

Edited by Thomas Fink

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ALLIA ABDULLAH MATTA

Couleur

1.

white glass cuts open race wounds on the train
babylon bound steel/ticket in brown hand
coffee lady sits in blue seat of plane
gazes on argentine sky/at flat land
insults cut/ slice organs to puce-strand,
slivers/ for the words, gestures, excess space
occupy history, anger, violence, pain
occupied by flesh-folk who taste disgrace
criss-cross, step over, les noire vies/ black-face space Displaced

2.

babylon ochre girl climbs agate line
aquiline slow-slowly shit-talk response
she yells in criss-cross tongue/blade incline
magenta curse words silently ensconce
b-girl blood war stance umber renaissance
cites old folks, *yuh good fuh yuh self yuh know*
affirm tawny carob collective lines
move tongue in formation, *excuse-you No!*
am I not standing here? then obsidian fists you sow.

3.

georgia red clay dirt/keeps blacks in-line
they stand on line for moist land, a wage, food, and respect
look down dark country roads, smell death, and decline
not allowed to intersect,
and it is all so circumspect;
it is all so circumspect.

Auntie Mary
(After Mary Prince)

1.

How dare she make a Black-girl pet of *me*?
Led by her petite- pink-pale fingers and
call out, "nasty-Nig-gal"/ am I to be
her noire play thing/ too young to understand?
I was/born in Brackish-Pond Bermuda
my mother, farm property of myners,
my father, Prince, labored as sawyer, a
man/ could not protect us from cruel masters
I lived apart from my mother/siblings,
nursed little baby dan/ miss fanny taught
me letters to spell/then sold for sterling;
my trials/eyes tear/ salt water slave-girl bought
my life before a Black-girl of 12 years
my mother lamented and cried for years.

2.

My sisters were sold to another man,
I with a new master at Spanish point,
poor child, poor child! master a mean bad man!
Learned lashes/ rope, cart-whip, cow-skin/ sharp points
mistress taught me to bake, pick wool, & cotton,
wash floors & cook/ the savage mistress was she
punched my face with her fists/ blood soaked cotton,
blood-hard blows/ savage damn mistress was she
I, stripped/flogged because of glass-broken jar
my bare skin raw to the touch/ came her man
to flog me more, beat my fresh open scars,
beat me till I was unable to stand
so evil/ the cows kicked over milk-pails,
sped away and left dirty milk-hoof trails.

from *Flayed Flaws & Other Finagled Opacities*

(preverbs)

12

syntactic signs of life

We're fresh out of sames.

At the cleft turn left.

Otherwise we're written in no time round.

This thinking can be distinguished by tough music green fuse driving.

All narrative forces the issue.

No on.

The same words cannot fall out of the same mouth the same.

There's bounceback and furtherbounce.

Poetic ideas wear out instantly.

Went to the other side of the tone and got scratched.

This is a poem assessing the space left in a darkened world.

It makes tripping over what you're saying look elegant.

Groping the surface of reason, *I speak in season*.

Any variation in saying the saying says the more.

And outs an operative contrary belief system we live by birth to death.

Like my mother said I want it both ways (at once!).

I didn't know I was here till I knew we were here together.

Saying so's defining us before our eyes.

Variability of meaning in the night tongue is advantage by day in a darkened world.

What an exciting mapping device in the service of excitable mind.

Finally beginning to get the hang of it.

Poetry has appetites.

A come and a go of same.

Then comes the swing of it. Makes three.

Like making tea for thee like three for two.

It all depends on the break and how things fall, one and all.

Then comes the brake on it.

This is not a progression but an altered sensitive subtraction with excitement.

Poetic ideas have a half-life.

Too little attention has been paid to incommensurable logic in daily life.

Yes there are no same lines for yes there are at imaginable angles, or angels.

They come from nowhere whence we return.

Buddha never say shoulda.

We are in hot pursuit of Klein Bottle Scripture.

It starts sentenced to rupture.

If you thought it you got it.

I speak an affect for a reason.

You're understanding but you don't know what is poetic understanding.

It never lets you go.

Raise high your antenna, poet!

Pluck that live fucker from the aether, Bertha.

I admit everything, so fold, you got the feel.

Elegy for the Moo-er

Joey drowned our senior year, just in time for me to walk up to the stage in my cap and gown, confident that the mooing had stopped. His friends reported he was drunk as he cannon-balled off a floating dock in the middle of March, in the middle of the night, in the middle of a cold lake surrounded by fancy houses people only used in summer. I skipped his funeral, overflowing with crying friends, six football players carrying his coffin, blaming themselves because they hadn't saved him. Our yearbook was dedicated to Joey, his smiling headshot collaged onto the backdrop of a lake. I thought it funny and terrifying, but the rest of my classmates cried as they flipped the pages.

For a whole year I'd wished him dead—Joey mooing down the halls as I passed, defacing the signs I made when I was running for student council president, *MOO!* in red Sharpie. I ripped the signs down one early morning before, I'd hoped, anyone had seen them. What had I done to make him think I was a cow? True, I was a big girl with big breasts that arrived early, just as I was always early to school. I did my best to hide myself under the bib of my overalls, which made me—if anything—a farmer, not livestock. Of course Joey was handsome and popular, a tall jock bulging with confidence.

When he got Sarah pregnant he turned on her too, "Sarah had an abortion" spray-painted on her locker. Years later my therapist said that Joey might have had a crush on me, though I find that hard to believe. Sarah, his girlfriend, was slender and on the dumb side, like a cow—if you believe cows are dumb, which I do not. No one came to her defense about getting rid of the fetus, not even me, because I was afraid the mooing would escalate. I wondered if Sarah still loved Joey despite his cruelty. I wondered what he said to her in private. She walked the halls, deflated, trying to ignore the whispering. Mostly Joey tortured me when he and I were alone. I dreaded passing him in the hall or on the street downtown.

