – The indelible scenario reared itself, in spite of Madeline trying to quiet her mind. She let the absurd tragedy replay, through its unimproved dialogue:

"Hey." That was his opener as he had come into the kitchen with his own dirty plate. She remembered how she had burnt the meat that night, unable to focus.

She was at the old kitchen sink and her hands were hot. She was angry (having seen the credit card bill, in its innocent white envelope, looking just like any other month's bill, no red warning label, nothing but its sealed innocence).

She had let him finish eating a bloody piece of steak and bring his plate to her, as he seldom did. He put it in the sink in front of her without a word. She exhaled and slumped with her warm hands on the metal sink edge. Finally, a coursing feeling inside of her gained steam:

"Mark, when did you start seeing someone else?"

It no longer felt like pressure on her liver and gut when she thought about it. She didn't remember looking at his face, just the sink, just the dishes, just the last of dinner.

"I am glad you brought this up," he said. Glad.

"You practiced being this calm, didn't you?" She had on an apron, one that he had given her, she thought, as a joke. She wiped her hot, wet hands down the apron.

Then she untied it and let it drop to the floor. As predicted, he picked it up.

She had walked out to the curb, because she was the curb girl and he was the garage guy. She climbed into her sensible Subaru wagon.

Madeline recalled how carefully she had driven it to the 7-11 and bought a bottle of wine that she had liked in high school, the liquid wicked headache.

She drove back home, and parked, the bottle in its brown bag in her hand. She stared at Mark's white BMW framed in the garage door, parked where it always was. She parked in the driveway, safely beyond it.

She was going to talk to him. No, she wasn't.

She unscrewed the cap. It tasted dreadful. She got out and walked into the garage.

Closed her eyes and slowly poured the sticky pink sweetness and acidity over the BMW windshield and hood and watched it seep into the few openings the car had.

Over the roof, down the back and back again to the hood.

He came to the inside garage door and watched until every last drop was out. She started to open another bottle, but he intervened.

"Please move your car so I can move mine," he had said, with a criminal's calm. He cleared his throat. That was all. Please.

She sat there a moment and then backed hers out onto the street, then rolled it to the curb to see what he would do.

She watched as he backed his car out, maneuvered the hose attachment to "cone jet," blasted off her traces and left.

"Come on in," her friend Robin had said that night. Robin had never trusted him, not before the wedding, and vocally, not afterward, which had annoyed Madeline more than it disturbed her. Robin was right; Robin told her to forget, any way possible.

Madeline had deleted every picture of him that she had online, one by one. Then she dug through boxes and drawers to find every taken picture, any printed picture of her husband and ripped them into little pieces and put them in a dark vase that she

imagined was the shape of an urn. She dropped a match in and let them smolder a bit, swung it to lose the smoke.

Then she had driven to the Fowler neighborhood, where the rich folks lived, and let them blow over a fairly good-looking retention pond she had brought Mark to, for a picnic, once. A day when he had had so little to say, and when he did, he spoke thinly, like watered-down tea. Never again, she told herself, never again, the wrong man. A horrified family, playing a round of disc golf, stared at the smoking ash riding a warm air current into their neighborhood pond, believing it was someone's cremains. Which in effect was true.

\*\*

Figure it out, something else, something else, Madeline redirected as she stared ahead. She squinted and let her eyes focus again on the screen.

2:30 p.m. She pulled her brown and caramel highlighted hair out of her eyes – the highlights done by herself, such that the best were in back, after she had gotten the hang of it, and unfortunately not around her face.

Nothing pleasant or particularly comfortable broke the mood of the office, and in fact, Madeline Shoregrave liked it that way. The big boss had a German work ethic and a Nordic aesthetic that provided no distractions. She typed along.

Habitat. The thought perked her up.

Tonight, was a Habitat for Humanity night, her solace. Everyone watched the antics of Kurt, Kurt now with Jane, and about to score. Some people were taking bets on when Jane would come in with that little half smile that Kurt eventually conferred on several women, because Kurt was that good and that predictable.

Madeline heard a video prattling in the next door office. YouTube. She hated the word, it sounded like an endless loop of moving selfies. Which it was. Unlike most of the 30-odd-year-old women in her office, she didn't need the hilarity of babies, kittens or accidents. Her choice would be to run at her slow pace up a mountain, cause herself some physical pain so she knew she was alive. She would feel better when she recovered. Or perhaps she would choose to skip the mountain and kick a shinbone. Anyone would do.

Concentrate, she thought. Two and a half more hours.

3 p.m. She did a couple of seated tricep dips and was just about to stand up when she heard the friendly, probing voice of the man who stopped by the hall, an equal-opportunity cheer-bringer.

Ethan, a little down the way, with Denise, then with Cheryl, then Anna.

As usual, he gripped Madeline's door edge with his fingers while his face remained in the hall talking with someone else.

She was not in the mood for him.

She grabbed her hair, like a certain type of woman around the world might grab at the corner of a veil to make sure it is hiding enough of her face. Madeline did this not out of modesty but out of vanity. Her lip was killing her and the cold sore was cresting.

She hung her head and started to proofread in earnest.

With a firm hand on her desk, she ran her other hand down her forearm to keep her fingers from drumming. She had forgotten to put on jewelry.

“You busy, Madeline?” he asked slowly, still in the hallway. His voice surprised her.

“Kind of,” she called without looking away from her screen.

Today, Ethan seemed like a wind-up doll that had run down.

She tried to be civil: “But I imagine you’re busy, too.”

“I’m going to the hybrid webinar, some productivity thing late this afternoon,” he said, and waited for her to say she would go, too.

She stared at the words on the screen.

“You know, part seminar, part —“

“A hybrid seminar?” she exhaled all the way. She came out from under her hair, stabbed her keyboard again. The machine worked but slowly. “Why can’t they make a computer that will last longer than we do?” she said and peered into her own words there.

“Very few things do,” Ethan said. “I can only think of—“

Absent-mindedly, she said, “That’s good.”

She scrolled to the end of her document. Only three more pages. She could do this with time to spare.

He drifted across the hall to see Josie, like a pinball, hitting one door, then the next, then the next, all the way out.

Madeline definitely would go to Habitat on her way home. She glanced under her desk. Her sneakers were not there.

She sipped the superhot K-cup office coffee, and as the brown richness and chemical hit her cold sore, she winced, but then it rolled out like a shallow beach wave on her tongue and she imagined she was smarter, mistaking alertness for cognition.

4:55 p.m. As she gathered things into her purse and put on her ugly black flats that were completely broken in, Madeline set her jaw. She would go to Habitat, and she would not be overly interested in Kurt, the handsome one, and his highly entertaining interactions with women. She would be all on her own, and be okay with that.

Madeline pulled her shoe up over her heel and got a glimpse of the sole. She was surprised to see that her shoe was worn all of the way into a hole under her big toe, on the right shoe. All the way to the carpet, which explained why her toe ached.

At moments like this she had some insight into why her husband might have wanted a change from oblivious, thrifty, somewhat lazy her.

Then again, he was arrogant and in spite of his Italian and British suits, had acted like a dog when she wasn't around. The thought of the MD2020 effectively coating his white BMW as he drove off consoled her, made it feel their final transaction brought everything to a close. A ridiculous one, but a close.

The right shoe: she did what perhaps any enterprising woman, but one too leisurely and cheap to get to a shoe repair, would do: she cracked the cardboard off of a legal pad, stood flat on it, and started to trace around her foot.

Ethan's voice drifted down the hallway outside her door. Checking in with the ladies at day's end, wafting like perfume, that voice. Madeline kept tracing her foot.

"Mind if I sit down?" Ethan called. Then he poked his head in.

Silence.

"Are you talking to me?" Madeline finally said.

He pushed on her door, which was mostly open, and stepped all the way into her office. She straightened up and stared at him.

"Come in," she called lightly.

"Funny," he said. He turned toward wall calendar, tapped on a random date that was circled. His eyes bunched up, meditating on the date. His head swiveled.

"How old is that computer?" he asked.

"Is that important?" she asked him.

"No. Unless you want to be efficient," he said. She scowled. Her brown eyes darted over him. Ethan, the nice guy. She noticed for the first time how flat his stomach was, compared to most men who worked in offices, in their mid-thirties. His blue shirt was tucked in neatly, wrinkleless, showing off the absolute plane of his trunk.

"You are busy," he said without looking at her. "Can I just, just give me five minutes. I want to—"

"You certainly could, but I am leaving," she said. She was surprised to hear how loudly she sighed.

"Madeline, they would upgrade you if you want." She ignored him and picked up some work from the desk, papers and a pen.

His voice was eager; it always was eager. He leaned over her desk: "Why don't you tell me exactly what you are doing, there?"

She started to fold her arms, but the pen in her hand hit the floor, which caused him to take a good look at her bare foot. Which was on the cardboard.

"Try me," he said.

There was no good way to say it.

"I am making shoe...improvements."

He nodded solemnly and stared at her feet, one in a shoe and one not.

His lips were slightly parted, as if he wanted to start a speech.

"Things aren't easy," he said to her, still looking at the floor.

“Is everything okay?” she asked finally.

Another big sigh. “Not really.” Here we go, she thought.

He stood up and closed the door almost to shut. “It’s just that I, now, I see the others here. Everyone is working so hard, every day. I see you. I see myself. And I think there must be something beyond, something to want to think about and be part of, something to aim for, because it’s easy to see how people could be driven to...”

Oh dear, she thought. Existentialism. She forced the cardboard inside the shoe, took it out and trimmed it further.

She could tell he was staring at her. Sometimes people just know.

Suddenly he slapped the back of a hand into his other palm. “You think it’s just the same old stuff here, but suddenly -- you suddenly --“

She wiggled her foot into the shoe. Better.

“Damn, you really are leaving.”

Madeline buttoned her light sweater with one hand while her other hand checked a text from her friend Robin.

“Yeah, okay,” she said absently, in a high, dismissive voice. She was stamping her foot down when he leaned over the desk on his arms, to be closer. His nearness made her become different, a twinge akin to body lightness, which she recognized in herself as the embodiment of attraction: lightness all the way along her legs, paired with alertness and a twinkling of the freedom of not wearing any clothing.

