

Marsh Hawk Review

Spring 2020

Edited by Mary Mackey

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| PAUL PINES | 4 |
| Museum of the Infinite..... | 4 |
| D. NURKSE..... | 6 |
| Caligula..... | 6 |
| Marbles And A Dead Bee..... | 8 |
| Flora Of The Boreal Forest..... | 9 |
| BURT KIMMELMAN | 10 |
| Year’s End | 10 |
| 2019..... | 10 |
| KIM SHUCK | 11 |
| Breakfast Guests | 11 |
| MARGE PIERCY..... | 12 |
| Finally deliverance..... | 12 |
| My year in Maryland | 13 |
| The real influencers..... | 15 |
| JANE AUGUSTINE..... | 16 |
| Seven Stanzas on the “Poetics of the More-Than-Human World” | 16 |
| EILEEN R. TABIOS | 18 |
| Plato According to the Dog..... | 18 |
| LIST POEM, MARCH 2020 | 19 |
| RAFAEL JESÚS GONZÁLEZ | 22 |
| Sueños..... | 22 |
| Dreams | 23 |
| JOAN GELFAND..... | 24 |
| Branded..... | 24 |
| THOMAS FINK | 25 |

| | |
|--|----|
| A Toppling Advice Column..... | 25 |
| Formidable | 26 |
| JANE ORMEROD..... | 27 |
| Think Bib on Fire or Privilege..... | 27 |
| ANDREA CARTER BROWN | 28 |
| Elysian Fields..... | 28 |
| KIRAN BHAT | 30 |
| The Chief’s First Wife Meets the Pastor..... | 30 |
| MICHAEL RERICK..... | 32 |
| From: (Mars)..... | 32 |
| INDIGO MOOR | 33 |
| Lost in The World Machine..... | 33 |
| DANIEL LAWLESS | 34 |
| On the Way to Your Funeral, Already Sleep-Deprived..... | 34 |
| LUCILLE LANG DAY | 36 |
| Dining Alone in Athens | 36 |
| JOSHUA MCKINNEY..... | 37 |
| Catechism..... | 37 |
| ROBERT GIBB | 39 |
| Dptych: Art School | 39 |
| Inked | 41 |
| Sketches For Paintings I Never Got To | 42 |
| DAVID LAWTON | 43 |
| Pirandello's Directions for Crossing the Charles River | 43 |
| BRUCE BAGNELL..... | 44 |
| Biography of | 44 |
| GEORGE QUASHA..... | 45 |
| 1 angel angles..... | 45 |
| 2 the poetics of downward usage | 47 |
| 3 mind-degradable therapy..... | 49 |
| GAIL NEWMAN..... | 51 |
| Sabotage..... | 51 |
| Elegy | 52 |
| Does The Spider Have A Heart?..... | 53 |

| | |
|---|----|
| RUSTY MORRISON | 54 |
| notes from the understory (level 5)..... | 54 |
| BARBARA NOVACK..... | 55 |
| Dancing on the Rim of Light | 55 |
| JIM BARNARD..... | 57 |
| My Dog, her Friend, and the Fence | 57 |
| BASIL KING | 58 |
| Before..... | 58 |
| Eva Hesse (1936-1970)..... | 59 |
| Walt Kuhn..... | 60 |
| 1877-1949 | 60 |
| STEVEN ROOD..... | 61 |
| Self Portrait With A Cod’s Head | 61 |
| SUSAN TERRIS..... | 62 |
| By The Prickling of My Thumbs | 62 |
| When The Hurley-Burley’s Done..... | 63 |
| Not So Happy, Yet Much Happier..... | 64 |
| PUMA PERL | 65 |
| Delusions of All Right | 65 |
| WIL GIBSON | 68 |
| I’m going to tell you | 68 |
| TIM KAHL | 69 |
| The Siren Queen | 69 |
| RICHARD LORANGER..... | 71 |
| Breakfast | 71 |
| ANDRENA ZAWINSKI | 73 |
| Born Under the Influence..... | 73 |
| GRACE MARIE GRAFTON | 74 |
| Land of The Red Dust..... | 74 |
| JANA HARRIS..... | 75 |
| Father Joins the Monastery at Menilmontant..... | 75 |
| and Prepares to Renovate Humanity; Paris, 1833..... | 75 |
| MAXINE HONG KINGSTON..... | 77 |
| Once I was on an airplane | 77 |

PAUL PINES

Museum of the Infinite

The museum of which you speak
has no vanishing point
everything in the open
no hide and seek
for what explains
our journey
 between meaning
 and menace

like the God Particle
that links mind to
matter
 our universe one
 of many nested in
 a regressus
 of black holes

ends where mortality
ceases to burden
the human heart

I want to stroll this museum
with you old friend
as if we'd been here all along
watch the corridors of our
assumptions
dissolve

 around portraits
 hanging in plain sight
 without walls
 or frames

Paul Pines (1941 – 2018)

From *A Furnace in the Shadows: Selected Poems* (Dos Madres Press, 2018)

D. NURKSE

Caligula

After Suetonius

Caligula ordered the night city illuminated.
Every stoop, porch, or balcony was a stage.

He made the senators dress as prostitutes--
tight silk skirts, paste-on eyelashes.
Up to a matron to wriggle into a boy's shorts.

Marcus Severus, one-armed veteran
of our labyrinthine border wars,
had to hobble into the amphitheater
armed with a plume, and attack a lion.

A plume! We were fascinated.
We were all players, who was the audience?

The Emperor chose *me, me, me*, and *me*,
and slept with us. He was passive
as a bedpost, but listed his demands
in documents we had to sign in advance.

Slaves--who had been stockbrokers
or insurance agents a moment ago--
carried triremes on their backs to Rome.
Sails billowed above our seven sacred hills.

Would it ever end? We were enthralled.
Every breath was a saga
when you long to skip to the finale.

We no longer washed, brushed our teeth,
or picked a scab--just *him, him, him*.

It was Cassius Chaerea who killed him--
that lispng tribune he called 'pansy.'

The Emperor lay curled in blood.
We were mesmerized. All we could do
was compete to reconstruct the portents:

*headless chicken racing all morning,
kitten born without eyes, huge cloud,
tiny cloud, cloud like a fist...*

For a few hours the Chronicler
listened and scribbled, but soon
he grew bored, we bored ourselves,
so began Caligula's slow death--

Caligula who so often said of a captive,
'make him feel he's really dying.'

*

Now we're helpless as always,
faced with twilight, a child crying,
birdsong, the breeze, our seven steep hills.

From "The Paris Review"

Marbles And A Dead Bee

Def. Imago 1. The final and fully developed adult stage of an insect... 2. An unconscious idealized mental image of someone, especially a parent...

-- Oxford Living Dictionaries

1

Imago was elected this morning--
in the gray hour before dawn
the last firewall crumbled.
A street drunk moans
in ecstasy or shame.

2

Close your eyes. Imago controls
the House, Senate, Supreme Court.
Open them. Just sunlight on a blind.

3

As a dropped bulb shatters
so my country.