For a couple of years I was afraid I was a witch—my luck at Joey's death, his death for which I'd wished. This was before I fully realized the problematic association of women with animals, before I read that bullies become bullies because they feel powerless or forgotten or have problems at home. I signed a sympathy card the school sent to his parents. I swallowed my guilt, suppressed my glee and dutifully responded as though I thought the drowning a tragedy. It would have been more symbolic if Joey had been trampled by a bull—bully that he was. Or kicked by a cow (me!) as he tipped her in a field.

It Is Easier to Imagine the End of the World than to Imagine the End of Capitalism

—H. Bruce Franklin

Capitalism as prime:

easier imagine capitalism is

Capitalism as fibonacci:

end plus end equals easier
end plus easier equals imagine
easier plus imagine equals capitalism

Capitalism as pi:

imagine. end world capitalism of easier it capitalism imagine capitalism to of is of imagine
easier imagine to world it easier it world imagine imagine to imagine easier is of capitalism
than easier is of capitalism than easier to to world end of is end it of imagine of of imagine is
capitalism end than capitalism to easier than of is world of world world...

Capitalism as golden ratio:

end. it end to than imagine imagine

CHARLES BORKHUIS

Little Nothings

a little nothing
goes a long way

now it's starting to act
like something

now it's starting to flip
back and forth in your hands
like an invisible fish

impossible boundaries
one goes and the other stays
one is called upon to matter
one shadows the other
crosses over and back
without a word

where is the nothing behind something
that keeps everything afloat
and dancing on the flicker of a flame
always the wrong question
haunts the proceedings

heat waves call to the dunes in trance
the thing itself and something else
balances on the shiver of a blade

perhaps the dreamer's awareness
of being here now
erases all conviction

turn the lights on and the insect
scurries through a crack in the wall
but I anthropomorphize
as I disappear into the woodwork

and the missing subject is
and the missing subject is

at the squirmy center
of all our knock-knock questions
who's there
in the hole that never answers

others on the periphery answer endlessly
snippets of total strangers and childhood chums
brazen bullies and sweethearts
love terror and humiliation
stuffed into suitcases that you
agree to carry for a lifetime or two

someone is having a peripatetic breakdown
amidst the sounds of traffic the shuffle of cards
something is always interfering with everything
here comes tragedy its broken eggshell heart
its existential tremble in a peep show
of simulated desire

everything comes with its interruption
its little shimmer in reflection
chaos plays with certainty at every turn
the real thing is laid over its silhouette
on a dissecting table
what might this sleeping flesh
this intimate emptiness reveal
always the wrong question
haunts the proceedings

FOLLOWING

who alone follows
turning down a wrong street
only to pass you again
when lost at a crossroads

reflection in a storefront window
the back of a head
or profile doubled
by the glass partition

a crude indication
of a replication encircles
and ensnares as it disappears
leaving a hint of other lives

inside this one wherein
a sudden jabbing pain
over the left eye brings
a mortal clot to boil

and a moment turns on its head
dead star still blinking
what we are made of
spacetime spinning round

the gravity of a dark center
deep as drowning
illusory as escape
you find yourself within the prism

of possible paths taken
by other selves diverging
and following in overlapping traces
that have made you who you are

CARRIE CONNERS

Overheard in the Bathroom at the WV Blues Fest

These goddamn aluminum fishbowls remind me of prison. Her voice, a rock-filled gizzard, makes me think I've seen and heard enough for the day: the man who dances like a rooster, shoulders jerk, chin juts, long, dead arms swing, the other dancers give him a 3 foot clearance radius all day. The jeweler with dementia, used to sell bracelets he made from antique silverware, now can't remember his wife's name, plays the spoons on stage with a band of young Alabama boys. So good they all just shake their heads. Or, the green-pallored guitar virtuoso who's had some young man's liver inside him for just 4 months talking about the car accident that took that kid's life so soon and allowed him to stand there picking at strings, moaning out old sorrows so we could all feel a bit better by feeling bad together, and he's sorry that he doesn't have a song about it yet, but, to be honest he doesn't think he ever will because some things can't be translated into sound.

Garage Sale

A woman had a garage sale to get rid of the birthday and Christmas cards that had been sent to her over the years.

She placed them between a dusty table lamp and a dented tea kettle to make the sale seem credible. The cards were

cluttering her desk, she couldn't find her bills, but she was afraid that god and the garbage man might

judge her heartless if she threw them out. A young man came to look at her wares and exclaimed, "Finally! I've found them. Cards from my long lost family."

MARGARET H. JOHNSON

If I'm Wearing Gold Chains, I Want to Be Wrapped from Head to Toe

Some day I want to wear gold chains crisscrossing my shoulders, strung from my neck, draped about my waist and twisted once or twice around my ankles. I want earrings of purest gold, a gold ring on my right pinky toe, one in my right eyebrow holding a diamond stud and I want to wear something that radiates royalty, something that shows my entire leg when I dance with the man of my dreams, wearing white linen from head to toe and sporting a white straw hat, and because he likes long flowing dresses of the finest batiste, I wear it well, do I not? And the earrings, they are gold articulated with diamonds. He gives me a nod reminding me I can't stay for dinner since I'm expected to be home cooking his dinner--he doesn't eat other people's food. It's not long before he arrives and when he walks through the front door, Mercedes parked on the lawn, he looks about the family room and smiles at my grand attire. Then he offers a kiss and asks, "What's for supper?" knowing I can transgress time zones in the blink of an eye, have dinner prepared and the kitchen sparkling clean before he even sits at the dinner table sipping red wine and testifying about what a good woman I am. It's what I do being a good woman, what I was born to do. Last lifetime, I came as a man, which is how I know what a man wants until it's time to go. I think if I have the choice I'll return again as a woman now that I've learned what it takes to overcome how the world imposes its will, shapes your destiny and salutes you for knowing what it takes to be happy in whatever chains you're in. But if I'm draped in chains, I want to be wrapped from head to toe and I want to hear them jingle in real time when I walk upon quicksand in gold slippers.