Ethan had gazes. They went to different depths of field, of interest. This time there was something animalistic in his gaze, and she was the object.

Madeline, not one to be manipulated, decided to give it back to this man. She leaned on her own arms on her side of the desk and gazed into the blue-gray grounds of his eyes. Ethan could take his conversation-starting observations elsewhere.

“Coffee sometime, Madeline?” he asked without flinching. “Not Keurig cup.”

She wiggled her toes in her shoe. Felt okay. She breezed past him with the most impenetrable face she could manage, her deep brown eyes aimed beyond him. She summoned considerable dignity in her posture, given that he had seen her putting cardboard in her shoe.

He sort of blocked her way.

“Ethan.” She nodded and made it by him without a backward glance. “Maybe,” she said in a plain voice. “If there is something to talk about.”

There were many other sets of ears on the hall, more patient than hers.

Madeline flounced into Habitat with renewed energy born of the strangeness at the end of her work day. She wheeled on her heel when she heard a familiar voice, grateful that she had some padding in her shoe now.

“Hullo, Kurt,” she said, reaching out a hand and pretending to touch his arm, at the bicep. He flexed immediately. “Are you letting the ladies get their work done?”

The unmistakable scent of Janie’s chocolate chip cookies hung over them.

Madeline contrasted his look, a pompadour of dense brown-blond hair, an aquiline but masculine nose, two very stunning green eyes under dark clear brows, and pink lips, both of which were the width of those of a classic statue and looked slightly wet from talking so much, all of this she found herself comparing to the plain but somewhat alluring compactness and ruffled, casual, yet sensitive regard of Ethan. Ah, she thought. I am forgetting my cares. Good.

Kurt followed her past the louvered doors into hardware. His square jaw was in her face and she noticed that he jiggled his leg a bit under his pants, nervous with energy. He followed a bit too closely, like a wolf on the trail.

“What’s got into you?” he asked.

She continued to a cabinet in kitchens and pulled out a glass. No one had brought any beverages, so she went to the only working sink in the room.

“Summer fever,” she said, bluntly. She took a sip of her water. The glass had heft.

“Fever or not, it agrees with you,” he said. “If I wasn’t somewhat occupied, at this point in time, I would take you out and –”

“Not a concern, then,” she laughed.

“What concerns me is the way you drink.”

“Kurt, it’s water.”

“Madeline, it’s a vase.”

“It was in the kitchen cabinet. I’m thirsty.” She tilted her head back. “It is a little tall,” she admitted, but kept gulping down from the huge glass.

“A little wide,” he said. He stopped and looked at her directly: “Madeline, you look gorgeous today. Something happened with you.”

She nodded. “You’re perceptive.”

“Listen, darlin’” – Kurt dripped nondescript yet enchanting nicknames, with good reason – “I feel that. You and I.” He got down in her face, big-eyed and shameless. His eyes narrowed at the sound of the door opening, away from their line of sight. Perhaps toward his pending conquest, Jane.

Madeline recalled the way Ethan had struggled to express himself. She smiled at the memory in front of Kurt, who kept trying with Madeline but also kept his eyes on the front door. “Just say the word, lady....”

He trailed off and when he saw Madeline looking around the room, something she liked to do to play with him, instantly, he popped out his phone and stared at the screen. His index finger flung page after page, woman after woman, back into cyberspace.

Madeline walked away at a good clip into the bath section, past five sullied clawfoot tubs to ask their leader for her next assignment. Was it that obvious that she felt delightfully chaotic in her brain and in her chest today?

She heard Kurt yell over the row of hung doors as he hurried toward his next woman.

“I mean it!” A long pause. “Madeline!”







Americas





Dale Smith



These poems are selected from a larger project that looks at masculinity and race through the actions of individual white men. I am interested in their capabilities—their capacities for violence and for self-invention. A few such men from this project are presented here: the Texas settler Josiah Wilbarger. Hernan Cortés, the European violator of Mexico. The ethnographer and adventurer John Wesley Powell. And unidentified white and mixed-race workers in early twentieth-century Toronto. I believe that poetry's ability to negotiate extremes and to indulge contradiction gives insight to the inherent conditions by which whiteness has been manifest. The degree by which men of all ethnic markings are violated by New World expressions of (white, racist) power finds expression in the gestures and conditions through which men have lived and died. The point of the project is not to celebrate or condemn individuals, but to receive them into an afterlife marked still by their orders, by a manic ferocity. Pleasure in art, in the making and receiving, might I hope expose my preoccupation with questions hard to live with, and harder still to change.



Josiah Wilbarger: 1833

You fell in the August pasture

blood opened from your throat,

terrified

where history like a dream

invades memory

laden with violence

that night Bob's wife Anne

saw you naked under a post oak

caked in blood and called

your name in the dark

Lighting the tallow she found

men unwilling to pursue her

vision

and once again in slumber

saw you more vividly under the tree and

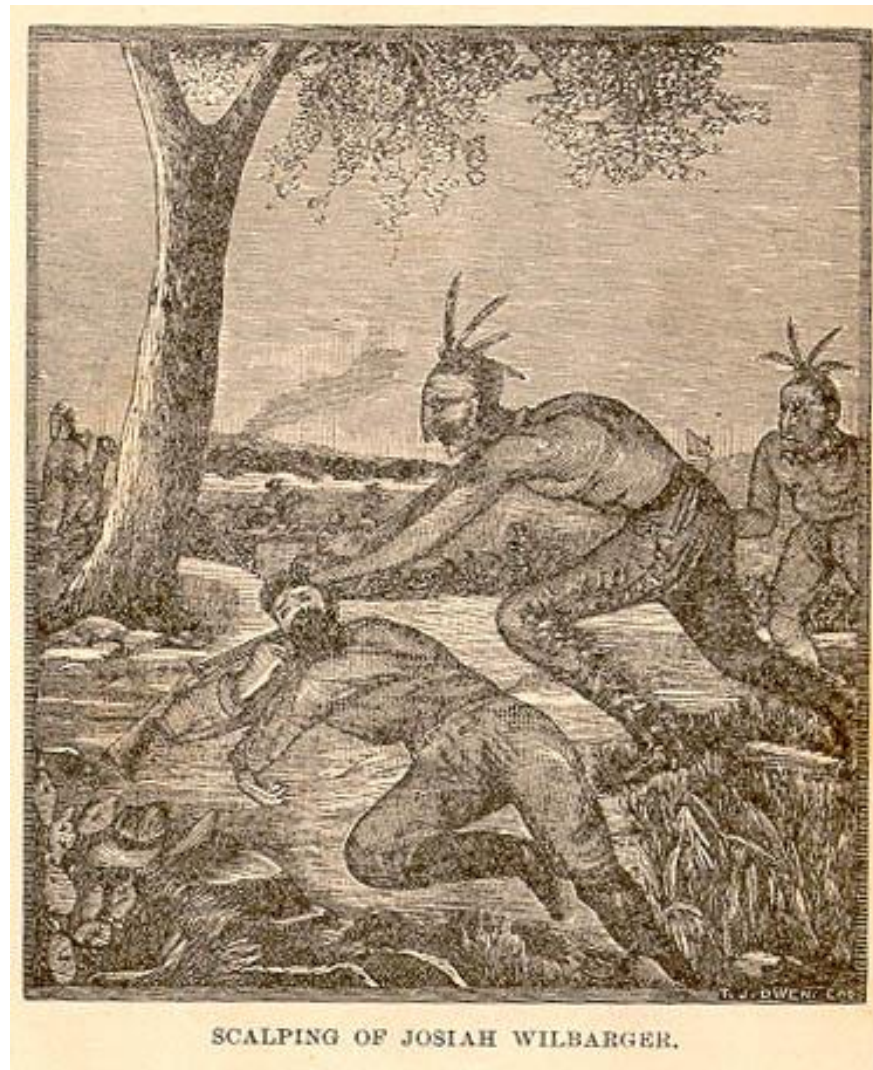
cried out—

By daybreak men assembled, riding

out along the Brazos among  
oaks and waist-high  
buffalo grasses  
at the mercy of experience  
and remembrance  
little broken things betrayed by the heat  
of day  
to wander among the escarpments  
where you lay in your blood and green  
flies  
oozed maggot eggs  
the musket ball entered the back  
of your neck  
passing under your chin with a gush  
and so the Apache interlopers  
did not  
cut your throat as they had the others  
and you did not feel, you said later, the knife circle  
your scalp, and the skin pull back and  
away from your head

Your clothes were taken you  
crawled  
later back to the stream near where the  
horses had been tied  
and drank there  
as if in a dream you might survive  
night alone under huisache motionless  
There your sister came and told you it  
would be okay  
she would go for help  
though she died that same night  
in Missouri  
and you only learned this later  
she trailed off toward the houses of the people who found you  
even as a neighbor dreamed of your  
image bloodied under the oak  
and all marveled at this and that you  
lived  
fifteen years to tell what had happened your skull exposed  
the skin hardly growing back over the  
dome of your head

where these events ripened into marvelous lore



“Was it Cortés that did it? Was it Cortés who? I think it’s Cortés who did it.

Was it? I think it was. It was.”

—Charles Olson

(June 29, 2018)

Cortés lit the sun  
seed. A seeming  
of the sun. A dream  
but for all the dying.  
Green parrots. Teoxihuitl  
serpent mask  
of Tlaloc. Old  
gone things....

So now the quiet  
house calms  
in still breath  
of sleeping kids.  
Bright weekend  
celebrants stock  
beer in coolers. O  
Canada. Across  
the water, dear  
Cortés came  
to hunt moose,  
and take away the game.

And comes to this.  
You sit in your room.  
Without your heart.  
Are you dreaming?  
Will you know  
there's no parting  
without sorrow?

Wait now for the phone's  
buzz and glow. Wild  
onions and goldenrod  
grow in summer's  
heat. We go  
shirtless and step  
feet into lake tide.  
A voice inside  
a golden vacancy  
sounds against  
sky's monotonous  
blue hazy grey.

To clarify such seemings

I am persuaded by.

Flamingoes stood in estuaries.

And mangrove springs

gave shade to the tiger

heron. I cannot

hear my voice. Find

the arrow, the heated barrel

of the harquebus. Strange

steel that broke

obsidian blade.