4

The poet will defend herself with poetry,
the lover with sex,
the child with marbles and a dead bee,
the suicide with suicide.

5

But if you choose to kill yourself
find a quiet room in the past.

Tonight your life is required for a task.

From *Resistance, Rebellion, Life* (an anthology)

Flora Of The Boreal Forest

The child insisted on being carried
to touch the pine, the oak, oak, pine,
and I grew numb under that adamant voice.
My arm throbbed as she tried to decide:
Cone? Acorn? Needle? Leaf?

It's only thanks to the half light
that we can go home, she prancing
on my shoulder, trying to braid
my wisp of hair, singing absently.

Thrush or vireo, loud and invisible,
slurring two maniac notes:
wherever it calls from is the center.

Lake behind the scrim of alder
like a plenitude you long for
all your life, most of all at the end.

Lit window like a force
you can't imagine knowing you
but it consumes you without reflection.

World like a hole to fall into
forever, or else a curtain
you might stick your hand through.

Soon even she will tire of her song,
how it meets itself coming and going,
the vast spaces between notes,
the snarky refrain, Damariscotta,
the first faint stars, and she'll put
her sticky hand over my eyes: pine.

From *The Times Literary Supplement* (UK)

BURT KIMMELMAN

Year's End 2019

The morning back door open,
our cats leaving for the day,
squirrels begin their fearful
chirping, the trees towering
above. I wait for the word,
the world's final undoing,
the world's claim upon its kind.

KIM SHUCK

Breakfast Guests

Down in
Down here
Along the droning streets
This city stores poet thoughts
Tule boat songs
Mourning Cloak paintings
I have tripped over Bob Kaufman
Coded into pavement
Blood of a police beating or maybe a
Phrase with an eggshell curve
In heavy fog while children wander school paths
I have invited Bob to breakfast here or there or
Even in my own kitchen
Depending upon his mood
In this morning comforted with a downing fog
Bob has returned with the cats
Returned from last night when we all
Called him back to this painful and necessary place
Where at least he will no longer be arrested
But I suggest that that pain was the least
And here we sit
On my stairs
In the dripping fog
Reciting Eliot to one another

MARGE PIERCY

Finally deliverance

The sound of rain after a long drought:
first it just tiptoes across the roof.
We are not sure what we're hearing.
Then it strengthens to a patter, then

It's playing the roof for a drum as air
is cleansed from 89 to 70 degrees.
A sheet of rain washes everything –
leaves, bricks, street, even our minds

choked on dirty air, our itchy skin.
We've been hiding in airconditioned
rooms from raging heat, a massive
fist of coals pounding us weary.

Now everything is being renewed.
Hope rides in on a storm.

Copyright 2020 Marge Piercy

My year in Maryland

My father's older sister Elizabeth
the one who didn't die too young
took in foster children for money,
kept one on, Mary, grateful

for a home at last, willing
to work all day for nothing, half
daughter, half servant. I was nine,
my father was sent from Detroit

to Maryland to learn how to fix
radar on ships. Aunt Liz rented
us a house, no heat, a toilet
but no way to bathe in the woods.

I showered mornings in the kennel
where Liz raised retrievers.
I always had fleas. But the Severn
River at road's end beckoned.

The land was hilly, holly trees,
flights of wooden steps going
to the river where a gang of us
swam, rowed with the tides.

An occasional dinner at Liz's
with Mary serving was prickly.
Liz glared suspicion at Mom
at me. Nobody else had black hair:

something off there, foreign.
I was happy outside, miserable
within where Mother tried to cook
on a rusty stove and they fought.

I loved Joyce with whom we became
pirates, guerillas, explorers; I loved
Tad who almost taught me to swim

arms smelling of salt and suntan.

I did not love Aunt Elizabeth.
I did like one of her Chesapeake
retrievers and wanted it. But
soon that pup was sold.

Copyright 2020 Marge Piercy

The real influencers

Xena was a starving street cat when rescued.
Nonetheless at the shelter, she purred
when picked up and clung to us.

A big tabby total symmetrical,
perfection of her kind, she is serious
as a Talmud scholar, she watches us

day and through the night for fear
we may stray into danger. Schwartzie
was born in a good shelter, brought

home at eight weeks. He believes
he was born here, is fearless, gentle.
He finds mice adorable and protects

them from the others, while Xena
kills with one blow and eats them—
you never know, she says, when

food may disappear. We are all
products of our past, what we fear.
what we cherish, even how we think

we should live. We carry our parents,
grandparents in our blood and brains.
They speak to us in dreams, in food.

Our past expands and narrows us.
Our past curves what we see.
I'm a peddler with a pack of years.

Copyright 2020 Marge Piercy

JANE AUGUSTINE

Seven Stanzas on the “Poetics of the More-Than-Human World”

(i)

There is no such thing as a “more-than-human” world;
it is a fantasy of the human world.

(ii)

Oh, you mean what used to be called
the “natural world,” trees and greenery, etc.,
that which I think of as outside of myself.
Which it is, of course. But
where is the boundary? Am I unnatural?

(iii)

Aroma of sun on scrub-oak outside
of a mountain cabin is there, no matter who
is inside. Do you feel it? Yes. No.
The cross- cancellation/evocation of words.

(iv)

Oh no, not another poem about poetry. Forget it.
But words and the languages of causes, the way
one human being does not recognize another
in a headline, pay attention to that.

(v)

Gun-carriers of the U.S.A. have nothing to do
with Australian fire-tornadoes, which are
the more-than-human world in action, fire
making itself.

The gun-carrier predicts civil war if elections
don't go his way, “I don't believe in violence,
but I'll do what I got to do.”
The human world makes the more-than-human,
clarifies the pain.

(vi)

“Oh the humanity!” cried out the reporter watching
as the dirigible Hindenburg caught fire
and was consumed in three minutes,
a triumph of hydrogen and thunderclouds
over the pride of Hitler’s Germany in 1937,
the largest rigid airship ever made.

But “how beautiful,” a woman earlier had thought
“the silver airship against a clear blue sky.”
Then it turned and its tail showed swastikas,
the gas chambers, technology of Zyklon-B.

(vii)

Oh, the humanity, that’s what I mean. The material world
is beautiful in its self-existing powers and we too exist.
I repeat: the human makes the more-than-human world.
These words are part of the fantasy, though

that may not be quite the right word.

EILEEN R. TABIOS

Plato According to the Dog

Fortunately for the dog, I now stay home.

Fortunately, the dog now witnesses me working all day.

Fortunately, because of Covid19 a major philosophical question has been answered.