The One Thing You Should Never Do

In this
Iowa

Blankness
The sky

Is azure
Today

As a chair
To the dump

& I'm
Coughing

Myself
To death—

Crow-
Sounds

Bounding
Skyward

In the
Blinding

Dust
That's

Lingered
All summer

& berating
The thousand

Invisible
Cuts

My words
Leave

Like sparse
Light

On the small
Mad

Tongue
Of my

Impatience
I'm eager

For the joke
Of some

Organ
Grinding

Music
My fingers

Playing
Harp

On the
Funereal

Grass
On the

The empty
Gesture

Others
Make

Of my
Exhaustion

A Radio Too Big for the Space

We are
Listening

To a radio
Too big

For the space
& I'm

Telling you
I love you

Like I love
This storm

Of calamitous
White helicopters

Chomping on
The darkness

Of the bay
Tonight

& everyone
Here speaks

Low
Unutterable

Things
About how

There was
This Swiss

Army knife
Covered in

Dog shit
On the sidewalk

Once
& what was

A Swiss
Army knife

Covered in
Dog shit

Doing on
The sidewalk?

SUSMITA SENGUPTA

No Promiseland

No promiseland
Broken Down words
Hurt Total confinement
Questions not answered
Circle of life
Caring people surrounds
Carefully could not care
Drugs with bottles
Death and disbelief

Preface

While these names represent the real names & bodies of writers & musicians. On occasions both celebrated & loathed. Words, ideas, & locations have been inserted. Extracted. Exaggerated. Or wholly imagined. I have spent my time sometimes from afar. Sometimes at the center of this generation's creative nexus expressed as fragments of the ineffable.

There have been readings— salt mined from sea given syllables spat at skies & gutters alike. I have attended these readings. I have given these readings. I have curated & hosted these readings. I have danced the mask of pretension & Ben has laughed as the other version of Ben is on Skype in his pj's petting his cat. I have been virtual & IRL. I have been to the bars. I have been to the conferences. I have been on-site. Off-site. Completely present. & in absentia. I have been on the planes. I have been in Sam's car & Brett's rented car & the cars of others who remain a mystery or shamed into yesterday's forgetfulness. Highways given unto rural roads. Fake metal trees outstretching the pitch pines. There have been buses & buses & buses. The playhouses. The galleries. The parks. The apartments. & again. The bars. We have been down for ugly & up for beauty. We have been our own messengers. Merely ancient or future alienated alien music.

I am away from these people. The energy thinly tethered to the strings at the periphery of void. Grass whispers. Rooftop yawps. Here in Miami amongst gust of hot summer winds. The little green & brown lizards. The snails. The silkworms that have destroyed my eggplant. Wasted flowers. Hitomi lies voiceless & sick in bed. The time of June is a little after noon.

I have let imagination commingle with memory, as this seems surer of the heart's pleasure. & what of pleasure. What of the kids in the pool. What of the abandoned skateboards. What of the banks. What of our debt. What of art. What of the squirrel running across the power-lines, which intersect the top of palms. Whether animal heart or other. Whether inside looking out. Whether outside the poem or pinking the blues in. & through the pinhole opening a daily existence we have dedicated ourselves to the complexity of love. & this love. Is for you. & is for you. & is for you. & is for—

KATE LAMBERG

East Main Street, on a Weekday Morning

"A rose is a rose is a rose" ~Gertrude Stein

either everyone is sleeping
or away in a cabin upstate,
or points further east
to create a peaceful visit:
leave early, and stay late
or don't leave at all
redo some poems,
graze in the garden,
call a home-bound friend
dance that dance (you did as a teen)
to satie, wearing mostly red
or just stay in bed

PETER NICKOWITZ

Portrait of a Man as Saint Sebastian

Someone tried to open
me like a can

is opened, yet each hurt,
like you, numbing –

Bleeding's so dramatic,
don't you find it?

A better feat is not,
to bleed at all.

I'm no more a saint than
you are a god –

your finger in my palm
always my muse.

I happen by your smell,
your sweat. I bed

only you, forsaking
all the others.

Everyone else subdues
my restless mind

as dull architecture
subdues my mind.

Why am I covered by
these fucking pricks?

Every moment you're gone
drips blood-blossoms

on the floor at my feet
is a canvas

and blood on it marks where
I first took flight.

Self-Portrait as Icarus with Daedalus
(after Anthony van Dyck)

In the soft yolk of morning sun
he stands over me

*This is so good
it 'd be morally wrong
not to produce it. Do you think it could be
the greatest contribution to American
literature since Whitman
first smelled his smell?*

His body gets between the window and me
so blue-grey screen replaces sun:

*Quit the delusions of grandeur
& get back to work.*

& who then is the monster with or without wings?

DEBORAH GOLDEN ALECSON

Love Poem for Dad

Surprise!
you kept me in your Will
did you love me after all
or was it oversight
I'll split my share with my son
your grandchild
remember him?