Hundreds of black-crowned

night herons roost

in maples in Ontario, south

of Rogers Center, quick flight

by wing to financial

markets. They nest

in pairs, fighting

raccoons, devils

sucking wild eggs.

The parents scream,

gesticulate wildly.

The waves are the waves

old as any dream

killers transact. Arch

wings back, beaks

sharp, jutting, harangued.

And other little birds—

goldfinches, warblers, killdeer-

scatter to the wind.

John Wesley Powell

Rafted Separation Canyon

in Utah's Virgin River.

He directed the Bureau

of Ethnography at the Smithsonian  
from 1879 to his death,  
1902, and published  
studies of the Ute People.  
Powell advocated for division  
of western lands by water  
lines, not rail, not  
the abstract of state  
farm ownership.  
Served with the 20<sup>th</sup>  
Illinois Volunteers. Lost  
an arm, Shiloh;  
returned to battle at  
Champion Hill, Big Black  
River Bridge, the siege  
of Vicksburg. A boy  
from Boone County,  
IL, his father an itinerant  
preacher from Shrewsbury,  
England. Just to say  
a quiet testament,

here, first of May,  
2018, two decades  
since I searched  
his movements west  
into the Grand Canyon,  
selling adventure.  
Stood there once at Four  
Corners as a boy.  
In the sun in that Ute  
Navajo white  
gone world.

### Workers on Jarvis Street

Poised in dignified vacancy  
shovel                      rake    pointed spades  
smoke thickens            and the steel dome









Douglas Rothschild

## SOUTH SWELL

A.}

Looking for something like that.  
Or that. The sense  
of repetition created

by the waves. Their  
undulation, waiting  
for the something  
that might happen

next. The eternal  
question. Get on  
this one? Or this?  
Wait. Now? Or now?

No, not this....  
Now? NOW... no,  
too far.... Now?  
Now? Just sit.

Watching

while the guy  
in the corner  
is getting tubed.

2.}

While the guy  
in the corner  
is getting tubed.  
People add scale

& the rocks  
on the beach,  
& the heads,

bobbing in the  
moment before  
the surf appears,  
appear to be the

same. Yet the  
way the camera's  
eye, collapses

perspective,

makes it not  
precisely true.  
Is this wrong?

Are the rocks  
bigger? Is what  
is perceived  
as perspective,

skewed? Casting  
about for meaning  
while waiting for

the rising & the  
falling consider  
the swell. Consider

A.]

The rising & the  
falling. Consider  
the swell, consider  
the rolling waves.

From here perspec-  
tive asks rolling?  
It thinks rising,  
bobbing, watching,

waiting to see  
the sea for what  
it is. A thing  
observed as an

example. The  
beach or the  
surf? The sea  
or the ocean's

swell, casting  
against it's  
flatness—trans-  
formed by what

perspective,

changed into  
something that  
it might have  
been? Looking

closer the hope  
to see what can  
not be know. As  
though one day,

by being still,  
stillness could  
hear waves in  
the mind's eye.

Rolling

The waves, wave.  
As the surfers  
add perspective,  
their heads bob

above the medium  
that transmits  
the energy of  
the substance

of the fluid  
in which their  
buoyancy is the  
agency of their

transition.

The juxtaposition  
of the moment of  
their transposition  
which, by rolling,

is the moment  
that informs us  
of the simple  
presence of them.

SAN SOLIEL: In the Sun [*a translation*]

Sonnet One).

Like a hand in a glove, the sun, in translation, escapes  
the dictionary & hides itself, in a cloud. Yet the day  
remains envisor, the waves, breaking—in & out. They put  
envision to shame. They replicate place in a flat plane,  
advise us on longevity. They disrupt the flatness. They  
plane the beach, as it were, with slosh. The tiny granules,  
disrupted by breaking & surge. Swell, as it were, just walks  
you home. Perambulates the beach with sand in your wet shoes.

When has it ever been different? Each particle of water, drawn  
by some inexorable reaction toward either the sun, or the sun's  
mirror. The sun, behind the cloud's visor, standing on a spindle,  
displayed longitudinally, the sun's mirror, reflective. Sitting  
there atop the gentile waves, a cool night, perpetuates illusion,  
wherein the sun-visor-spindle can be displaced longitudinally

Sonnet B}.

along the sun-visor-spindle, a 'Chevalier Vitre'. This knight's life mirrored in the pale-moon-light. It is not the sun itself, but its shadow-self's reflexion from behind a cloud. So that any proposed cloud cover, manifests a darkness through which the reflected rays of the sun, neither cannot nor will not penetrate.

& though there is no medium to vibrate, & thus transmit the gravitation, & the gravitational waves, generated by the electromagnetic concentration that is the cold body of the dark moon, create in that body of liquid, which covers 75% of this planet's visible surface, a vertical modulation of particles, that continued over time, constitute the virtual waves

created by the sun's thought, mounting it's chariot, riding across the arc of heaven, & crashing down, like waves, upon the sand colored, sandy

beach.

AT LINCOLN'S FEAT

"& little note, nor long remember that other that cannot be seen."

Sectional Eye: Aye

Maritime acquiescence must begin somewhere,  
completely at sea, one needs to impose order;  
rules & regulations; otherwise, the ship of state  
becomes unsteady, the going--difficult--the path

--uncertain. Someone, O' Captain, [my captain]  
needs to know, how to look upon the phases  
of the changing moon, nestled in the troughs  
between waves; between clouds. This is our  
Lincoln, who, sitting in a cloud of thoughts,

reflecting on his thoughts, pooled about his feet,  
reflecting. Earth & sky. The monumentalness of  
the diurnal, as the Constitution turning on the point  
of an obelisk, spins, hangs by a thread, & twists

slowly in the wind.

## Section Aye-Aye: Who Needs Waves

In a cloud--the foggy thoughts of a cluttered mind.  
The voices raging against each other, a house divided  
cannot stand, but sits, contemplating the end of time  
before it is engulfed & overwhelmed by the relentless  
on-rush of doom, which, rising & falling, periodically  
makes of the observer, time. & though the change is  
constant, it changes nothing other than the momentary  
perspective of the observer, or the temporary position  
of the observed, for what is in the world, remains in  
the world, & what is outside the world, remains in the  
imagination of the imager....

Carry on Mr. Bowditch: Aye-Aye, Sir

The cloudy headed negative, the fogginess of war, that is rampant on these cold ramparts in these cold times. The war that rages through the muddied thoughts & machinations of the ideologically pure. & the waves, which belie the shifting sands of the firmament beneath

the feet of those who find themselves, below the wrackline, upon the surface of the moon. Is this here what can be heard of what the sun says to the moon? Or is it the sun in the galaxy, saying that love cannot love one another, without that dark matter to transmit that love?

Yet, how could it be otherwise?

How could love, love what cannot  
be know, or know what it cannot love?

Tidal Elements: 23 {from A.C. Guelzo}

"We are met on a great battle field of that war, which is [itself] a reminder  
that those very  
ordinary people,  
whom the [un]cultured despisers of democracy hold in such contempt,  
have been willing to  
mount some  
very extraordinary efforts to preseve it. Especially, we have come to  
dedicate a portion of  
it, as a final resting  
place for those [ideals which have] died here, that the nation might live.  
Live, and be reminded  
that those  
[ideals were part of a vision of democracy that] saw in democracy  
something more than  
opportunities for  
self-interest and self-aggrandizement, something that spoke to the  
fundamental nature of  
human being[ness]  
itself, something which arched like a comet in the political sky. This we may,  
in all propriety do,  
[for] it is  
altogether fitting & proper that we should do this . . ."

& the waves roll on, as they had  
rolled some 5,000 years before.

23: 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.'

Raked by this planet's response to it's darker, lonelier, long  
lost twin, which is what the sun's seas welcome all to join in.

The route proposed is the proposed route, & the method of  
transport medial. "Bring the chariot which rides above the clouds

across the sky." But what of the world on such an afternoon?

"...Arrived yesterday...land. Tomorrow then, more south." Then  
more waves. & the angles's angels. John Brown's Body, mouldering

in The Battle Hymn of the Republic. It's grapes of wrath...stored  
in these lilacs about to bloom. But who needs waves when

there is always the back & forth tug of history. Where 'some nothing'

is actually a thing, that cannot be shown to be there. It does not  
simply beginning by beguiling the viewer with the light that these

few good angles let filter in, but by providing a direct statement  
of negation. It is the negation of the interstellar dark matter, it is

Lincoln's Feat, which we cannot love each other through.







Tim VanDyke

*from* 185 Moons

## Dear Door

Dear Door— what does death hold for me— Quihica—  
your clay frame— all blood is driven from it— the space of  
a nail— space and blood revolving like the lunar orbit  
found its head— which is yours come this way— to this  
place— all the lonely spheres come to pay their debts with  
the hot gouge of a dagger— the apostates of democracy  
come to pay their debts— the women covered in black  
shawls come as I care for my wife— they pay their debts—  
remain faithful to the thread of humility— the threat of  
virginity— Dear Door up on the Mountain— the women  
up early to make tortillas for the day— grinding the maize  
without a mill for fear of the foreign sprouting in their  
fields— it will eat them up— Dear Door, my wife came  
close to passing through you today— I care for her in  
many ways— her women care for her and I care for her—  
as surely as you care, in your way— Dear Door, what do  
you open up to? More moons?— What a fate— the  
women— they cry out in fear for the city— they call out to  
it— to Bogota— there are bodies rotting in the river—  
hearts cut out and bled— I mean to say I love you to my  
wife, and I do say I love you— can I also say I am sad—  
they float in the river— someone should tie stones to their  
necks—Dear Door on the Mountain— the women out  
early, up in the cold— the gleaming machines of the  
*Latifundia* chew up corn as easily as they chew up the  
people made of maize— as it is taught by the catechists, the  
women are told there is only one God— only one heart—  
but it's not true— there is also the Sun, the heart of the  
sky— there is also the Night and hellish stars— there is  
also the great space of the synaptic chasm— there is me  
and the women and my wife— we all say I love you to the  
living— to the dead— I don't know