LIST POEM, MARCH 2020

Food

1 rib-eye steak
3 swordfish steaks
12 chicken legs
3 packs of frozen fish
1 brisket
1 bottle of barbecue sauce
3 packages of smoked salmon
1 dozen eggs
4 packages of creamed cheese
1 bag of parmesan cheese
4 bars of butter
6 jars of pasta sauce
1 jar of garlic
5 bags of pre-mixed Caesar salads
4 boxes of pasta
16 boxes of flavored rice
1 bag of white rice
1 package of quick-cook brown rice
24 cans of tuna
4 cans of crab meat
6 cans of soup
3 plastic containers of soup
6 cans of green beans
4 frozen packets of corn
2 containers of potato salad
1 jar of coffee
2 jars of Fortnum and Mason Assam tea
2 boxes of chamomile tea
1 oversized box of generic black tea
1 half-gallon of milk
12 bottles of iced tea
4 bottles of diet iced tea
1 box of crackers
2 baguettes
6 English muffins
6 types of snacking cheese
1 bag of yellow squash

1 bag of carrots
1 bag of green beans
3 tomatoes
6 avocados
6 mangos
4 lemons
6 bananas

Medicine

2 boxes of aspirin

Water

4 gallon-jugs of spring water
36 bottles of seltzer water
96 cans of seltzer water

Cleaning Supplies

54 rolls of toilet paper
24 rolls of paper towels
1 package of napkins
2 boxes of dishwasher detergent
2 boxes of laundry detergent
3 boxes of toothpaste

Pets

2 bags of dog kibble
72 cans of dog food
2 bags of cat kibble
24 cans of cat canned food
12 boxes of pasta
2 bags of brown rice
6 cans of pumpkin
4 bags of turkey slices
7 bags of frozen bones

Identified Failures

Refilling two drug prescriptions
Mid-month restocking of bananas
Mid-month restocking of bagels

Excuses

- 1 slice of carrot cake
- 2 slices of chocolate cake
- 1 slice of lemon meringue pie
- 1 chocolate cake in its entirety
- 3 packages of Emmy's Coconut Cookies, vanilla bean variety
- 2 packages of Emmy's Coconut Cookies, dark chocolate variety
- 2 brioche cakes with Bavarian cream topped with honey and sliced almonds

Despair

- 1 bucket of vegetable stew with 25-year shelf life
- 100 MREs

Hope

- 51 vacuum bags

RAFAEL JESÚS GONZÁLEZ

Sueños

para Leila Rae

Paz o pandemonio
no significan nada
no importa lo que se cuente
de José del saco arco-iris,
o esas sibilas y tales,
o Freud y Jung.

Tú de repente de pie en un puente
sobre un río —
 el Río Bravo,
 o el Misisipí,
 o el Guadalquivir
escuchando y el balbuceo del río
sólo disparates y tú sin saber
aun como llegaste allí,
solamente como después de darles lustre
a los pomos de todas las puertas de la casa,
dejando la de enfrente para el fin
saliste cerrando detrás de ti,
vistiendo nada mas que pintura en el cuerpo.

© Rafael Jesús González 2020

Dreams

for Leila Rae

Peace or pandemonium,
they mean nothing
no matter what is told
of Joseph of the rainbow coat,
or those sibyls & such,
or Freud & Jung.

You suddenly standing on a bridge
over a river —
 the Rio Grande,
 or the Mississippi,
 or the Guadalquivir
listening & the river babble
just nonsense & you not knowing
how you even got there,
only how after polishing
all the doorknobs in the house,
leaving the front door for last,
you walked out, closing behind you,
wearing nothing but body paint.

© Rafael Jesús González 2020

JOAN GELFAND

Branded

Lowing, she is jolted. Free roaming once, now branded

“Triple SSS” ranch. She masticates new grass,

Her bell clanging a song she longs to escape.

Up in San Francisco, the young flourish, workforce warriors

Pray like hell to survive, to preserve back, wrists, eyes.

Tied to screens and cubes, they brandish

Salesforce backpack, Twitter snow cap, Uber baseball jacket.

Google thermos, Facebook key chain, Apple everything,

Logos of belonging. They relish their bells, glued to notifications,

Texts, mail. They munch power bars, Ninjas in their crowded fields,

Take the searing poker bravely, weigh tradeoffs.

Paycheck, health insurance, babies.

A chance at the payoff, a wild ride, early retirement.

At dinnertime, they taste the hint of something

Burnt under the sniff of grassy air, hear the faint

Jangle of the chain, the distant sound of bells.

THOMAS FINK

A Toppling Advice Column

With the

spanking new
deregulation of
truth claim
standards, one's
half century of
verbal butchery

can slip into
a square foot
of guilt. Your
doctor seems
about to puke?
If possible, move
to another bridge.
Implore your patron
sinner for grave insight
into the inhuman condition,
& you'll be gifted with grift
moxie— plus a love that
never ceases to comport

itself trans
actionally. Should
your heart
tell you what to
strive for, try the
opposite.
Or at
least something
less idiotic.

Formidable

judgmental,
authoritarian
those hippies
incapable of
away from
origins.
as pork-
Glower
Do you
self as
One who
Don't think
who you
Furiously
selectively
at base,
were
slipping
nuclear
American
bean pie.
or glow?
view your
formidable?
snaps orders?
I don't catch
are. If my
company's been a bug crawl ing on
your extremities, all that's about to
shift—tectonically, Dude.
Most often, in a free
society, you're at
liberty to select
your next owner.
In the boardroom,
barring an irrefutable
payoff for prime
stake holders,
compassion
is aberrant.

JANE ORMEROD

Think Bib on Fire or Privilege

This horse is huge! Language of misshapen sweetheart a decade
of wink and smile for a spin around the park or beloved academy of music
Licking baubles posies the true name of clothing and I had forgotten
a toyland square the body warmth from all four winds
“In need, find an officer,” they advised in a dust dream
of authority but open I was yet strayed too close in a tee- I just *flew*
Landed inside the clock then memory shifts to locate the weight of night

I used to own something from the Orkneys (a different story)
Already envisioning movement beyond blanket or cul-de-sac
or semi-colon He was a sot, they said but I saw him
as town hall the praised ballroom / bandstand the fancy worn hotel
Maybe *that* is where I landed raising cake to
my nostrils as he lay deep dead in the gully

ANDREA CARTER BROWN

Elysian Fields

Dad only told happy stories about the war.

Not just to his children.

How he ate Christmas dinner
a week early
in the middle of the night
somewhere in southern England
before getting on a troop transport
for France.

The time he drove a blacked-out Red Ball Express
6 x 6 truck on unmarked dirt roads in France
in the middle of the night to pick up
a single bottle of scotch for the officers'
New Year's Eve.

The time he ran into my mother's brother Reverne,
an infantry private returning from the front,
crossing a pontoon bridge over the Rhine
as Dad was headed toward it.

How he happened be in Paris on the Champs-Élysées
on V-E Day, May 8, 1945. Of this, I have proof:
a hand-written receipt from a women's lingerie shop
on the Rue de Rivoli in pencil on cheap newsprint,
the penmanship clearly French. This he kept
with the other mementos.

According to that story
he asked the shopgirl what size (bra) she wore,
thinking hers would fit my mother. It didn't.
Too small. Mother never forgave him
for getting it wrong.

I also believe his stories

about being kissed by French girls
on that street that day. He was a GI
in uniform in the euphoria of victory.
His Elysian Fields. That smile didn't lie.

KIRAN BHAT

The Chief's First Wife Meets the Pastor

I was a papaya stripped of my peel,
stuck,
with something wet clinging to my bones,
us stuck in these positions
as we had been for our entire lives.