A little more money is nice
love has no price

now that you're dead
I rewrite our story

was it out of paternal duty
and some opaque love
coming through
that you did not write me out

Hospice Patient Volunteer

when the human body
is no longer breathing
it morphs into husk
yellowed and ashy

the lavender nail polish and silver toe rings
become obscene in their preciousness

the shit that is shat
is the last biological chore
of a dying ember

and we in attendance
clean the bottom like a baby
but the shit of an infant
is sweet and creamy
while the shit of the dead
reeks of opiates and chemotherapy

puff, we are gone in a flash
leaving a life of memories
laced in the hearts of loved ones
or irritating the gall stones
of unforgiving relatives

I survey the scene:
mismatched sheets and pillow cases
blankets from toddlerhood
remotes scattered about
a jar of syringes for break through pain
commode and walker
used in better days

honored to be privy

it is messy
our coming and leaving
our birthing and dying

and everything in between

CHRIS PUSATERI

False Starts & Conclusions

No one can say with certainty: here lies the beginning

Each day it takes longer
to say
the everyday,
as time itself accordions

You read cities with ears & feet
walking asynchronously out of
time like a
bad soldier

Like a Formula One racecar
on a cobblestone street: *just try*
your superpower now
motherfucker

So much that touches us does not seek permission

You are free
so long as your choices do
not impede the
market

Typing parallax to your mind's riot
from the rumrunner's pad to the pirate's quiet
exactly that kind of tax

Nature is a prison of delights
a small trolley piled with anticipated desires

In the housewares shop speakers
respirate tidal sounds
so your purchase
will appear
inevitable

The next breath yours to claim
and no one can say with certainty

You occupy 5000 search results
an internet of "things"

The rage
of the intangible

as it fights
for form

as you will
it,

as you
were

Now again punished by
gravitas posing as physics:
honorifics, heirlooms, homonyms

Keys no good
if you don't know
which lock: it's full-up car parks
from here to eternity

We do not note worlds
we do not hope
to appropriate

The ape as it apes – the person as it personifies

They say this field is optional—you can submit the form without it

Later, I will lie
but I will do it
as gently as possible:

“little”
“white”
lies

We open our mouths
then close them without speaking
our minds
tiled
in silence

When we arrange
our fingers on the keys, raise
our instruments to attention,
we are only just beginning

This sentence is
nothing of the kind,
a denial of reply, I write it

This world
one of recrimination: the ease of refusal

One can literate

but cannot answer

another beginning: struck-out, done over
none can say where it lies

I cannot name the song but I can
name the bird that sings it

a listening
into the betwixt

yet no one can say with certainty: here lies the beginning

The bulging eyes of hungry calves as we wet
our morning breakfast "Right now, milk is cheaper
than water in Europe" The center is always close at hand

There are
a thousand kinds
of labor,
most of them
unnamed

With the exchange value of a clenched fist,
mass multiplied by velocity
& yet sometimes

it's the glancing blow
that causes the greatest pain

The light goes out
for minutes at a time to preserve itself

Even our objects wish to exist, in their charmless mechanical ways

The sound of a new broom
the hiss of its bristles
on stone

The locking of a door means someone's home

Without certainty, and mindful of limits: I clear my throat & begin

JANE JORITZ-NAKAGAWA

plan b audio one

courtship of empty space
process garden of past medals
wall of being and faded photographs
featuring thin trails of violent intentions
masquerading as frenzied farms
blue books of frozen procedures
nothingness in small white porcelain bowls
i dismount saying thank you
i dismantle saying i'm sorry
i'm speechless when the wind slaps my face
when you turn around and impeach me
i fall in your general direction
to subsequently be lifted by slow moving clouds and
straw men of the future
in my colleagues' arguments
in a heavy whimpering meadow
near the indifferent willows
enhanced abandoned items
more transient words in space
thank you for hurting me
taken out of my thin arms
the beginning of weather crumbling into wealth
empty words are useless props
restarting the phrases which eat my organs into cheap relief

plan b audio three

paramount desert

intertextual liquid

(somberly

(steadfastly pole dancing

artificial time

churns my beloved attic

occupying the difference (between)

as if always

behind the

building plot of

in tune astroturf memories

in search of an elegant solution

to the narcotic haze

with only loss to cheer me up

LEWIS FREEDMAN

I Want Something Other Than Time

I begin with a preliminary remark,
a tell-all kind of remark: to be
a patient is to be free of time.

But to be a patient is to be low-spirited, is to find that the inversion of suffering experienced in crying is inverted again in repetition. Is it possible to usefully abandon hope? At least, if we keep on hoping, we'll die with a harness on our backs?

I lift a question, another question, and i store it for later, i haven't asked this question yet. I feel pushy, pissed, in these corroded shadows; i'm like "the future is blue" as though that were a meaningful spell to foretell the future, and then a doubling sequence is like "the power of the generalized breath, maybe it is."

Like if i breathe, i hope... i hope my inexorable way of living never becomes the subject of investigation for our totalitarian state.

And now the question (not worth saving): "will they ever ask me to donate my eyebrows?"

I Want Something Other Than Time

This is precise.
No sequence that does
not sentence itself.
No point to itself along the
sequence of its duration.

When i first began writing this dimension would overcome me like a mask. I seemed to be an endless fabric ripped into the thing, and perhaps, i thought, one day i could submit my whole self to it in an accident.

But what exists is already kind of closed up. The order i made was borne by the spirit to be delivered in two days. It was for something private this order. Something private and molting. The voice said "like a mask"; a limit to its own.

No solitude in which one
could proceed from.

NATSUKO HIRATA

Moonless poolside

My father's favorite movie scenes
float up from magical palms
in old whispers. A barman
brings Chilean wine
to mysterious
western
regulars.
Glistening
beyond
apocaly-
psism
pours
into
the dark
pool.

Sparkle tree garden diner

Countless
luminous rolled
down

between
magnificent twigs.

Intelligent downstairs. Waltzing rain on garden chairs.
Conversation with an accomplice leads to brilliant thunder

p
e
a
l

secrets.
Soundless worker brings appetizer has a good
command of sign.

Quiet
allusions
will be
eloquence
of
bright
agreement.

Amethyst
breeze
after the rain.

NOAH ELI GORDON

Carbon Footprint

The self
You imagine
You are
Steps out
From the self
It imagines
You are
To fill
With ash
The plastic
Flowerpot

Albatross iPhone

You can be in the whale
Or the ark
Or that evil box
You can even be in love
But your loneliness
Digitized as it is
To resemble mine
It's in there with you

SHEILA E. MURPHY

Now and Then

Everyone's own magnificent comes home to rest.