## Us Little White Kids

The city smells of sewage after the heavy rains— sewage from the river, risen up onto the streets— the city burns bright for a moment and disappears into the Sun— us little white kids disappear, too, around the corner— steady hum as we glow—honest hum, steady about our business— from a silence come the birds— from a boundary— from the sky limp in its body— look at the differences— city spaced along a basin— boundary of vegetative decay— boundary that only birds can pierce— silence after a rain— we take refuge in the disappeared ringing in our ears— remember— don't you hear the last birds in the evening— coming home— becoming no one— don't we hear praise as we come and go— us little white kids staying steady at our business— remember Columbus, who had debts— the slaves on his ships had died— so in Cicao in Haiti— where he imagined were fields of gold— he ordered all persons over fourteen to collect a certain quantity of gold every three months— in exchange he gave them copper tokens to hang around their necks— if after three months they didn't have any tokens hanging from their necks— Columbus cut off their hands— they bled out— the only gold around— bits of dust in the streams where they bathed— birds heavy in the trees— birdsong muted by vipers—disappearing— into the city— into the Sun

Us little white kids always invading— always reaching into a space around your mouth, around the growth and brush, around the dead animals sketched sparsely onto teeth that glow and frighten like shadows beneath the moon— invading, comes a clearing that unmask the foliage covering the body of my assassin—I do not let her body sink— I leave it by the pool— no one god may trample the earth— nor crush the throats of the assailed, nor assault the keening— those that are weightless— and over there, the clean line, the *Latifundia* quietly eating the entrails of its workers— whimpering at night in their beds as their bodies disappear— surprise and shock that their fortifications will hold out a little longer, that their bodies will space each thought against a thought of suicide— the way it gathers force— like lust— a sense of the moon behind the snow, caught up in flickering snatches of trash.

In silence we entered the churches to steal God's spit—  
His corpse pursued us so we sped away— the only sound  
was God choking on our fumes— that's how we rolled—  
with speed, with bellies swollen in naïve insolence— us  
gringos— us little white kids— whoever holds the sword  
holds the flame— whoever holds the trance holds the  
sight— sees what kind of dog eviscerating what kind of  
woman in the shadow of the temple— sees the battlefield  
and the woman huddled in the grass— sees the Spanish  
gentleman release his hound— he will spare her if she takes  
word to the next town— the hound lunges forward— us  
little white kids acting like snowflakes, kicking up trash in  
Villavicencio, lung hungry and reckless— we timed our  
steps to the sound of the parade of spirits marching past  
our doors at night— and the confusion, and us barking at  
the curtains— so crazed we drove a motorbike through the  
crowd— so crazed we got the glory and the belt— so  
crazed, every night we sped into oblivion, hoping it would  
illuminate this dark place, and crown the earth frozen in  
moonlight— shed tears as we mourned our golden headed  
moments of freedom— voices echoing among the  
skeletons and the gleaming, industrial-sized giants— a can  
of gasoline ready to ignite those daytime tyrannies almost  
animate in the dark

Us little white kids glaring at the moon's face— us in our pajamas— us declaring independence from our stillness— us our declarations swaying in the wind— us the wildest of animals— us with our hands covered in spit— us as we faced tyranny with an open throat—a campesino from far away looks like a tree that trembles— the coyote fat in his truck— us deadly with doors pocked by gunfire— to remember that parasite fantasy— a campesino man runs naked from the dogs while we huff glue til we get shaky in the teeth— us smokes a weed plucked from the river's bank, calls it hashish and vomits— hallucination and parasite, memory of us kids enraged with pop guns, with flame and mystic power— us with blood to disappear— 250 at the hands of Popeye who is Escobar's assassin— my assassin's body is as nubile as it is old— Face of the disappeared— faces behind the torn beast— flesh of horses rotting, served in the cantinas at mealtime between the hard hours of picking coffee and sleep— us little white kids eating the Sun— giving to it a Gnostic name that means "twilight envelops the mongrel as it is picked up by the scruff"

Birdsong in the evening— us little white kids cussing—  
hushed cursing well away from firelight— well away from  
the city's rapture— instead, the stellar glints of blood—  
come out, stars— moonlight bridled by the last glints of  
sun— us little white kids down in the banana patch, playing  
swords at dusk— me with a machete— Tim with a leafy  
stalk— he jabs and I swing, lop off pieces of stalk until  
nothing is left but a deep red gash between index and  
thumb— white to the bone and a rupture of skin— rapture  
of feathers falling— our faces taut with laughter—  
darkness falls and out comes the jungle— the jungle  
dark— and in my memory now comes Chiquita out of  
some passing membrane— come to claim what?— some  
stray bananas?— come to claim us or at least our fathers—  
come for us by the throat— extinct tree T-posed above  
cavities— the red gun line of nearby rock crags— Chiquita  
come in cool green and liquid eyes— come with the  
temptation of hope— come lustered with the promise of  
flight— sullen light of bullets catch the shape of the moon  
as they float toward the deadly sea— flight of corpses  
caught by the river's course— caught in the last stages of  
hunger— Chiquita's harvest, the workers eaten up and spit  
out into the jungle dark, liminal with sacrifice— another  
membrane creeping in to keep this memory safe— let them  
continue to barter— who will accept salvation— who will  
be weighed down with stones— us little white kids crawl  
out of the dark— hello, house— hello, blankets— hello,  
earth, upheaving, covering its skin ripe with scars

## I Dream of a Mountain

It's true— no one god may trample the earth— let him—  
our share of night is clear— my wife on the mountain and  
no one god in the forest— east and north of  
Villavicencio— my wife with auger and her share of  
mourning— the bite bores deeper than the bit— my wife  
with anger to start again— Goddess got that anger again—  
got that angel to go again— hey angel— how to escape the  
approaching storm— hey angel— how'd you get blood on  
your knickers— no one god may break through the forest  
floor— let him stub his penis on a rock— he fears his own  
resurrection— my wife is a tree that shudders with  
acetylene fire— her fruit cut into the air as they fall— as  
starlight cuts as it falls— as it replies to the soft brown  
earth— gives it all back like a tusk in the belly— wind  
carries poison towards an absolute fall as planes fly above  
the crops— one more thing to spit onto the ground as the  
workers look up— my wife on the mountain tosses about  
like a lion— her red mane scatters sea foam and white  
ripples of flame— scatters thunder across the heart's  
chambers— casts uncertainty on the night's voiceless  
remainder— I saw a murder wrapped around no one god's  
mouth— a mask with which to revel in the echo of the  
kill— in this dream my wife is not with me yet— my vision  
is numinous— no one god is not with me— no one has yet  
turned into a story of atoms— lying beside me she is so  
beautifully bound up— her thinking face bound to the  
world— its making and unmaking— I am unmasked—  
drawn up slowly by the throat— to emerge— wet— soiled  
with blood— cut with a razor no one god has made  
weightless— in my dream it is big as the moon





RUINED, AND WINTER AT THE DOOR—AN EPISODE OF THE HORSE PLAGUE.—[DRAWN BY PAUL FRENZKY.]



THE HORSE BEWITCHED.—[SEE PAGE 514.]

Mary Yordy

1872

Walker Lake, Arizona — Joe

There is an old Paiute Man the settlers call Joe: 'Fish Lake Joe' from the Reservation at Walker Lake. Some of them give him work from time to time digging irrigation channels, feeding livestock. He brings honey and wild bird's eggs to trade at some of the homesteads. But among his own people he is the prophet Grey Hair, leader of the First Ghost Dance.

When Typhoid moved through the camps of the Paiute it was Grey Hair who came to undertake healing ritual. He lay next to the infected and journeyed to the land of the dead to gather their spirits and bring them home. As the epidemic advanced among the Paiute Grey Hair returned alone again and again. He found them but they would not come back to live in this evil world. His ancestors came to him, also and they also spoke to him, telling him that a great time was coming, a time when the earth would be renewed. He must teach the people a dance to hasten the time. All who danced this dance would be lifted into the sky as new earth flowed out over the land, green and alive with clear water and game. The whites would be no more, and there would be no more death or sickness: then they would return.

Believers in the visions of Grey Hair have been gathering at Walker Lake year after year to dance. What began as a circle dance of Paiute mourners has grown into an inter-tribal phenomenon with hundreds of participants who gather to dance for days at a time. Visionaries from distant tribes have traveled to take part and carried the dance into the territories of the Modoc, the Klamath, and the Shasta. Smohalla the Dreamer came from Wenatchee to hear the vision told and is teaching the dance among the tribes of the Columbia River Basin far to the North.

But the Walker Lake Ghost Dance is nearing collapse. Grey Hair is never satisfied with the rituals. His followers question him and point out inconsistencies in his teachings. He goes up onto the mountain alone and returns with augmented visions, changes in the dance.

---

## The Aurora

Three days after an observer in Japan records the appearance of a trail of spots crossing the face of the sun, the Earth is bombarded by an electromagnetic storm of unusual power. Telegraph stations lose electricity, thousands of messages are

lost. In some locations fragmented transmissions animate electrically dead equipment, and baffled operators struggle with unintelligible code. Profound disruptions of magnetic equipment on ships and in scientific observatories occur as well.

Following the solar storm's silent impact on the magnetosphere, auroras lift radiant walls of colored light from horizon to apex in the Polar Regions. The Auroral Zones dilate, extending thousands of miles from the poles toward the equator. Freakish auroras appear in latitudes where they are unknown, in Cuba and Singapore, in Paris, France.

The Auroras are red and brilliant. Many witnesses fear that a great fire is burning somewhere in the distance. At some vantage points the fiery red gradates into a dense, unnatural green glow along the horizon.

---

## Paris

At the time of the aurora, the city of Paris is engaged in the repair and renewal of the urban scene after war with the Germans and the brutal suppression of the Paris Commune. Cafes, theaters and shops are opening. Orderly shipments of leather, furs, silk, gems, precious metals, ambergris and distillations of flowers arrive to nurture the ateliers where world-renowned Parisian commodities are going back into production.

An odor rises from the Seine. Some attribute it to meteorological conditions, others to the blood of 20,000 communards washed into the sewer system the previous spring.

On the night of the Paris Aurora, few sleep. The people of the city maneuver gas-lit streets to gather on roofs, in parks, standing together in quiet crowds, faces illuminated by the alien, spectacular display.