God knew there were few souls,
in as much need of salvation, or divine love,
as his.

I stood.
He closed his legs and turned to his side.

God reminded me of the time,
not long ago,
when he came to seek my guidance,
not with his son, nor his wife,
but with his spilling heart
alone.

It was not my place to speak.
Without a word
I excused myself,
and returned to the tent of the wives.

As he declared to me the words of his own son,
as he invited the boy to the church,
to give his own confessions,
I saw that this was more than a spat before a marriage
they were in need of divine intervention.

I told myself never again.
This was not a promise meant
to be laughed at by the monkeys,
it was something said with utter faith.

© Kiran Bhat, 2019
From *we of the forsaken world* .

..

MICHAEL RERICK

From: (Mars)

NASA's CGI Curiosity roves on a Martian mission, samples, and poses at a heroic angle. Mars Direct astronauts will live off the land, process atmosphere, and homogenize dome cities for colonization. In the eighties Pepsi threatened to carve their logo onto the moon. Recycled urine works as a water source but trapped farts and redundant tasks get cut from television and movies. Google Mars will calculate distance and time between water, oxygen, and fuel kiosks. Luke Skywalker, C3PO, and R2D2 joke and goof in character on Pigs in Space, confusing science fiction and wisecracks. Percival Lowell's Martian canals will be achieved through poetic (like Amy Lowell) colonial mines. *Star Wars*, absent tedium, cannot translate space euphoria into DVD.

I, and over half the world's population, manage the urban. Tucson, AZ resists sandy basin basements but wind chimes and sierra houses serve us above ground. Glass craters in secret New Mexico military bases stare at the face of Mars staring back. Homegrown strip malls outnumber skyscrapers here. Robert Zubrin's Mars timeline has passed but Ira Flato secrets the plan in their present *Science Friday* conversation. Time tears space so all space will be torn up, an entropy gift of wind across a dry basin. Tyrone Williams argues globalism's timeless Derridean gift. Life on Mars will make us a moment within a string of accidents, nothing special or unique in the universe, once again.

Astronauts hitch one-way Martian dreams to technical toiletry and tin can culinary innovations. An internal report concludes no secure oil fields or strategic bases will be established through the multimillion-dollar project; hence, the mission is suicidal. Yet, Earth's orbital laboratory continues low gravity psychoanalytic experiments. The University of Arizona Science-Engineering Library's cream gloss walled and grey metal shelved basement holds physics, cosmology, and Mars texts; equally unpeopled, the upper floor's faded maroon floors stack the university's art books. As we diminish Martian inhabitants will be invisible to the naked ogling eye, but videoed by the Steward Observatory's large lenses on Cherry Street. Biosphere 2's isolation echoes an extraterrestrial "outland." Travel to Mars will be full of stars and as seasonless as southern California; but, Martian neighborhoods will pass thin, red terms.

INDIGO MOOR

Lost in The World Machine

Black, nimble as Jack, jumping I-beams like candles.
An air hose hisses like Medusa's head tied to my wrist.
This Refining Machine performs the alchemy to turn
rusted steel virginal again. But it's stinging me to death.
Grey-hot pellets jet from tiny holes; blackstrap horseflies
cutting away the oxidation. Like the foreman's gaze,
they always find the tender flesh. I'm summer college

fodder, working shit jobs before humping
a train back to Raleigh. The welders' first
sparks of the day always make me flinch.
Dust-laden smoke circles the rafters, ropy
chains hanging like man-o-war tendrils,
like a trembling curtain of almost lynchings.

I'm a Harlequin playing cards with somebody else's
deck: I know as much about refining steel as I do about
studying textbooks. I'm hard-tracked to do both or neither
until pressure geysers out my brain, until I roll snake
eyes with the future. Maybe— if I threw myself into
this machine, I could save my feet this tortured road.

Crosstown bus-passes dig deep into minimum
wage. An old lady shuffles after my bus as it pulls
from the curb. I don't reach the pull cord in time
to give her a fighting chance. Or, like my absentee
father might say, maybe I just didn't try hard enough.

DANIEL LAWLESS

On the Way to Your Funeral, Already Sleep-Deprived

On the slow overnight train from Chicago to Altoona,
After people had settled down, having hoisted their heavy bags
Onto the overhead rack and unfurled a magazine
Or unwrapped a tired muffin or iffy chicken salad sandwich,
I heard somewhere a few rows up a kid swear, *No*,
It was a real-live corpse! Pretty funny, but

An image that stayed with me all the way to Toledo
As I gazed at my haggard face through the window
In the growing dark, where cows and trees and STOP signs
And here and there an unmoored trailer floated
By as if a dim river had overrun its banks,
As if I were already thinking of them in the afterlife;

Or in a more Zen or theoretical physicist sense
As if, when I let my brow fall against the cold glass,
My own face disappearing, the cows and trees
And STOP signs and occasional double-wide had become
My thoughts alone, disembodied, drifting out
From the Ohio countryside into the vast, unknowable universe.

An image that, inevitably, vanished,
As despite the grinding of the heavy wheels and the screeching

Of the air brakes, I took a little nap, then got up to massage
My aching thighs and use the bathroom.
Which is pretty much where I'd like to leave you, Robert.
Opening the thin little door with a majestic yawn to find
Everyone silently gathering their things

In the half-lit car, the kids rubbing their eyes,
As you wipe your hands on a crisp white handkerchief.
As the porter with his gleaming silver cart comes rattling down the aisle
With his fresh *Times* for sale and his steaming croissants,
The tiny bubbles of Perrier rising in their tinkling green bottles
As the voice on the loudspeaker announces *Altoona!*

Next Stop, Altoona! as if it were heaven itself, your hometown.

LUCILLE LANG DAY

Dining Alone in Athens

Strofi restaurant

On a rooftop beneath the Acropolis, I have
sea bass wrapped in vine leaves, served
with white wine sauce and olives. Yes,
a true feast! The Erechtheion and Parthenon
rise above me, columns lit and glowing against
the darkening sky. Though cracked and crumbling
after twenty-five hundred years, they're more
intact than the Arch of Hadrian and once
towering Temple of Zeus on a field below.
Athena planted the first olive tree here
in a contest against Poseidon, whose magic
was seawater. The twelve gods of Olympus
declared her the winner and gave the city
her name. But now the old gods are gone,
their statues in museums, their temples in ruins.
Around me, parties of men in short-sleeved shirts
and women in sleeveless white dresses chatter;
couples gaze at each other, speaking softly.
I order baklava to share with my husband, age
seventy-six, who waits, neither sick nor well,
back in our hotel room, and complain
to the moon that even the gods are fleeting,
but I like that story. The tree. The goddess
who holds her own against the sea.

JOSHUA MCKINNEY

Catechism

Unheard until now,
 this morning's chickadee,

and then the garbage truck's
 pneumatic arm exhales

a crash of glass. Emphatic
 breathing in all sound makes

a vatic wail, a free decree
 in the mild tenacity of waking

the warm alarm of the child-
 world continually teething.