Music for use spawned Hindemith's creating what would frame each small occasion.

Compositions for the instruments he had.

At my senior recital, I performed his sonata for flute and piano.

Agreed at the last minute to wear a long dress from Hawaii
that my mother brought to school.

Fashion statements lapse when sound remains the sole reality.

I wrote a piece for flute and dancer, who wore bare feet.

A crowd attended, loving me for reasons.

Now I retrieve bits that form my history.

I am a lucky individual with bright eyes.

able to discern within the score the time to play, a place to rest.

Artifice

Campus is replete with dough from grants
and size-D cups of joe. Quite plural mornings
lean toward *nacht* propelled
in the direction of new daytimes,
pretty much alike.

Once accepted, you become legitimate
as you inhabit a plateau
on which others listen, pause,
perhaps agree. Very different from
fellow intellects pecking at texts
in parallel, affordably alone.

Chant “innovate” often enough
and someone will equate you
with that word,
trolling for secrets
about how it’s done.

From far enough away, patterns
defy the clutter of a new vicinity,
where slog prevails. Staccato incidents sans hinges
fall forward, in pursuit
of adoration, that it may boomerang
to arrive at the inevitable destination.

CARLOS HIRALDO

FB

Village without community,
hyperbole übbber alles,
perpetual homelessness
posted.

The id
in a masquerade of branding
gone viral,
chasing you, chasing me,
chasing Amy.

I am id, you are id,
we all id. Fuck it!

World window opened
to shout void.

In Contemplation

In the downstairs loo,
first time at the Short-Hetherington household
in Wimbledon, London,
I sit.

Bearded Edwardian ancestors,
and maidens in long dresses,
navy captains, sirs, OBE recipients,
and their proud young wives
peer at my face
from their black and white world.

My brown cheeks strain
against the ivory cold. I stare
at the coat rack before me
and wonder about my wife's stately parents
walking down the narrow streets wrapped-up
warm in other people's funk.

They are welcoming to me
and to our progeny,
though I've been less than a year in their daughter's life.
I wonder,
though,
what the ancestors think
as I shit before them.

SUSAN TERRIS

On the Bridge

the clock on the bridge has no hands/if I
hold mine in the air/ I look and feel young

Jung was obsessed by hands/by dreams/today
the afternoon dream is fraught with rejection

in it/I am intent upon murder/to submit or not
submission can be sublime silence

or a whipping/as in whipped after a long day or
tense game/but murder with bare hands may

be another kind of game/any dark one needs
a candle/light it/blow it out/relight/blow

check the mask/the yellow rubber gloves/but stop
time is out of joint/the clock has lost its hands

Ghost Note

the one I didn't write/holding/yet written in my hand
backwards slant/disappearing ink or lemon juice

practice run/to read it light a match and char/unsung
song/the missing beat/fires you covet/silenced by

heartbeat or drum/in this infernal rain there is sun
yet no golden pot/invisible feet of striders/is that

a dog's sharp bark or treefall/is a hart leaping over
words and woods/ghost sounds/love me

then/ghost shadows/secrets/now/inversion
always/ghost note/and at long last/a slow dance

VINCENT KATZ

Metro North

Stratford's arched bridge in haze
Bridgeport big business and sea
Empty lots and highways still courts
Arenas smoke ruined fabrication
Fairfield Metro giant facility shops
Fairfield cuteness is dilemma

Greenwich blonde brunette a modern
Sculpture and blasted rock
Stamford many get off a river
Modern dullness distracted by personal life
Church spire handles the sky
Noroton Heights Darien cute little nervousness
Westport light flickers on tree vines
A river sailboat then shrubs
Fairfield glory tree and split rail
Bridgeport massive columns gutted field
Iglesia Cristiana Pescadores de Hombres
Giant Machiavellian Factory
Convolute intricate destruction
Church darkly subdues neighboring roomers
Stratford graffiti and prone rusted culverts
Ancient bridge abandoned piles
Milford ancient buried dead
West Haven tall grass and cranes

West Haven golden arch elevated
Elevated highway low homes
Pockets of inlets
Milford's grave scrub bridge
Pass over highway highway pass over Bridgeport
Tug barge and ferry defrocked church
Green's Farms highways electrical mains yard
Ocean wetlands Westport the gates to town

Pelham Bay manor homes
Extensive cemeteries
Rain-soaked ball courts
Fairfield Metro a large area
A blank wall some parts painted white
An arch huge wood chunks stained
Metal flap rain protection? on bridge
Derelict buildings being demolished
Milford delapidated shacks with skylights
West Haven dirty snow mounds still line parking lot

New Haven rainy platform train half in shed
Array of tracks large-gauge dark gravel
Milford a nice little street and marina
Southport a swan on an inlet
Green's Farms wetlands yellow swamp grass leading out

New Haven tower as in Christ Church painting
Skulls surprisingly on the Westport

This station is South Norwalk
The next station is Rowayton
It is Spring, the trees are in leaf
And flowers lend a gentleness
To stocky warehouses and
Barracks-like storage units
Giant, jagged rocks surge
The earth is full of life
The sun almost too bright in
Darien's cloud-fostered haze

Riverside's delicate apples
Long-view river mouth
Docks and decks like in Maine

Broadway for Paul

Now on 75th in June air everyone's naked
Not in a hurry I'll walk a while

There's an opening but I'm not going to it
A girlfriend and Anne Carson in a restaurant, sitting alone

Further down, freer of people and manias, I still want to walk
See those younger take over their city, those older exist in style still

Paul is younger, redolent of style, charm and space of artist's place
In my best attempt: blue shoes, white pants, blue and white small-patterned long-sleeve shirt

Young girl munches contently, walking from violin lesson with nanny
As another girl so centered, food prepared brought for her after practice

Rastafarian hair gigantic bunch in cap tonight will let loose magnetic spliff rhythm
Purses hang from shoulders, backpacks, hair neatly organized in length