---

## New Zealand

Te Kooti entered the colonial record as a criminal sentenced to time in prison. It was there, through diligent study of the Bible, that Te Kooti arrived at a potent combination of Maori legend and Old and New Testaments. He emerged from prison proclaiming himself the true king of the Maori. As a boy he had once worked for a traveling showman. The tricks he had learned then, involving burning phosphorus and sleight of hand, inculcated faith in his supernatural powers. Te Kooti was believed to prognosticate weather and troop movements, to ride a horse that sometimes flew through the sky, and he raised a great rebellion.

But now it is finished. He has been reduced to leadership of a small band of warriors who hide in thickets and caves and make no fires. The forest glowers, silent and strange in the dull light of the red aurora. Their former brethren have returned to the old kingdoms, landed in jail, or dropped through the gallows floor with nooses around their necks.

---

## Missouri

The astonishing aerial rivers of Passenger Pigeons over the Central Plain of the American continent have dwindled to sporadic sightings of smaller flocks. Traditional nesting places are found empty in the East. But with the help of the telegraph and the railroad, market hunters continue to provide hundreds of thousands of birds for human consumption and various collateral uses of fat, pelts, wings and feathers.

News of a Missouri flock is telegraphed to a network of locations, and trains bound for Missouri fill with commercial hunters, their dogs and apprentices, shotguns and kits. The profession is bitterly competitive. In Missouri, skirmishes with locals are quickly settled as all agree on the need to seize the day.

The movement of the flock is swift, its direction unaltered by the presence of the arsenal below, by the deafening report of guns and the barking of dogs.

---

## Spirits

There are too many bodies. The churchyards and mausoleums of the cities are congested with human remains. Mass grave pits are extemporized for the victims of Yellow Fever, Typhoid, Diphtheria, Cholera, Small Pox. Nine years after Gettysburg, postwar hostilities play out in allocation of space for graves. Remains of the Confederate dead are evicted and conducted south on trains and in wagons.

Under the circumstances, who can blame the Resurrection Men, the Body Snatchers, supplying Anatomical Theaters and Medical Colleges with corpses? They merely pursue a livelihood comparable to the daylight trades and by doing so provide medical science with treasured resources. As long as they restrict themselves to the graves of pauper, lunatic, and friendless masses the authorities turn a blind eye.

The average life expectancy is 40. Half of the children who survive birth die before the age of 5.

Spiritualism is at its height, making communication with the dead the basis of an enlightenment proclaimed by psychic mediums and elucidated in cheaply-printed, often pseudonymous books and pamphlets. Traditional religious cosmology is declared obsolete now that the dead may be directly consulted

about the other world. In darkened rooms the dead are invoked, tables rattle, objects levitate. The touch of invisible hands, the appearance of ectoplasm, and the messages of departed loved ones verify the continuation of existence beyond death among the believers, many of whom are among the more educated, progressive classes of society.

The mediums confide that they depend upon mysterious entities called 'Spirit Guides.' To a phenomenal extent these invisibles are introduced to participants as deceased members of American tribes. Many a séance begins with invocations to Red Bird, or Bright Cloud, or a series of mellifluous syllables suggestive of native language.

---

## Drought

Throughout the temperate zones of the planet, drought stills the wheels of mills. Great rivers narrow on avenues of mud. The courses of small creeks and streams lay dry. Crops fail.

---

## Gilgamesh

A light burns in the basement of the British Museum, long after the halls and offices have emptied and the galleries have closed, in a storage room delegated to the Department of Assyriology. A lanky, hollow-eyed young man places a large cuneiform fragment on his workbench. It is one of hundreds crated in Iraq that have languished unexamined since excavation.

His name is George Smith. At home, his wife and their five children sleep in a cold, fifth floor Bloomsbury flat, but insomnia and the habit of night work often bring him back to the Museum to work long into the night.

George Smith is a peculiarity, a working class autodidact. Decryption of the Assyrian tablets obsessed him from the moment he saw them on a museum outing for printing trade apprentices in his youth. His mastery of cuneiform began at the kitchen table of a workingman's boarding house where he sat night after night learning to decrypt the ancient characters as the house slept and the mice scuttled in the cupboards. He haunted the museum and its library for years until someone notified the director about the odd young man requesting obscure excavation records, translating exhibited tablets on sight.

The fragment is large, almost four columns of fine marks in ancient clay. Segments of text from a past millennium lift from obscurity as he works to clean the surface.

I HAVE BEEN WATCHING YOU

I WILL REVEAL A SECRET OF THE GODS

A THING THAT IS HIDDEN

His brushes and picks are exposing an account of the anguish of the gods, the destruction of the world.

A DOVE SENT OUT OVER THE DEPTHS

NO RESTING PLACE

---

Bustles

The reign of the hoop skirt, worn with crinolines and covered with vast yardages of fabric, suddenly ends. Skirts are swept back, bringing the front and sides of the garment close to the body, and heaped on a framework that extends from the back of the waist over the hindquarters of the fashionable woman. Most bustles are engineered of riveted metal strips and cotton twill. They are lightweight and durable and collapse in a concertina fashion for storage. Extended into its full shape, the bustle supports an equally extravagant and elaborate type of skirting which concentrates its luxury of material and design over the backside. Hairdressing echoes this shift of adornment to the rear, massing braids and hairpieces in dense arrangements at the back of the head.

Utah

A Utah couple arrive in Tooele one night in a state of wild dismay, the goods in their wagon scrambled, horses nervous and soaked in sweat. They describe an encounter with two beings 'like tall men without faces' who stopped them on the prairie road. The beings were covered with a kind of downy, shining fur. They had a strange device with them, something like a funnel attached to a tube. One of them held the funnel against his abdomen and extended the tube toward them. A series of loud 'chattering sounds' ensued, and the horses bolted. By the time they got the team under control the strange beings were nowhere to be seen.

---

## Vesuvius

Mount Vesuvius erupts. Italian Geologist Luigi Palmieri refuses to leave his post at the observatory on the mountainside and mans the scientific instruments alone. Fortunately, the slight knoll the observatory was erected upon parts the flow of slow-moving lava, and Palmieri survives.

Naples is shuttered under a cloud of ash. Stray pedestrians rush on errands pressing handkerchiefs over their mouths and noses. Acres of vineyards and farms have been overwhelmed, villages destroyed, and substantial fatality reports are published in the papers. These prove erroneous. Survivors feared dead are located one by one in the following days. Aside from the misadventure of a group of German hikers only indirectly related to the eruption and the demise of a couple of tuberculosis patients attributed to poor air quality, there were no fatalities.

---

## Nebraska

Grand Duke Alexi of Russia's grand tour of the USA arrives on the Great Plains. It is the 22nd birthday of the sixth son of the Czar, a soft, sad-eyed young man who is laced into a corset each morning by his aides and loathes hunting. He has grown extravagant muttonchops according to the latest tonsorial fashion. On the cold plains of Nebraska the Grand Duke dismounts to shake the hand of Buffalo Bill Cody.

Those assembled on the plain include General Philip Sheridan, General George Armstrong Custer, two companies of cavalry, the regimental brass band, and 600 Sioux warriors on horseback lead by Spotted Tail. Spotted Tail, a small man of around fifty years of age, approaches the young Grand Duke. He is wearing a borrowed gentleman's suit and an upside down US Army belt. He extends his hand. They offer greetings in their respective languages and exchange gifts. Demonstration of Wild Indian horsemanship, archery and lance throwing commence.

There are three wagons of champagne, spirits and food, dozens of choice saddle horses and a legion of servants and grooms. The spectacle has been months in the making. Substantial material concession was offered to the Sioux who agreed

to participate. Systematic extermination of the wild buffalo herds has made provision of game a concern, but a small herd of 200 has been located.

Reports of Alexi's success on the hunt will vary widely. He rides out onto the prairie and kills one of the creatures under the expert coaching of Buffalo Bill Cody. Or he stands in a train car with a .48 caliber rifle and kills 12 Buffalo through the open window. It depends on whose memoirs, which newspapers, are consulted.

The Grand Duke is quite taken with General George Armstrong Custer. They pose together in a Nebraska photography studio assuming informal dress, Custer semi-reclined on a bearskin-draped chaise lounge, Alexi holding a pipe, wearing a fez and smoking jacket.

---

The Virgin Militant

In Forbach and Neubois, towns 173 kilometers apart, on the same day, apparitions of the Virgin appear. Neither will be recognized by church authorities.

In Forbach, Clementine Girsh, age 11, sees the virgin appear surrounded by the souls of the dead, weeping tears of blood.

In Neubois, 100 worshippers in a small chapel see the virgin appear above them raising a great sword, her face aggrieved. Witnesses will describe a paralytic sensation--as if the air in the sanctuary had coagulated around them and held them fast.

---

### The Horse Plague

A plague spreads among the horses of North America. Horses affected by the contagion are too ill to be worked for weeks at a time. Carriages and wagons sit empty, ailing beasts lay coughing in their stalls with mucous running from their eyes and noses. Transportation and commerce are paralyzed in an ever-widening zone of effect. Without horse power there is no wood, no coal, to feed the

massive engines of the steam age. Manufacturing stalls. Streetcars and trains sit motionless in depots. When Boston catches fire, firemen harness themselves to the fire engines and draw the machines through the streets in human teams for want of fit horses. The city burns.

---

### The Diamond Field Hoax

Two Kentucky swindlers convince a consortium of wealthy investors including Charles Tiffany, Presidential Candidate Horace Greeley, and Baron von Rothschild to invest in a 'diamond field' discovered in Wyoming territory. The engineer sent to survey the claim is taken on a four day, circuitous journey over rough terrain. Hoodwinked by an array of uncut, low-quality gems purchased in Amsterdam and lightly buried in the desert terrain he telegraphs the investors and stakes out thousands of acres of land.

---

### The Convention

In New Orleans representatives of the black professional and educated class convene to discuss the issues of the day and the progress of the race. Women are excluded from the affair. Lunch is served at long hotel tables on fine china. In the evening the participants may converse over dinners or enjoy the night life of a city that was untouched by the military ravages of war and has long nurtured a wealthy and accomplished class of persons of color. The incorrigibility of their lower classes is lamented: hard work, sobriety and education are recommended. Their statement to the papers will object at some length to the fact that people like themselves are forced to share train cars with an unimproved class of colored persons while the worst sort of white man may ride in a better car. The labor movement is condemned and the corrupt administration of Ulysses S. Grant is endorsed for a second term.