What has so cursed us as to make
 such first occurrence old? Once,

when I was born, I nursed awhile,
 and then, ungrieving for some future

loss, forgot. That was a moment ago.
 Since that time, this

music moves in me as in the bones
of the little bird outside,

who tells me his new poems
are coming soon.

ROBERT GIBB

Diptych: Art School

Canceling out the whites,
Which in watercolor meant
The tooth of the paper

Or cold-pressed board
On which the washes took shape.
Even for the nebulous sky.

You worked with brushes,
An elephant-ear sponge,
The mastic you rubbed off

Afterwards, leaving
What you wanted left
Untouched: cloud or caustic

Or the vase into which
You could then trace veins
Of crackle, fine as the sable-

Haired tip of your brush.
Even the runnels of sunlight
On that figure in her tub.

Water in a glitter of water.
Transparent washes
That brought all of it to light.

ii.

She was naked, then nude,
On a kind of improvised dais.
It could have been a throne,

Given her indifference

Toward us and the drawings
On which we worked—

Neutral gray paper penciled
White with high-lights, black
With overlapping shadows—

The flesh posed motionless
In its clefts and folds,
Or put on hold

As she crossed the room,
Pausing, like a sequence
Shot by Muybridge.

A woman left alone
With her thoughts for hours,
Ringed by renderings

That could have been forms
Of tribute, fashioned
As they were in her image.

Inked

Duke's Upper Deck Café, Homestead

A kind of conjunctivitis indigoing his eyes
At a hundred dollars an injection,
The needle not painful at all, he's saying,
Though it doubled his vision at the time.
Now everything's just fine,
The graffiti he's been inked with otherwise
Sending tendrils from his cuffs
And vines from his buttoned collar,
Their small leaves bearding his cheeks.
I imagine him appearing in installments,
One patch of skin after another
Filled with whatever bruise-hued eagle
Or nimbused cross he's picked from
The pages of the catalogue.
He's started me thinking about ritual
Scarring, the raised welts patterning
The tribal body. About the *particolored*
Labyrinth in which Queequeg is set.
I'm guessing that at best his tattoos
Are meant for camouflage, at worst
Are flung into our faces so he can bask
In their effect. "I should take a good look
At myself," he says laughing, as though
Trading the mote for the beam. Now
He's boasting about the band he fronts
And how it just shreds heavy metal—
Power chords and endless riffs,
The mind-numbing decibels.
I wonder if he always has to hog the stage.
To look that scary can be a rush,
He admits, especially when hanging out
In biker bars, his ink-injected sclera
Doing the trick even there.
Every loud jarring thing about him,
It seems, just can't help but make a scene.

Sketches For Paintings I Never Got To

The portrait of a friend before one
Of Altamira's raw-sienna bulls was as far

As I got, though I had sketches for more.
Interiors mostly, with animals:

Muskoxen huddled on the tundra
Of a carpeted floor, a hawksbill turtle

Lumbering from the sea to deposit eggs
In a doorway, the shimmery cloud

Of a jellyfish hovering in a hall . . .
Each animal interior out in plain sight,

Or so I'd once envisioned,
Each detail slicked carefully in place.

Dens and dining rooms and kitchens.
Safe havens in the Anthropocene.

I've space here for another, a bedroom
Perhaps to link it with dreams,

And in it the orangutan I sketched
Years ago in the great house of apes.

I'd fit him in the frescoed Borneo
Between a bed and chest of drawers,

Shaggy in his robes and tassels,
What that round face flat as a pie plate.

Each animal a faithful likeness
Like in the caves where they're flanked

By those little stick figures, ithyphallic
And rocked back on their heels.

DAVID LAWTON

Pirandello's Directions for Crossing the Charles River

You keep to your pattern
Provincial sidewalk bustling creature of habit
In grimy, busy neighborhood
Advancement delayed to point of exhaustion

Sometimes a portal in the fold of the map
A railyard avenue seam of steerage
Riding the inner mechanics of your rotating gears
Flicks the upstage side of the canvas flat as you go

Dressed like a popinjay despite the brutal landscape
Checking to see if the lens is wet
It's all there. Clearly. What a nice reflection
A change of scenery fragrant as Sicilian limes

This happened just the other day, in the 80s
Why waste time, when it needs to be squandered?

BRUCE BAGNELL

Biography of . . .

My cell phone, always going to sleep
wanting the plug,
crying out for attention.

The milk bottle, yes, that's right, I buy in a bottle —
it returns again and again
full and empty like my heart.

A nail that went clear through my foot —
I was young, no one knew the nail's province
and so I was stabbed again, thin needle in arm.

My pile of old keys in a drawer
full of stories
I can't find to open.

Crow who caws when I step outside —
he can identify human faces
but I can't pick him out in a murder.

GEORGE QUASHA

1

angel angles

Shake the bush and all our little I's fly up and scatter.

Going to the devil is that things polarize either out of boredom or excess of being.

This is about not losing nerve in being's excessive necessary standing with waves.

Mind seeing itself from so many angles at once is high on its cross.

Now it's one-pointedly unpointed.

Point taken, away, meaning interpointedly aware.

Poetry proves not knowing how to read reads true out of the blue.

Starting over recovers.

Angular angels keep hope alive getting past hope alive.

Home is not back but further alive in.

Sense of self can not self separate from sense of humor.

The memorable part throws itself under the bus for laughs heading home.

You live in doubt to remember first nothing.

My contrary surrounds me.^[SEP]A line's reflexive tension can't help showing its body against surround.

The tool has no name to pry open the next ancient tomb. *Inside by any means!*

I'm resisting. Hence the turbulence. The line cuts. Power flags.

How can the grumblings not be lyric against the light-stringed lyre of syntax?

Eros swaps the laying down of arms for the laying on of hands.

Lips mouth hands.

Completion mothers eternity. Still the waves.

From *Crossroads Angelics* #1-3 [of 34] (for Chris Funkhouser), in *Hearing Other (preverbs)*, © 2018

Self opposed running fears the demon is at center.

Who left the door open?

Please don't get in the way of my bounding in opposite directions.

What grip wrought.

Lingual action is a strike on the way out.

Metaphor lacking by nature proves its need to be as powered by you here.

Relationship means speech is lacing.

Say the *K* bespeaking literal site power syntactic. Taxis. Instant *direction*.

Speak to take it in the throat.

Misspeaking is turning the corner on.

It can't stop catching on its own open hand.

Crows caw interliterally turned on.

It's high art flying higher ever.

Things not as they should be would be other.

They know what you know.

What won't show's directile dysfunction.

Lingual self abuse is self catachresis.

I'm who I say as long as I say. Better believe I'm still on the line. Longing.

Can't breathe up here and swallow it whole.

No way up but down.

The poem crawling on all threes hot & cold all at once keeps me coming back.

From *Crossroads Angelics* #1-3 [of 34] (for Chris Funkhouser), in *Hearing Other (preverbs)*, © 2018

Poetry is language that has you coming and going, at a crawl.

Ears open where they used to close.

The genie is coming out right against odds.

Don't get ahead of yourself while staying ahead of emotion surging.

No key to this saying but it opens the door it goes through as we speak.