Legs displayed, breasts in see-through t-shirts near building
High school memory goddess took steps through this city, rumblings of sexual contentment

Bouncing, imagining, thinking, when in high school, white furred dog
The light goes down slowly citizens pass to private sounds I stay longer

Savor specific light
Drink water from air, feel length in this smell

Admittedly comfort too of shops, leather or laces
Mother with daughter exits, slowly in stages go, apart down broad sidewalk

End of park, memory, smell of leaf, earth, of fertility, expansion now
Down to concrete, other beauty, if enthusiasm can lift

Final park border: Maine monument Columbus high on Doric plinth
Strange bat-figure lowers head — in sadness, submission? — Gothic spire pierces distance

Design Museum's open late but Broadway I drink in every last sip this Friday of walking looking
Sun sinks light across streets luxuriate in loss, deep satisfaction out here among denizens

LEILA ROSNER

Naked Fools

A wandering minstrel glued to his Samsung
Doesn't know a word of the satyr's song.
Why should I use a lute when I can download the app?
I begin to answer but roll my eyes instead.

A naked man runs frantically down Astor place.
His body catching a swift and knowing breeze
As the lunch he bought at Chipotle
Gets stale and rancid under the cheap umbrella.

Waiting on line for the 8th edition of death
To intellect and memories from the Polaroid.
They need it then want it then bathe in it willingly
As I light his invisible bath with eternal optimism.

Oh sorrow of sorrows doth take its toll
On the man giving his eye to the hypnotist
Who makes him see a swirling pattern of blind images
As the hypnotist laughs at himself and kisses the stars
That gives him power to grant then take away.

BASIL KING

The Butterfly and the Rat

Mother of pearl there is an Olmec head
In my back yard and it doesn't stop talking
And it says mammal Rat
Your blue eyes
Your teeth
Are without wings
Mammal with no
Color with no wings
You stand
On the subway
For something
Unforgettable
Something chained
Something ankled
Something repeats
And repeats in my ear
The butterfly and the rat
The color and the tail
On the subway
Mammal Rat
Your blue eyes
Your teeth
Are without wings
Mammal with no
Color with no wings
Without the butterfly
You are bruised
Blued eyed
Sincerity

Pause

Mother of pearl there is an Olmec head
In my back yard and it doesn't stop talking
And it says two stops after
Smith and 9th
I live in a house
On the Slope
And internalize my prospects
I remember the HA in the park
And all its green curiosity
Mammal hunger
Mammal thirst
The Monarch butterfly
Travels

And when it sees
The Duke of Burgundy
Talking to the Painted lady
Math calculates the impossible
The plate glass window
The butterfly and the rat
The color and the tail

Pause

Mammal Rat
Your blue eyes
Your teeth
Are without wings
Mammal with no
Color with no wings
You stand
For something
Unforgettable
Something chained
Something ankled
Something repeats
And repeats in my ear
The butterfly and the rat
The butterfly and the rat

Pause

Mother of pearl there is an Olmec head
In my back yard and it doesn't stop talking
And it says sometimes it's so difficult
To know what is vanity
And what is real
When vulgarity
Thwarts intelligence
And extends a vicious
Metaphor that tells us
There is always a good
Reason to forget
Mammal Rat
Your blue eyes
Your teeth
Are without wings
Mammal with no
Color with no wings
You stand
On the subway
For something
Unforgettable
Something chained
Something ankled
Something repeats
And repeats in my ear

The butterfly and the rat
The color and the tail

Pause

The New Born
Retaliate
Not everyone makes
Their own mortar
Their own bricks
Plants their own garden
Not everyone is
Innocent
Not everyone heals
Not everyone flies
Like a butterfly
And chews like a rat

MARY MACKEY

Arash's Song

Let me bury my face in your hair
for it smells like wheat and roses
Let me bury my body in your flesh
for it smells like wild lilies and spring

Am I singing of the Goddess Earth
or my love who sleeps here beside me?

Of both I sing of both,
of the grace of Her brown hills
and the brown curves of your breasts
of your ankles and wrists
and Her saplings that tremble
when the south winds blow

I am singing of the vast seas
of your journeys
and the infinite ocean of Her love

Song carved on a fragment of a wooden lute
Europe, Fifth Millennium B.C.E.

(From Mary Mackey's novel *The Village of Bones*)

Pile of Rocks

mounds of back sand smooth as tongues
wrap around our feet like lips
behind a curtain of glittering ash
the waves weave and unweave
like threads of molten glass

this morning
six fishermen brought up a monster in their nets
something twisted and so old it had no name

look at those rocks we call a hill

an old man is fighting his way out of the cracks
smeared with egret tailings
just below him half-buried children
are trying to claw their way through a pile of skulls

let us command those rocks
to be rocks only rocks

let's pretend this is really a beach

MARK YOUNG

geographies: Bandung

Uber, with its rich
colonial architecture &

world class secular
education, has, along-

side the baby boom,
played an important

role in the history of
postwar population

Prehistoric Pronouns

(Tom Beckett Title #4)

If I were lower down the
food chain, said *Tyran-*
nosaurus R., in answer
to a question from David
Attenborough, my andro-

gyny—flitting between Rex
& Regina; he, she &, in
certain seasons, it—might
have been a problem. But
the dinosaur kingdom has

lost its hang-ups about gen-
der-bending since the Earth
cooled. &, besides, my size
makes "mine" such a sing-
ularly possessive pronoun.

EILEEN R. TABIOS

On A Pyre: An Ars Poetica

Flames
eating my
body hotter than

fire
for the
poetry in burning

books
ravage more
than a drought-stricken

forest's
revenge for
the creation of

paper
so flimsy
against non-metaphorical needs—

The Sublime Rarely Allows Shortcuts

—after Kinta Beevor's memoir, *A Tuscan Childhood*

For hunting truffles,
Italians prefer
dogs

over pigs who
are so
greedy

they are almost
impossible to
control

once they've scented
a truffle.
Taking

his dog to

a likely
spot

the hunter spurs
him on
with

cries—*Dai! Dai!*
Cerca!—like
those

of a *cacciatore*
after gamebirds.
White

truffles can grow
down 15
inches.