Elsewhere, impoverished former slaves attempt homesteads and farms on land the government fails to grant, preyed upon by White Leagues.

---

The Far West Quakes

An earthquake of catastrophic magnitude strikes the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the night. The initial quake and a series of violent aftershocks rock California from Mount Shasta to San Diego and disturb the sleeping at nearby Walker Lake. The followers of Grey Hair gather in the darkness outside their homes.

The epicenter is the nearby valley they once called Flowing Water. Early travelers had marveled to find the green valley in the desert, ignorant of hundreds of years of Piute irrigation, and named it Owens Valley. There, at dawn, a Paiute servant in the employ of a farmer pulls a child from the wreckage of an adobe house. Scores of pioneers and silver prospectors are dead.

After the earthquake, Grey Hair will go up to the mountain for vision. When he returns he will gather the people and tell them that he has been deceived. His visions have been full of shadow people and lies; it was all the work of witches.

A second violent earthquake will strike the North Cascades a few months later, opening huge cracks in the earth near Seattle. The Columbia River tribes will flock to the missions of the Christians and abandon the practice of the dance.

---

## Lake Michigan

The crew of the Grand Island Lighthouse see a huge black object appear in the Southeastern sky. They watch as "All of a sudden a tremendous flame burst from this dark opaque body... a report like that of a thousand big guns and it left the sky perfectly clear and serene." A month later, at twilight, the Muskegon Lighthouse keeper 200 miles South records "...a smooth luminous cloud or object rising out of the Eastern Horizon." In seconds it flies directly over the lighthouse and disappears into the West.

---

## Liberia

President Edward Royce Jr. of Liberia, a free black Ohioan by birth, faces an angry mob from the balcony of the Liberian Presidential Mansion. He has antagonized the Mulatto upper class of Monrovia and now stands accused of theft of funds and constitutional violation. A trajectory that began with a

profitable barbershop in Newark, Ohio, spanned immigration to Africa, ideological awakening, and election to the highest office of the nation is plummeting into a night of riot, the night of his death.

---

### Star Storm

Astronomers have searched for a sign of the comet Biela for over twenty years and discussed it as "The Missing Comet" speculating that it may have broken up in space. As Earth enters the trajectory of the comet in 1872 there are unexpected sightings of falling stars in the Northern Hemisphere. The frequency and intensity of the phenomenon increases on the following night, with the radiant point at the feet of the constellation Andromeda. By the third night, thousands of trails of light per hour dazzle the night sky. The Star Storm is witnessed from the Great Plains of North America, over the North Atlantic and throughout Europe. It will be entered into the annals of China:

From all parts of Heaven myriads of stars rained down  
followed by luminous trails surpassing in brilliance  
stars of the first magnitude.

---

## Ghost Ship

American merchant brigantine *Mary Celeste* is found adrift near the Azores weeks after departure for Genoa from New York. The ship *Dei Gratia* signals, but there is no response. They come aside, finding the deck unmanned. *Dei Gratia* crewmembers board the eerily silent vessel. They find it sound, rocking gently on calm seas with a full hold and orderly cabins. The final entry in the log a week before is commonplace, with nearby coordinates duly noted. There is no sign of the twelve people who were on the *Mary Celeste* when it left the harbor of New York.

---

## The Enemy of my Enemy

Cavalry lead by Apache guides discover the hidden refuge of the Yavapai Tribe in a cave 1000 feet above the floor of the Salt River Canyon. They slaughter the Yavapai men who emerge and then fire into the cave killing between 75 and 100 men, women and children. The thoroughness of this massacre leaves no one to

undertake ritual or burial for the dead Yavapai. Their remains are abandoned in the cave as the subsequent Apache War begins.

---

### Postscript

Central Arizona will become a place of dead mines and dwindling towns within two generations. The existence of a cave of human skeletons somewhere high on the canyon wall will brood among legends of lost fortunes, love and murder related to travelers in roadside cafes. Looters will rifle the cave of the dead Yavapai until official recovery and burial in 1933.

Soon after the defeat of the last rebellious tribes of the United States a nostalgia for the noble savage of North America will seize the American psyche. Their image will appear on coins and paper currency, on various commodities whose manufacturers wish to establish their brand as uniquely American. Women will embroider Indian Maidens and Chieftains on pillows and dresser scarves; children memorize sections of the Song of Hiawatha. Actual persons of native

blood, however, will be gathered under the rubric of "The Indian Problem" and incidences like the massacre of the Yavapai will enter the histories as 'battles.'

1873 will bring a financial panic followed by many years of profound economic depression in the US and Europe. The American South will be devastated by the failure of cotton markets. Reconstruction will fail. Having rid themselves of the egalitarian Royce, the snobbish, corrupt Mulatto upper class of Liberia will operate the country like a plantation for the next century.

The proliferation of cosmological events, geological catastrophes, epidemics, hoaxes, enigmas and apocalyptic visions in the year 1872 will be noted according to taxonomies that subtract them from their confluence into a single year. Even within their category of record the 1872 star storm and the atypical auroras will languish unexamined. Astronomers of the 21st Century, discovering the intensity of these phenomena through review of data, will be puzzled by the neglect of the 1872 events in their field.

Theories of the disappearance of the crew of the *Mary Celeste* will wander into the realms of pulp fiction. The ship itself will eventually be run aground in an insurance scam. George Smith will die in Aleppo, on an expedition to the site of the ancient library, of dysentery. Perhaps the as yet unpublished journal of the

Grand Duke Alexi will reveal his reaction to the demise of his friend and correspondent George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Alexi will flee Russia as a disgraced Naval commander to while away the rest of his life in Paris Society. Souvenirs of his meeting with the Sioux are retained in the museum at Tver.

Even the bustle is a flop, out of fashion by 1875. Tracing the course of the events, enterprises and notables of the year one finds success seemingly favored tricksters and swindlers. Te Kooti will live to torment the Maori Kings with his drinking, womanizing, and peculiar brand of Christian/Maori mysticism. The perpetrators of the Diamond Field Hoax will elude legal action and move into quiet but profitable careers, one in banking, and the other as an undertaker in New Mexico. Spiritualism will prove protean and invincible.

The white farms that displaced the Piute will become water-starved acreages when the water of Owens Valley is turned west to fill the sinks and swimming pools of Los Angeles 50 years later. In the following generational cycle a desertified Owens Valley will become the site of a Japanese internment camp. A section of Nevada desert near Walker Lake, where the Ghost Dance began, will become the Air Force compound known as Area 51.









Elegiacs





Janet Holmes



## How I Mourned

After he died  
my body shedded  
shuddered its  
formal knowledge  
of having been  
touched  
my skin  
twitched stretched  
to reach the pressure  
a hand a body  
would had made  
on it  
and memory with  
blunt ungraceful  
tentacles did disable  
undo my  
speech and  
thinking  
I could not  
shut my  
close my eyes  
to sleep  
at nighttime  
to  
feel to work  
my mind

I trusted  
tried  
I paced til  
morning  
I roamed I watched  
from the high  
window traffic  
lights go green go  
red from the high  
window only  
a random car that  
late that early  
his people  
left me  
alone my friends  
“respect your  
privacy during this  
difficult  
time” I wondered  
had I had  
I had had my comeuppance  
payback for  
I was  
had been  
beloved  
happy is  
punished am

bereft in short  
it was anyone's  
grief and sometime  
will be your  
grieving the sob  
sometimes no  
sob wait til  
it hits  
you that fetal  
curl one hugs ones  
shin bones  
and / sometimes one  
just grabs  
the remote how  
I wanted to  
grab the  
remote  
I lifted the old  
dog to my lap  
for warmth  
I click and I click  
to watch  
what has a plot not  
bloody not very much  
blood pouring out  
someone's mouth or  
a wound

not angry not loud  
voices not rage I had  
standards and  
comedies were not so  
funny and not  
no the shows  
about women  
tortured and raped  
by serial killers, no  
and click, not  
this, no, in my chair  
rejecting them  
no and  
a mystery  
after mid night  
it is always  
unraveled solved  
by the end  
by convention  
they tell us who did it / the bad guy / gets caught / the conniving  
woman taken away / in cuffs  
the detectives / police force / the “good guys” / confirmed proven  
good guys it was only 6 / episodes deep in the / sleep-free night  
of the empty / shell of my  
mourn  
ing  
too numb

to turn on the heat I  
bunch the comforter  
over me click  
in the first  
episode the man / good guy / the detective is conversing easily  
with his partner a / woman as normal / as all of us I feel  
a kinship / he talks / and she talks / back why / do I weep  
she is sharp / smart middle-aged I watch /  
tearing up / he sees her / face but she  
is a ghost / she is was his  
partner killed in / a drive-by  
shot and gone / he loves and / loved her  
(how I want  
my beloved's  
face in my hands)  
the other good guys think / he's crazy / a nut case too old  
for his work / too weird he / solves her murder / she helps him  
do it they dance / at the end of 6 / episodes  
yes  
he dances alone  
or with  
her ghost I  
beg to be haunted  
as he was and  
there is no  
next season  
ghost me goddamnit

\*\*\*

so cold

he floats

below the ceiling

I feel it

fix my eyes

on the spot cry

for an image

come haunt me come

show me your

beloved

face again

your smile

again I will

wait as long / as it

takes / in the long

night every night

I push

not to sleep

to click, not

this, no, in

my chair

rejecting them

no and once

click I thought

I need more

than 6

episodes dozens  
of episodes  
click  
not that  
in the cold  
bunch the comforter  
around me / me and the dog  
no / click on this  
one hundred  
and three  
episodes  
In the first and  
in every  
show: a  
slight man  
with a limp  
pronounces You  
are being watched.  
A machine  
that spies on you  
every hour of every  
day . . . it sees everything  
violent crimes  
that involve  
everyday people  
people like you.  
I am not

a victim I think  
Crimes  
the government  
considered irrelevant.  
Being watched  
and the government  
doesn't care but  
the small  
bespectacled  
man cares  
They  
wouldn't act,  
so I decided I  
would. Not irrelevant  
he will protect us  
he and the damaged  
soldier special ops  
the actor who  
played Christ  
will intervene  
oh god / he is not  
allowed to kill anyone  
he is sworn to  
protect  
and he shoots  
the aggressor's  
knee or his shoulder

I work for the state,  
a government  
body and yes  
a university  
they watch and they  
snatch / but the men  
shot clutch their  
shoulders and knees  
crying ow ow  
and I bunch  
and bunch the comforter  
into my belly  
surround the  
dog let the bills  
pile up on the counter  
and then into a  
grocery bag and  
taxes unpaid  
and moving  
is painful and no  
sounds come out  
the bespectacled  
slight man has  
no emotion he  
says When you find  
that One  
Person

who connects  
you to the  
world you become  
someone different. Someone  
better.