I brought my keys but now they're loose divining.

There's reading with the clarity of sneezing.

The word pollenates. The nose discriminates hearing.

Ears fear to hear aware. That you might have to be there.

In talking to you it can't stop referring to itself.

Reflection affliction.

Mindful addiction.

Without the trip the journey goes off.

Returning repressed awakens depressed like bad rhyme.

Putting style first is still playing dress-up.

Catch the view of possible views while losing.

The poem won't be thought thinking until it thinks in you.

My manual of style says grasp the flicker.

You unrecognized are what you recognize.

How to get out with the whole hole intact.

It takes back our thinking, pushing out while pushing on.

From *Crossroads Angelics* #1-3 [of 34] (for Chris Funkhouser), in *Hearing Other (preverbs)*, © 2018

GAIL NEWMAN

Sabotage

The Lodz Ghetto Documents Office

Her left hand on the table
holds steady an index card,
while with the right she rubs off
the damning curled leg
of a five, the ample breast of a zero,
adding a loop to make the number older,
erasing another to diminish the truth,

Though the card is unlined, the script
soldiers straight across the page.
With feet rooted on the floor,
hands soiled with lead, she bends
over the table—working
through the thin hours.

Satisfied, she settles the card
back in the box and pulls free another,
white outside, clouds race over the city,
the sky bending into tomorrow's light.

The evidence is in her hands.
A Jewish girl—my mother—
in the year of her awakening.

“Sabotage” and “Elegy” are from *Blood Memory*, forthcoming from Marsh Hawk Press May, 2020.

Elegy

We still talk about my father
in an ordinary way.

Dad, we say, would love that flower
or that joke or the tie in the window

of the department store or the collie
tethered to a parking meter.

His shoes are still in his closet,
lined up like sentries to guard the past.

The drawers, though, are empty,
no shaving cream or socks.

The last rusty bolts and lamp fixtures
are gone from the shelf in his garage.

They live in my garage now.
Someday I will throw them away,

maybe next winter when the first storm
pours solace into the world.

“Sabotage“and “Elegy” are from *Blood Memory*, forthcoming from Marsh Hawk Press May, 2020.

Does The Spider Have A Heart?

And if so, how many chambers?
When wounded, does she bleed?
Is the heart connected to the brain?
And which organ instructs the other on how to live?
How numerous are her children?
Do they come into the world wet?

Does the spider have a tongue?
Can she utter a sound, a warning or command?
How do her children understand or speak?
Do they grip her body with gummy legs?
Do they ride her back? Do they lean against each other
as they sleep in some fold of web, turn of leaf?
How do they distinguish the thorn from the twig?

Does the spider have knees?
Joints in her legs? Can she bend at the waist?
When she swallows the male,
does he taste of her flesh?
When she creeps across the ridge of the flower
will she sense a fall?

Why does she enter a house with its many rooms,
expanses of wall, scent of meat?
How does she know danger? When she skitters
across the pulse of my wrist,
does she smell blood?

RUSTY MORRISON

notes from the understory (level 5)

such that dust without my knowing
is a subtle swirling viscosity surrounding you & me
always or only the 'always' I know as this life
dust is the cohesion & creates coherence between us

dust of what all of us are & have been or at least

this planet's numinous phenomenal 'all of us' as such

its consistency heightens my facility to sense
the dead
whom I can't recognize without allowing for
what will become of me

BARBARA NOVACK

Dancing on the Rim of Light

Shadows shift but do not fade
change rests on the horizon
but does not move
does not come
in the stillness between.
Still I swirl, pirouetting in the semi-ness
between being and nothingness
nothingness and being
birth and death and birth again
and death again too.
It may all be the same but
I don't know.
I dance
to keep not knowing at bay
its anguish too often
too much to bear.
I dance
to music only I hear
the cosmos speaking
beyond understanding
being and nothingness
nothingness and being
birth and death and birth again
and death again too.
I dance
in half-light
half born into morning
half dying with the night,
with the fading of the light.
But I am on the rim.
I am in the not known stillness
the unknown between.
I dance
on this sharp-edged cusp
a saving grace

dancing
dancing because I must.

From: *Dancing on the Rim of Light: Poems by Barbara Novack*

JIM BARNARD

My Dog, her Friend, and the Fence

My dog's a curious sort.
She's got a little friend,
belongs to the neighbors.
A fence divides them.
If you could see them
growling viciously
through that fence,
you'd swear
they'd tear each other limb from limb
should they ever meet.
And yet in the neutral street
they're the best of playful comrades.
Strange what a fence will do.

BASIL KING

Before

Before Diane Arbus
Before Virginia Woolfe
Before Philip Guston
Before Jackson Pollock

Before Pound broke off
the engagement Before
D.H.Lawrence grew a beard
Before Ezra Pound left for
Italy
Before there was a war
Before William Carlos Williams
Before there was slavery
Before there was a war
Before the forgotten
Before the dead
Before there were bombs
Before there was a war
Before there was a war

Eva Hesse (1936-1970)

All she had was a piece of string to dip into fiberglass, paint, dyed nets and paper
Marche into another piece of string tied to another piece of string tied to another
piece of string. Tied to another piece of string.

Pause

Paul Klee wouldn't believe his friends when they told him he had to leave
Germany. He was a German. Eve Hesse left Germany with her family when she
was three. At Yale she studied with Joseph Albers. Albers had known Klee when
they were both at the Bauhaus. Eva was told she would forget her parents their
divorce, her mother's suicide the death of her father.

Pause

All she had was a piece of string to dip into fiberglass, paint, dyed nets and paper
Marche into another piece of string tied to another piece of string tied to another
piece of string. Tied to another piece of string.

Walt Kuhn
1877-1949

A painting by Walt Kuhn *Roberto*, 1946. Roberto's face is painted white and his lips are painted red. He wears a pink shirt and white trunks. His powerful shoulders, arms and legs support his huge body. His hands are braced at the edge of the bench he is sitting on. There is no telling where he is. Surrounded by dark browns, blacks. We do not know where the light comes from. In Kuhn's paintings we can never be sure where the light comes from. Kuhn's has promised the clowns that he will tell us what they want us to know, no more, no less. The truth? Does Roberto ever take his costume off? Does he ever wash his face? Does he go to the movies? Does he admire Agnes Martin?

Agnes Martin's paintings like Florence Nightingale's and Margaret Sanger's is one of healing, not retribution.

This painting, 40 x 30in., aches. Its surface forgets that clowns make us laugh. We forget that reds, blues and browns can be soft. This painting, like all of Kuhn's paintings, is opaque, dark, Germanic, and as articulate as Beethoven. But Kuhn's never refers to the *Pastoral*. His clowns rarely go outside, see a rainbow or hear the trees rustle. The moon is hand held; a condition that contains doubt can inaugurate torment, atrocity breathes.

STEVEN ROOD

Self Portrait With A Cod's Head

The man looks at himself from above
and at an angle, sees
an old man, too old to be bothered by admirers or haters
who know nothing about a cosmos within.

The man puts the horrible head on a white plate,
fork and spoon in his hands, ready.

Cheeks, brain, collar, bones.