When the dog
begins scratching,
his

handler immediately pulls
him away
otherwise

his eager paws
will wreak
havoc

upon the mushrooms.
The Sublime
rarely

allows shortcuts.
The handler
himself

must get down
on all
fours

to sniff for
scents of
must—

he is irreplaceable
when digging
carefully—

so very care-full-y...

WILLIAM ALLEGREZZA

divide, as trial

our signal words,
i have not seen
but I know they
are lost through
brutal craft.

)
still i
trained early
not to move,
so even now
you do not hear me.

my voice through
leaves quickly is
becoming someone
else's home.

Not A Marathon

1952: we traded spontaneity
for solidarity.
Someone who would not speak

saw linen wrinkled.
Bathrooms never lie—
nor do urban
restaurants crawling with dybbuks.
I used him as I would use

any other liquid soap.
It wasn't the prospect of a marathon.
But sherpas shrieked under my footprint's
weight. This video has not
been sped up or slowed down

for dramatic consequence.
Open softly: context may implode.

ANDREW LEVY

Much that is Admirable

Much that is admirable in the best of Levy's work is felt in firmness and delicacy of cadence, an indefinite and definite geography, as with the Old Testament's language of space, a mutually fortifying congruence between what the language means to say and what it musically embodies. It's been said that the way one writes and reads delimits one's vision, and that to convey the truth of that reality to "make us fit our own life into its world," within and without aesthetic considerations filled with ambiguity, confusion, and contradictory motives various and arbitrary, multilayered in characterizations of people and events, 'fraught with background' full of mystery and omissions, leaves unsaid any detail that does not pertain to the poem's purpose. Conversely, what *is* said is always loaded with meaning, a semantic weight that creates the effect of an accumulating suspense for the simple reason that the subject will not fit into any of the known genres. In reading Levy, certain parts are brought into high relief, others left obscure, there is an abruptness, a suggestive influence of the unexpressed, "background" quality, multiplicity of meanings and the need for interpretation, universal-historical claims, development of the concept of the historically becoming, and preoccupation with the problematic end of human knowledge and experience. Clearly, he mixes certain things that should not be mixed together.

"I could see between the planks of the barn wall how they piled up hay against the wall, which they then set on fire. When the burning roof caved in the people and people's clothes caught on fire, everybody threw themselves against the door, which broke open. The punitive squad stood around the barn and opened fire on the people, who were running in all directions." The baby straps on its holster, six shooters mingled with the sinful supplications of the multitude, to bury in its gloom the victims of a pestilence, and then to block up its mouth with stones, and avoid the spot forever after.

"The finger of Providence hath pointed my way!" cries the baby, aloud, while the tomb-like den returns a strange echo, as if someone within were mocking.... "The babies, I say, the babies break down their tower; and swing I know not where." Competition and conformity have infiltrated the assassins of poetry. Every baby is a commodity, to be bought at the lowest price and sold at the highest. Individual success is a mental health issue poisoning the planet. The mean-spiritedness makes me feel sick and disinterested. Eating brutal solvent heat sufferings melted radio ship destroyer factory school habits ego calculated heaven ambition murder. What is it to be a baby in the 21st century? New product families? Sentimental sacrificial weapons of ubiquitous living, incessant pain, cultural history? Exhibitionist accommodations? The fatal glass of beer? The baby, gun drawn, is singing and chanting the things that are part of it, the worlds that were and will be, death and day. No baby shall see the end. Its diaper is of fire and its gun is a lead flame.

MARCIA ARRIETA

Sketch the Birds

Illustrate
the
hidden
silent
hours.

The
collections
are
arranged
alphabetically.

We
preserve
initiative.

We
add
movement.

JOSEPH DONAHUE

Absynthe Cake

The ache of such absences
pass into us, becoming
the surest sign of life, now that
birds sleep during the day
my mind becomes as
small as theirs so when
I say I have a lot on my
mind it's more like
a kind of singing
that persists in silence
during which perspective
tends to reverse as if
in the allegorical painting
all this will one day be
the vanishing point occurs
not on the canvas
but within the viewer,
like a glacier that washes
over a mountain, shimmer of
pine needles rolling
over chunks of ice
that slide down
becoming a stream
where in the distance
an icon is held up to a blaze
that is turning the village to ash
Finally, in despair, a priest
flings the icon into
the intensifying fire
with a rebuke: "Well if
you wont help us, see if you
can help yourself!"
I woke to find my room
full of chains and
the tennis court flooded
Everyone lies but the lie shines
with its own glorious truth
a pillar of flame before
which Brahma
becomes a goose,
flies up, but cannot find
the top of the fire
Vishnu, a boar, and
digs into the earth
for a 1000 years and

cannot find the
lower limit of
the eternal burning
Then the flame opens
Siva, inside the flame
reveals himself as
the lord of all
and prophecies:
"This life is like
a present from the
madhouse gift shop,
a contortion of wire
piercing the heart of a candle
the wick inexplicably
juts from its side,
the mangle of
script on the card
seems to say:
'Not to be burned
till the end of
the world,
till the morning
a bird becomes
incidental to its song
as if it just flew by
at the moment
a throat was needed' "
From the kennel at the end of the street
comes a joyous yelping
day rises into the sky
over the Japanese
fountain on the
former slave
plantation where
as a girl we would
gather for morsels of absinthe cake
back when my father made
an effort to translate
all that was said
But now, back in Poland
and among his siblings,
he doesn't do that
its like he doesn't want
to be my father anymore,
he just wants to be
in the world in
some other way
It makes sense,
but it startled me,
that our roles in life
are only that, and
that they end.