I pull my dog  
who will collapse  
any day now up  
on my lap  
on top of the comforter and  
this is what I do  
for warmth.







Betty and my-  
self under a  
parasol at the  
old house in  
Mount Hermon

David Need



## Goodnight Irene: Sonnets

Goodnight Irene was composed as part of a daily writing practice I pursued for a year following the death of my mother, Irene, in Oct 2010. Each day I would write in three modes, weaving sketches of the “present” of the project with reflections, followed by the composition of an unrhymed sonnet. The long suite is divided by lunar month (new moon to new moon) and begins with the new moon that fell on my mother’s birthday, Dec 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010. This manuscript contains two months of the larger suite.

The period covered by this selection cover the weeks leading up to my mother’s memorial service at the end of March. During these months, my now ex-wife and I found out her mother, Dorothy, had late-stage lung cancer. My ex-wife flew from Minnesota to Ithaca to be with me at the memorial; we received the call to tell us that Dorothy had died at 2 AM on the morning of the memorial. My ex-wife and I separated six months later.

\*

Irene Norton (b. 1925) grew up in East Orange, NJ. Went to College at Mt. Holyoke and then did an MA in German Literature at Columbia. She met her husband John in Berkeley CA. They were both grad students — she working on a PhD on Schiller, he working on a PhD in Nuclear Physics. She stopped work on her PhD when they were married, had five children between 1954-1961. John and Irene lived in Oak Ridge TN, then Middleburg Heights, Ohio (outside Cleveland), Andover, MA, and Durham NC where, in her 70s, she worked as a public service attorney. She died in her sleep in her last home in Ithaca NY, Oct 10<sup>th</sup> 2010.

\*

Other portions of the Goodnight Irene project have appeared in Hambone, Oyster Boy Review, Heavy Feathers Review and are forthcoming in Hambone.

## Winter into Spring 2010-2011

12.23.10

After we viewed Ma's body // claustrophobic morgue entry-room,  
thanked folks who kept us from her as per regulations, "We can't  
leave you alone in the room," Ed and I drove up the sunset  
coast of Lake Cayuga to Taughannock Falls — she'd ask us to drive her

there to sit at the overview quarry gap, maybe five-hundred yards across  
to the ribbon streamed drop from field-level up there to lake underfoot.  
Ed talked about having joined AA, and I pressed him about whether  
he was okay with conceit of a Higher Being / I don't mind saying God

I said // we walked down the WPA steps  
and leaned out over & after a bit a school group came  
running down both steps, yells echoing off

the grotto walls, the way kid's voices do in the day, and one kid  
leans so far out, too far, and girls taking it in in clusters, and Ed said "Okay,  
life goes on," and I said she would like this, the kids, as we go.

12.16.10

“If there were witchcraft, I’d make three wishes,”  
Mom’d sing, summer camp memory, and  
like the Buddhist *Pure Land Sutra*, where  
a bodhisattva makes a vow he wouldn’t become a

Buddha unless anyone who thought of him would  
be reborn in his pure land & now he’s the Buddha  
Amitabha and so the vow is true, it was of course  
obvious there was witchcraft, Mom being a

witch, so the three wishes she’d sing about were  
one’s she’d made, the beckoning golden road  
and the campfire that called her home

and the one I can’t remember,  
she’d got them, the ironing board piled with  
underwear and Dad’s shirts.

12.9.10

“I can call the wind, David”      Maxfield

Parish mother, when she learned to sail,  
said across the kettle pond her small  
boat//green-black water I could not see

my face//in the boat I thought “sure”  
trailed my hand, wrist still bandaged where  
I’d tried to make a cut to stop the June  
stars//the vast departures of angels

startled like birds by blossoms and leaves —  
of course some remain, friend, bend sudden mist  
to share your tears

and visit at tea; the grass and oak and maple  
loved my Dad a-rosy in his slumbering garden pants,  
why not my mother also, young witch, a breeze would shelter?

12.1.11

Everything about a poem asks to be broken into,  
the flimsy locks of letters gathered into ponytails,  
the uneven flooring of puns, the way the guardian  
of the threshold requires that you look forward into

the first room and  
down at your feet at the same time —  
you understand it would be far better  
to be doubled —

in Rodin's statue of Eve, she steps out at us from  
a slab of background Eden, caught in  
midst of being a separate figure

she will never finish free —  
that is the way we look back at our own lakes  
and cloud come childhoods.

### 2.3.11

Mom's bad linear analysis from Bertrand  
Russell led from branch to branch by  
definition she supposed was stele instead of  
song all saying across the kitchen

was. Body closeness to bare grass un wit,  
pitched Kleist or Klein, spiraled interlace of deep-  
ening tragic, Russell's sort it out doesn't get,  
in the backyard, a table & chairs turned over —

“Drink your milk from the mask, David,  
before it leaks what two dimensions doesn't  
allow between the middle, that *space* here

you say you are not in the mood of?  
I married a physicist to keep that matter  
folded between my mirrors.”

2.8.11

In first color photo I have on  
a grey one-piece John Glenn suit there  
was a helmet for & it's 1960 something,  
it's the backyard by the swing set;

I am short next to my brothers the  
only one in costume I don't mind but  
look out, a look I am not a part of  
that family I am with my mother and

for a second I can be seen I am not  
in the family I am with and  
they are somebody else and

the distance from that moment  
to this I have still not realized  
what's there.

2.23.11

She had fierce circles of logic under  
her eyes as if shadows of her thin  
black hair, or finger trace of the last line  
of no resolution left her more and more

soft in the end,  
almost light what had been written  
again and again, bone to skin she was  
an adult girl coat wrapped with

babies she had to get across  
from the car to the store their  
wish to do almost anything

else, like fish she waded through  
& wore skirts not to show her  
legs, but to make them shepherd wings.

1.10.11

As melancholy,  
that guilt is not has-to-be  
but loyalty and rue  
*des enfants* strategize to

marry Ma  
does not drop you  
as she crosses the street —  
what children are instead of ash.

She is differentiate like  
Surrogate Rhesus Monkey,  
picks your fingers' science

off her coat.

“There, there, you are not me,  
or any part of my dream.”

### 3.2.11

If polis is that took place spread inland  
H.D. wrote we'd go to after sea, I went  
amphibian backwards into whale, lived  
invisible un-project and in no-space

I had to somehow open out as room.  
Without you, Ma, and still drowned  
that sunbeams startle and no surface

in the sky — thus Atlantean in practice.  
Polis is crows or spatter  
gas flame on the stove and radio;

Medicine Hat burns yellow in prairie night,  
a past that cannot be released alit in what  
can't be held.

5.9.11

There's a hard enough at work in the offering  
you get up each day & begin again the look for the  
door to the stairway you can't find in any room  
where you're s'posed to leave your soul cut-out

like two paper suns and stuck, piano roll,  
somewhere you can't reach, for someone else to gather;  
Rilke said to hold a bowl of fruit but you know  
only song can slender its way through the down slanted halls—

any house you're in you have to search, whether  
sunlit room or spouse, the fast evaporate of damp  
left by an absent tea cup tells you someone's gone

whoever she was, whatever crow or sparrow,  
stepped from your left side and looked back  
to demonstrate the proffer.

### 3.4.11

A bitter as I write in patient chords,  
a winter coat of paints, tongue  
could measure as pastoral retort, that  
stone cannot be drawn out text

except as light to say so many broken  
and disappoint selfish & drawn by power —  
I cannot even tell them dreams, that  
we are drowned in mind, even

there, on our most exposed “Date My  
Mother,” love-thought the TV should air —  
hard to be among the good as dead desire can love

I can’t embrace. No, polis isn’t, nor history,  
what millstone is, or the loom’s brace  
or the gray flax linen left.

3.15.11

Thin girl there wants something, Ma, I was not ignorant of;  
the distilled sun in Puritan pitchers, where a red berry bank o'  
clouds drifted; and since German, her belly white dough, like  
your North Holland skin & sex a mackerel sky, and struck down

sunbeam. Her saying in your saying you were asleep to,  
the bright crack of light late at night under your door, the  
hinge of what you didn't say your sister was already —  
we both knew she wasn't to marry me, but to

sit along the shame I appeared from, that you-dislike  
I was your duty for, and after your heart broke I said  
“touch your heart” where there was a well, and

you said, “o David, I don't like my body,” there in the  
colors it cast, the blue adorned and baroque, the  
white tent of it, in the alters.

3.26.11

The past reaches out after you and flowers you  
thought long dead and sang illuminate poison — sprung  
grass, plum, witch hazel sky — pools of drowse, sung to  
cover ma's fingerprints or scandal on your arm —

absolute ruin is possible, though a hermit thrush  
piped vast illuminated books in whose awn is scried  
brown carapace skin I die in. Lack fail at the last, Ma,  
where blood flows in old bones.

That moment I was not who I wanted to be.  
Second time I died, worse than the first but  
the same.

The room, a window.  
The world of this mind increasingly remote.  
And yet to live on after that.

4.7.11

Didn't we find Ma, it was not possible to sublime, that  
feeling tells, must lean against its difference — a rut in the road  
that fingers a track — not that *play* and *spill* were not  
our task, but that what wicks off comes as rain, splay or not.

Invisible is not grace & what the world wants is so many-  
voiced, even the *air* speaks, even what is gone.  
You were right that imagination's bright gauzy tent  
is the best part of the sun.

But we do not disappear into it's shadows or rays;  
I could still see you, even after, at the edge of the stove  
black magic hair and sparrow hands,

stubbornly shutting your eyes to be “wicked,”  
still wanting, among the impossibly bad rhythms of  
departing angels, to be taken out beyond.