The cod's eyes look out.

Seeing,

the man thinks,

more than he ever will.

The man eats.

Oily flesh. Delicious.

SUSAN TERRIS

By The Prickling of My Thumbs

I am going to bungee jump over the Zambeze, I said.

You said, Not if I can help it.

But a French boy and his girl made the offer

He said, It is not dangerous, *chère Madame*.

She said, The water, it will not hit you.

Simple: harness, cords, a drop from the bridge

We thank you, my spouse said, but not this time.

I know the prick meant never ever.

When The Hurley-Burley's Done

I always jump from a high rock, I said, on every river.

You said, You're always the only woman.

Because, I was a girl who grew up as a boy

He said, Maybe it's time for you to give this up?

She, being me, said, It's my secret power.

There's a rattlesnake humping across the water

We may not be going on any more river trips, you say.

I, daring the snake, hurl myself down.

Not So Happy, Yet Much Happier

I've rented a river-side house with 2 lemon trees.

You are not here to pick them.

So, at least for now, I have replaced you.

He says his name is Mateo and he's married.

She, he says, is a bitch, a whore.

Are you jealous of the lemons he's plucked?

We have squeezed and sugared and tasted.

I prefer sweet presence to acid absence.

PUMA PERL

Delusions of All Right

Nobody tells you how small you become
Everything around you grows larger,
more complicated

Keys stop turning
Computers start crashing
You keep losing

Money, hearing, vision
Friends, teeth, dreams

I've never been an optimist,
but somehow believed
I'd never grow old

It's all in your mind
we tell ourselves
Until our bodies break

Some days
even the dog makes me angry
All she does is sleep,
and stare at me balefully
We don't walk for miles anymore
and we like to take naps

I can't afford cosmetic surgery
I hate the smell of cat food
I don't like game shows
I won't go to "the center"
or the doctor or the old lady store
I won't wear pants with elastic waists

Don't call me ma'am
Don't speak too loudly
Don't speak too softly

Don't speak too slowly
Just don't talk to me at all

Every week I return to the gym
Every month I stop going
In between, I eat chocolate

I write a letter to my kids

Please kill me
I forgot your names
I'm sitting on a lawn chair
Please
The phone is ringing
Take that machine
out of my house
Kill me

They refuse to kill me
Occasionally, we eat dinner together
I try to follow the conversation
Sometimes it's too noisy to hear,
other times I'm just bored

Every interaction
is examined for traces
of condescension

I hate saying *what?*
So, I spend hours searching
for items in large supermarkets
I'd rather ride the wrong train
than ask directions

My possessions hide from me
Oh, there it is
I say
Forty times on Sunday

I gain weight,

I use less space

Sometimes when I'm out
I think about the dog's smile
and the book I'm reading
and the purple quilt on my bed
There's a ferry under my window
The river wakes me at night
I lie in bed and worry about money
and whether I should sell my car
and the cost of hearing aids

Maybe I'll become a shut-in
and read books all day, eliminating
the need to drive and understand
the sounds of other people

Another Winter ends
and nothing is all right

Why did I ever think it would be?

WIL GIBSON

I'm going to tell you
that these poems are
about how much I hate myself
when I'm not helping or
impressing someone,
or when I'm alone,
or when I'm awake.

These are happy poems.
Though I don't know if you can tell.

A couch I called HOME
for 2 weeks was 10 years
older than me. It wore its
years in a more pleasant way
than my body. My body is
more of a bench.
Uncomfortable.
Not meant for permanent use.

Temporary.

TIM KAHL

The Siren Queen

When the Eiffel Tower was the tallest structure in the world,
she sang Saint-Saëns, Massenet, Gounod, and Paris worshipped her
as its own, the California nightingale, the American linnnet.
She was the pagan temptress too, a long way from her birthplace,
the crude divot between the American and Sacramento.
Her father had been at the scene of the last golden spike driven
for the transcontinental. He judged a young girl's fantasies
too frivolous when as a first grader she climbed upon a chair
and sang for visitors. She rose to take her place on Parnassus
the day he died, and she set a path through so many suitors —
two czars, William Randolph Hearst, the Crown Prince of Belgium.
She was Massenet's lyric priestess who endorsed a brand of
corset though rumors were she never wore one. Sibyl Sanderson.
Once she walked on stage in the nude except for mosquito netting,
and the musicians played at an energetic tempo.
So much charm and beauty everyone turned to look at her —
idol, diva, the most beautiful woman in France.

Her Eiffel Tower notes in *Esclarmonde* brought a tremor to
the theater as she laughed to herself when the audience gasped
in horror at her broken shoulder strap. The critics conspired
to call her *enfantine*, born to recreate all the famous courtesans
in history. So Massenet wrote Thaïs for her and made her
wander the desert at the start of the third act, expecting an escape
from the sternness of the world. She wanted to be redeemed,
consecrated, sinner to saint in the span of a few scenes.
Her radiant journey ends with her flesh ascending into heaven.
But offstage her nervous agitation persisted. She didn't want to
sing Mozart or Verdi or Wagner like the other divas of her age.
They found her drunk on the floor of her dressing room.
Her addiction to morphine mushroomed her sense of shame.
She was the seductress slipping away to wage her lonely battles
with the singular role wrapped around her—the voice of the enticer.

She refused to sing at funerals or reveal the name of her perfume.

She said her favorite country was anywhere there weren't any cows or pigs. She wouldn't consort with animals, especially the domesticated ones. So she married a Cuban playboy, a millionaire, and she withdrew to his chateau where she could brood on her debut in New York City. The night before she was to take the stage she chased him in a jealous rage through a Manhattan storm; they collapsed in a haze of booze together. His health, failing from too many extended nights of liquor, gave out all at once. He was gone, escaped from his lover's desperate gaze. She was losing herself in her own exhaustion and treatment. A year later, unable to return to the stage, she fell mysteriously ill. She replayed the ending of Thaïs . . . this time for real. She perished as her pleasures left her, deceived her. Paris mourned the death of its siren queen. She was interred in the city cemetery. French officials ordered a painting of her for the opera house's ceiling. Her adventure from Sacramento girl to her final curtain as one strung out by her own beauty was fed by the notion buzzing in her all along. She was loved by men of power, men of talent, men of riches who saw her body was enchanted. She indulged their senses. It was easy for her to delight, but after that light had burned out, the purest reason she had for living was left in pieces.

RICHARD LORANGER

Breakfast

Breakfast is the most important way to decide what is important and what “important” means. When we break fast, we do many things at once, some of them consequential. We bring a halt, however temporary, to our hunger, which may or may not have consequence. We shatter quickly that which has long held steady. We leap rapidly forward. We separate our lives this very second into their fundamental components. Then we remove some, and exchange some for others. We force our way in and out of the moment. We splinter. We violate. We tame. We let go. We do it now. Do it now. Is it important? Is it of consequence? Hold tight. Hold very tight. Hold so tight your fingers nearly break. Then let go. How does that feel? What does it mean? You tell me. Then you can have a piece of bread.