The Protestant Conscience

for Mark Scroggins

The road sign is blank
This means a train is coming
Cows have wandered down the hill
In a fate not yet in play after a sleep
so deep we stagger and mistake the bed
for a graveyard of dreams
eyes of flesh turn to eyes of fire
The day feels un-bandaged
Midmorning, relentless moon
Seas, peaks, and craters overhead
The heavenward spiral of tree sap
A doctor astounded by an x-ray
“Whatever you’re doing, keep doing it”
Peace and joy are fruits of love’s garden
but a skeleton is not bereft of magnificence
Where did those red berries come from?
Yesterday the branch was all green
A gust is not just air through air
Days with nothing to do except doubt
A night that is a temple so large
one can only be led or be lost
ruled by an un-restful sleep
all gathered simply to witness
and be other within ourselves
were such to be permitted within
the ideology of this historical hour
Can the sun be said to have a wick?
Can the world be seen to tremble?
Can others so touch only on
a glowing screen in the dark?
I feel wet and empty and shining,
a stone swept clean in a storm
Somewhere within *The Fairie Queen*
its forests, monsters, imperiled souls
I am never ready for the life that
happens, abandoned as I am
often with prayers on my lips
in New York, the old neighborhood,
but on the macro-level I am lost
The map in hand has a beautiful glow
a faint wave of blue passing through it
a braid of grey shapes where
the words have washed away
Surgery delayed till next week
they dig out your flesh and bone
and send you home with bottles of
a crystalline fluid to pour through

a tube into your new hollow
A miraculous spring bubbles
in a bone grotto, medical silver,
you are purified, dedicated anew
to achieving the miraculous burble
of the cure flowing into you
like a wounded knight beside
a healing niche in a forest
Still beautiful, a sprite leans
and confides: "My hot flashes
are finally over. Nature is
done with me. The leaves
have my permission to turn
their colors, the torrent
to seep deeper into the brick."

JULIE KIZERSHOT

To The Tune of Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday"

This week the International News of the New York Times headline reads

A Syrian Family, Its Journey Complete, Cannot Leave All Its Troubles Behind

and here in Flatbush, curtains flap
outside the window spring treetops quiver in the breeze, light glints
off the black green tile of the roof next door
and equally on the silver fender of an automobile parked below

this morning early we discussed the difficulty
of sleeping together
You after years on the road require
noise and light
I slip into the dark quiet like a pond,
or cocoon

so Sunday belongs to the blues
and not even the pristine notes of Mahalia Jackson's
acapella
can climb us up that gospel staircase
to beatitude

in this upper room

Come Sunday, the New York Times states

A Terror Group More Deadly Than the Taliban Arises in Afghanistan

my Metro Pass is about to expire
and in Flatbush
a car engine sounds
in retreat

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ

From *Longer Po-ems* (Archae Editions, late 2017)

neo/log/is/tic

new/spa/per

no/on/day

not/at/able

or/an/gut/an

or/at/or

or/if/ices

page/an/try

pal/it/able

pal/pit/ant

pan/ace/as

pan/the/on

pan/try/man

par/ad/ox

pa/rag/on

par/all/ax

par/don/able

par/son/age

part/it/as

past/or/ate

pa/ten/tees

pen/drag/on

pen/tag/on

per/for/ate

per/me/able

pet/role/um

pi/cad/or

pi/ran/ha

plane/to/id

pol/ice/man

poll/in/ate

pomp/ad/our

prim/or/dial

pro/fit/able

pro/hi/bits

pro/life/ration

pro/tuber/ant

KIRSTEN KASCHOCK

Eclipse Aubade

If the day is blackened fish
or whited out we can fuck
all afternoon, yes? No don't
answer. I used to get sore—
now I'm more or less happy
to drape my leg over yours
and call it married. The bed
is plenty big for the whole
swampy mess but you are still
leaving me for your mistress.
A woman needn't have breasts
to threaten. I have knives, and
pills. The moon is cold, a know-
ing leech, filling her blousy
corpse with stolens. The sun, he
miscarries, trawling the crude-
streaked skyway—the wake of us
drawn behind his pitiless
boat, catch-and-releasing the light.

Mermaid / the poet's hair

moves on its own. Like an animal. A woman tucks
a soul in child's pose beneath. To maintain her lock
a poet counts the passings through and by toothed
meter establishes: luster can exist. One thousand

one. No brush stroke quite equates. Scheherazade (no
poet) wished to paint a single tale where hair was not
a noose—or worse—a rope climbed into cloud. No one
washes a poet's feet. Their dangling is remonstrance.

Disputed maps of divided countries, they cannot
kick down the fathoms they imply. A poet is hobbled
by fin, by salt and slow rot, by sirenhood. On hard rock
a poet rapunzels, tending detritus with witchery

: a skeleton comb plucked long ago from a universe of sea.

GEOFFREY YOUNG

Out of the White

When John Godfrey called last night
a dead of winter, TV-tuned-to-anything
evening, I asked if there was a way
to write a poem that wouldn't collapse

with the first word, if ritual preparation
or literary posturing might trick
the muse into yielding a vision of anything
--even shadows on snow--generating a surge

of syllables, some kind of urgent relation
of words to emotion, so that experience might
cough up some clues to be studied later. Well,
thank god for John--so blunt, so flash, so *homme*

alone—for drawing a bead on my palaver with this
shot: “If you're a real poet, you'll write poems.”

Mutuality

My problem with you is
Your problem with me
If I'm not part of the conversation
Not part of the steering committee

If my stance scribes a right angle to your garden path
If I'm expected to take dictation
To fall mutely into your fine line my problem
With you is your problem

With me why the secrecy
Where's my seat at the table my voice
In the room if we're writing *Mutuality* together
Where's my name on the page

Where's my face in the frame
Why am I sitting here alone editing “your” text?