7.9.11

I died April 21<sup>st</sup> 1978. I dreamt I visited the black woman's house.

A man was working in tall marsh canes wearing a colored shirt,  
rosy against dark skin and green pants.

A different guy showed me a knife after I didn't cross the bridge,

didn't push past the priestess — for a moment

I heard a lace bandana and went down instead aside to listen  
music of the river —

God is always more than what the myth is, more than the instruction.

Broke in Amherst, a long grave to wait for the body  
to catch up to where I'd gone.

Broke over the leg of the Connecticut River, broke and spilled —

we return to the places where we at last died  
until the body gives out is what prayer is.

That's when I died & had no one to tell & couldn't say.

Ah, Ma, how was I gonna explain that?

4.10.11

It's time to speak to the unsinger angels  
who have just begun the pause, as maple silver  
saplings are, as new and children,  
who fall among themselves to play —

to the more serious say that gravity  
writes *tikkun*, the shy fallen weights,  
their interest in gowns,  
veils we will resplendent —

all in the up of forgot  
the kept silent. Time to ask  
o autumnal return

of your even further distance  
that strikes our eyes as spears, and  
buries home-coming in us.

4.18.11

Spring of rose and darkness  
as a different measure of a man —  
*loc* or *lok*, an old way of saying  
*a space that opens*, lake-like look

about the otherwise dense finds;  
for tune or step, a place to chance  
new shape in the ridge fold, a  
glance in the day pole.

A guy in yellow hard hat  
stands listless in the street, stop-  
and-slow sign slack. A different

Irene walks Mick Jagger home  
to a one-woman red house, set in the same  
possible distance across.





## Picture Credits

|                             |                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cover                       | Doorway in Chicago; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                           |
| Justlost — David's Notes    | Sycamores; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                                    |
| Editor's Notes — Cory       | Window; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                                       |
| End of Justlost             | Collage on Office Cabinet Door; Photo by D. Need                                                                                               |
| Measure                     | Mt. St. Helens                                                                                                                                 |
| Andrew Mossin               | Emily Dickinson's Bedroom; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                    |
| Elizabeth Robinson          | Apples in Northampton MA; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                     |
| Elizabeth Gray — Cover      | Anslem Kiefer, Title Unknown, Photo by MJ Gore                                                                                                 |
| — Project Description       | Names of the Dead; Photo by E. Gray Jr                                                                                                         |
| — End page                  | Ypres Battlefield (2016); Photo by E. Gray Jr                                                                                                  |
| Cory Massaro                | Mask for Poetry reading; pastel, D. Need                                                                                                       |
| Joseph Donahue              | Nils Kreugger, "A Night in Apelvik" 1898                                                                                                       |
| Series (Ceres, Sere, Serin) | Woman on El Platform, Chicago; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                |
| Kimberly Lyons              | Akseli Gallen-Kallea "White Roses" 1906                                                                                                        |
| Mary Jane Gore              | sophie & cie [CC BY-SA 2.0]<br>( <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0</a> ) |
| Danielle Pflugardt          | Photograph submitted by Author                                                                                                                 |
| Americas                    | Building in Chicago; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                          |
| Dale Smith                  | Roadside in Indiana; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                          |
| Douglas Rothschild          | Ocracoke Beach; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                               |
| Tim VanDyke                 | Fire Salamander; watercolor, D. Need                                                                                                           |
| Mary Yordy — Cover          | "The Horse Plague" <i>Harper's Weekly</i> Nov. 1872                                                                                            |
| — End page                  | The Andromedid meteor "storm" of Nov 27 <sup>th</sup> 1872 as<br>portrayed in the <i>Enciclopedia Moderna Illustrata</i> ,<br>Italy, 1904.     |
| Elegies                     | Grandmother's Quilt in Graveyard; Photo by D.                                                                                                  |
| Need                        |                                                                                                                                                |
| Janet Holmes                | Cloud Wall, Chincoteague; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                     |
| David Need — Over           | Photo of Irene Need; D. Need                                                                                                                   |
| — End Page                  | Sasha Doll & Books; Photo by D. Need                                                                                                           |
| Picture Credits             | Odelon Redon, "Mystical Conversation" 1896                                                                                                     |
| End Page                    | Goya, "The Dog" 1819-1823                                                                                                                      |



## Contributors

**Joseph Donahue's** most recent collections of poetry are *Red Flash on a Black Field*, and *Dark Church*.

**Mary Jane Gore** lives and works in Virginia. In addition to journalism, she has published work in *Hospital Drive* and *Washington Review of the Arts* and has had honorable mentions for short stories in the C-Ville contest. This publication is the first appearance of her longer fiction.

**Elizabeth T. Gray, Jr.** is a poet, translator, and international corporate consultant. Her poetry collection *Series | India*, was published by Four Way Books in 2015, and her long poem, *Salient*, will be published by *New Directions* in 2020. A revised and expanded edition of her translations of the ghazals of Hafez of Shiraz (d. 1389), *Wine & Prayer*, will appear in March 2019 from *White Cloud Press*. Other translations include *Iran: Poems of Dissent* and *Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*, by Forough Farrohzad (Mantis, 2014). Sections of the Tibeto-Mongolian folk epic *The Life of King Kesar of Ling*, co-translated with Dr. Siddiq Wahid, appeared in *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* (Columbia, 2013). Other work has appeared in *Little Star*, *Hyperallergic*, *Talisman*, *Paris Lit Up*, *Poetry International*, *Ploughshares*, and elsewhere. She has served as Guest Editor for *Epiphany* and *The New Haven Review*, chairs the Board of *The Beloit Poetry Journal Foundation*. She serves on the Boards of *Friends of Writers* and of *Human Rights and Democracy in Iran*. She holds a BA and JD from Harvard University and an MFA from Warren Wilson College. [www.elizabethgrayjr.com](http://www.elizabethgrayjr.com).

**Janet Holmes** is a poet whose most recent book, *The ms of my kin*—an erasure of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*—was recently included in the exhibit "Under Erasure," curated by Heather and Raphael Rubenstein at the Pierogi Gallery. She has edited *Ahsahta Press* for twenty years, and teaches poetry at *Boise State University*.

**Kimberly Lyons** is the author of seven books of poetry including an e-book, *Approximately Near* (Metambesendotorg, 2016) and *Capella* (Oread, 2018). Her essays on the poetry of George Quasha and Basil King's works on paper are on the *Dispatches* site. Her essay on King's paintings are online at *Talisman*. She publishes *Lunar Chandelier Press* and lives in Chicago.

**Cory Massaro**, Ohio born, is currently/transitorily living in Zurich. He has written on oral epic and on the intersection of phonology and poetics in Sanskrit and Greek literature. Otherwise:

I was a fish thing  
the river shepherded upstream by saying,  
"Down, trout, you low-lake layman";

I was a duckling  
of which the feet were broader than the farm  
whose fields hatched tamped with waddles;

now I am water-  
falls bottled at the source. I hate all boats.  
I foam from within plastic and they capsize.

**Bonnie Melton** lives and paints in Durham, North Carolina. To see more of her work, her resume, and a bio of sorts go to [bonniemelton.com](http://bonniemelton.com)

**Andrew Mossin** is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *Torture Papers* (Spuyten Duyvil 2018), and a collection of critical essays, *Male Subjectivity and Poetic Form in "New American" Poetry* (Palgrave 2010). He has recently completed a new book of poetry, *Stanzas for the Preparation of Perception*. He is an Assistant Professor in the Intellectual Heritage Program at Temple University in Philadelphia.

When **David Need** is awake he lives and teaches in Durham NC. He has published two volumes of Rilke translations and essays (*Roses: The Late French Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, Horse & Buggy 2013, and *Notebooks and Personal Papers*, Shearsman 2018) and one volume of his own poetry. His poems and essays have appeared in *Hambone* and *Talisman*. He's written on Rilke, Alice Notley, H.D., Kerouac, Fanny Howe and Nathaniel Tarn among others.

**Gabrielle Pflugardt** is a city-fied cowgirl, dreaming of rock stardom whilst throwing up poetry. She used to be a fanatical athlete until she realized competitiveness and clutchiness were utter necessities she did not possess. Identity amuck, she went to college to become a doctor. She left with words, paper-cuts, and reading glasses.

At 24, her chin is up but sometimes she stares too long at the sky. Ever so often, she gets a deep breath and ends up smearing a stale breath of prose on anything she can get her hands on. She works to play, she plays to write, she writes to think.

**Dale Smith** is a poet and scholar who lives in Toronto, Ontario. He has published several books of poetry, including *American Rambler* and *Slow Poetry in America*. His essays and reviews have appeared in *Boston Review*, *London Review of Books*, *Poetry*, and elsewhere. Recently, he edited, with Robert Bertholf, *An Open Map: The Collected Letters of Robert Duncan and Charles Olson* and *Imagining Persons: Robert Duncan's Lectures on Charles Olson*. A new book of poems titled *Shreve* will be published by Talonbooks in 2021.

**Elizabeth Robinson** is the author of several collections of poetry, most recently, *Rumor* from Parlor Press/Free Verse Editions. *Vulnerability Index* is forthcoming from Ahsakta Press in 2019. With Jennifer Phelps, Robinson co-edited the critical anthology *Quo Anima: innovation and spirituality in contemporary women's poetry*, just out from University of Akron Press.

**Douglas N. Rothschild** can be found wandering about his mercurial & clock-marked city, among the already lunar debris. Perhaps the year will, at long last, be the brighter for all the bright shining he does.

**Tim VanDyke** has published *Topographies Drawn with a Divine Chain of Birds* (Dialogos, 2011), and three chapbooks: *Fugue Engine* (Cannibal Books, 2012), *Light on the Lion's Face* (Argotist, 2012), and *Farallones* (Garden Door Press, 2018). His work has recently appeared in *The Yalobusha Review*, *Typo*, and *The Brokklyn Rail*.

**Mary Yordy** was born in Klamath Falls, Oregon and lives in North Carolina. She conserves and restores books, pamphlets, and other works on paper, and leads bookmaking, hand mapping and collage working groups. She has published *The Paranormal Pamphlet Series*, *Women in Espionage Trading Cards*, and the *Anarchist Poster Series*.