When we break fast, we fuel and gather, we plunge forward, we summon a new paradigm. Yum, that bread smells good, but even more we can split it into atoms if we like, we can further it. The sublime patterns of everything depend upon breaking fast to catalyze their very being, and yes that is not all they depend upon, there are certainly other factors, and motions, and whatnots that fall between factors and motions, that comprise both, that embrace existence in ways we can't yet imagine, or never will, and there we slip into quantum gobbledy, and when we do that all the language changes and we end up with a plate of scrambled eggs, hot and piping, singing its magic to the morning air.

So the next time someone tells you to skip breakfast,
turn to them and say, *No can do, partner, prattler,*
urgent mime, for I break fast with every breath and cell,
and could no sooner cease than I could cease ceasing to cease,
for breakfast is, and is, and is the most important meal of the day,
which consumes with fullest heart and breaks fast upon the stone-strewn shore.

ANDRENA ZAWINSKI

Born Under the Influence (a Dämmerschlaf Pantoum)

*I passed through the narrow hills/of my mother's hips one cold morning...
no one knows where she has been.—from “Mother’s Day,” Dorianne Laux*

I was born under the influence of two flowers,
the opium poppy and deadly nightshade,
head tunneling past my mother’s fleshy leaves,
her wrists and ankles strapped inside a labor crib.

Through the opium poppy and deadly nightshade
I was pulled from the womb in her Twilight Sleep,
her wrists and ankles strapped inside a labor crib,
pulled with forceps in delirium, struggling to breathe.

I was pulled from the womb in her Twilight Sleep,
her Dämmerschlaf amnesia blocking the pain,
pulled with forceps in delirium, struggling to breathe,
her memory erased of me, frenzied and afraid

in her Dämmerschlaf amnesia blocking the pain,
my head tunneling past her fleshy leaves,
her memory erased of me. Frenzied and afraid,
I was born under the influence of two flowers.

GRACE MARIE GRAFTON

Land of The Red Dust

to Yun James Yohe's painting of the same title

Long ago and yesterday, red dust formed hieroglyphics along the inner route.

Trace the signs that lead to innocence and greed, reasons a mother would leave a child behind, reasons fingerprints smudge ferny artifacts.

Glaciers, the shadows of snakes.

Where does one bury the excrement, utter an echo that can't be mapped?

Indelible marks configure the geometry humans will use to become more than a sum of atom and urge.

We have the desert with scab and contortion, secret water telling itself in hidden shelves between rock, between layers of what has been, long before thought.

We have paths to the hills, the zigzag mountains scrambling eyesight, mountain-goat knows how to traverse crags, leave a clatter in air so thin it merges with space.

We have the stains helplessness etches on the skin.

JANA HARRIS

Father Joins the Monastery at Menilmontant and Prepares to Renovate Humanity;
Paris, 1833

(Rosa Bonheur)

The seminarians wore tunics
fastened in back, a daily reminder:
without fraternity you couldn't
dress yourself in the morning.
Father, the perfect disciple,
headed a gardener's brigade;
but a sublime voice and well-greased
tongue soon made him herald.

We visited on Private Wednesdays,
--our Saint-Simonian tasseled hats
drew stones from street urchins.
Father's honeyed words quelled
Mere's presentiments,
the New Christianity's imminent triumph
rekindling her faith—soon
we'd join his life as adjuncts.

But *Mere* was forced
to work to feed us.
She knew all of Mozart and gave lessons;
choral, clavichord, pianoforte.
Her embroidery artful as her music,
she sewed garters for more sous
to take to market; an onion, a few
rough outer leaves of cabbage, a bit
of offal for a thin lung soup.

Mere, her parentage uncertain,
was raised like royalty until her guardian
--Emissary for Marie Antoinette --died.
Now she sewed, washed

and mended clothes she made for us.
I inherited her tiny hands and feet,
my only coquettish features.
She had an angelic voice, but coughed
so hard she could barely speak,
pleading with Father
not to forsake her. When I asked what
that meant, she drew me close,
hugging me until my chest hurt.

Scarletina, scar-let-ina, I fell into delirium;
my head sweated, my mop matting into rats.
Why tears in *Mere's* eyes?
Why wouldn't she sing me lullabies?
As I brightened, *Mere* faded; she hadn't
the energy to brush my hair.
At the end of April, Father was summoned;
three days later my mother died.
I was eleven.
I did not want her life.
Or the hard unfair life of any woman.

Mozart overwhelms me still. Either
I cannot tear myself away or I weep,
becoming ill, and cannot bear to listen.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON

Once I was on an airplane . . .

Once I was on an airplane beside

a village girl in the window seat. At takeoff

I asked her, “Where are you going?”

“Waw!” She shouted in surprise, and grabbed
ahold of my hand, “You speak like me!”

“Yes, I speak Say Yup language.”

“Are you from the village?” “No, my MaMa
and BaBa came from Say Yup villages.

They left for New York. They lived in New York,
then California. I was born in California.”

I feel like a child, younger than this girl; I’m
telling about parents as if I still had them;

I’m talking in my baby language. “Waw!”

she exclaimed, loud as though yelling across fields.

“I am going to New York! I

am meeting my husband in New York. He’s
waiting for me in New York. He works

in a restaurant. He’s rented a home. He sent

for me, and waits for me.” She did not
let go of my hand; I held hers tightly
as we flew the night sky. She looked
in wonder at webs of lights below.

“Red red green green,” she said.

“Red red green green,” my mother
used to say, meaning, Oh, how pretty!

The lights were white and yellow too, and gold,
blue, copper. And above, stars and stars.

Mother, MaMa, as you leave

the village family you’ll never see again—

Grandfather walked her as far as he

could walk, stood weeping in the road until

she could not see him anymore when

she turned around to look. She’s off to that lonely

country from where he returned broke— “I felt

that I was dying.”—MaMa, girl,

you are not traveling alone. I am

traveling with you, here, holding your hand.

I know that country you’re leaving for,

and shall guide you there. I know your future.

I'm your child from the future. Your husband

will certainly meet you. BaBa will

be at the East Broadway station.

You will recognize each other,

though he be dressed modern Western style.

You will have a good, good life.

You will have many children, and live a long,

long life. You will be lucky.

“You are lucky. Your husband has work.

He's rented an apartment, and made you a home.

He saves money. He bought your plane ticket,

he will be waiting for you at the airport.”

She listened to the wise old woman teaching her.

But how to instruct anyone the way to make

an American life? How to have a happy

marriage? For a long time in the dark,

dozing, dreaming, thinking, we sat

without speaking, without letting go

of warm hands. The red red green

green appeared again. I told her,
“That’s Japan. We’re over Japan now.
We’ll be landing soon in Narita.”
“Waw! You speak Japanese too.”
She admires me too much. Inside
the horrible confusion of the international
airport, how can a mind from
the village not fall to crazy pieces?
I found a nice American couple making
the connecting flight to New York, and asked
them please take this Chinese girl
to the right gate. She thanked me. She said
goodbye, see you again. “Joy kin.”
She did not look back. Good.
Gotta go, things to do, people
to meet, places to be.

© Maxine Hong Kingston
From: *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life*