

MARSH HAWK REVIEW

Spring 2021

Guest Editor: Eileen R. Tabios

INTRODUCTION

From “If Love, Then Love,” the concluding poem in this issue:

When I read, I am the one who is chasing, chasing after God.

What I know of love: the sickness often becomes the cure.

The brain is wider than the sky...

Eileen R. Tabios
Editor

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
NINOTCHKA ROSCA	8
TOKHANG.....	8
Rocket Ships Not Needed	9
ANSELM BERRIGAN	10
Privacy Mutation Token	10
SHEILA E. MURPHY	13
Corpus.....	13
Theresa	14
Play the Lute Again.....	15
BARRY SCHWABSKY.....	16
The Shape of Jazz to Come	16
Seasonal Affective Disorder.....	17
Blinking Out.....	18
LYNNE THOMPSON	19
In Firenze, I Develop A Theory on Envy—	19
Cliff Swallows Fly From Argentina.....	20
Self-Portrait Without Contact Lenses.....	21
MICHELLE MURPHY	22
Fusion	22
Bridge.....	23
Drought’s End	26
SUSAN M. SCHULTZ.....	27
From “Meditations”	27
WILLIAM ALLEGREZZA	33
hidden word boxes.....	33
grasses, belief.....	34
nel mezzo.....	35
BILLY T. ANTONIO.....	36
JANE AUGUSTINE	37
February 28, 6:00 p.m., on watch	37
CYNTHIA T. BUIZA	38

COURAGE.....	38
AFTER ELIZABETH HARDWICK.....	39
PATRICIA CARLIN.....	40
HE. SHE.....	40
AILEEN CASSINETTO	41
Legacy.....	41
Kiss Me Over the Garden Gate	43
LYNN CRAWFORD.....	44
KIP.....	44
COACH	46
JON CURLEY	49
Lives of the Imaginary Poets.....	49
Reverser & Remover Song.....	52
HEATHER DAVIS	53
Porch Sitting.....	53
Asylum Story	54
Because Front Royal is Our Paris	55
MELINDA LUISA DE JESÚS.....	56
Requiem for my Pre-COVID19 Life,	56
or Keep Your Worries in Here	56
Pantoum for The Movement for Black Lives	57
CAROL DORF	58
Act(on) Street Mornings 17	58
That Kind Of Famous	59
One Accident In January	60
THOMAS FINK	61
HOW THE BODY WORKS.....	61
NOVEMBER 7, 2020.....	62
ROBERT GIBB	63
FOR THE LAST PINTA ISLAND TORTOISE, REMOVED FROM THE GALAPAGOS, 1972	63
VINCE GOTERA	64
writer's block	64
Bedridden Aunt Returns in Spirit	67

Dream Life.....	68
AYO GUTIERREZ	70
TANKAS	70
LUISA A. IGLORIA.....	71
THAT HORSE, THAT BODY—	71
AT THE CHASTLETON HOTEL.....	72
ODE TO ELIZABETH RAMSEY	73
BURT KIMMELMAN	74
Parapet Mid May, South Mountain Reservation	74
Night, Late Summer.....	74
JULIA ROSE LEWIS and NATHAN HYLAND WALKER	75
Training for the Grand National.....	75
Saffron Zofran	76
Beignets Benadryl	77
MARY MACKEY	78
Scavengers	78
Hurricane/Huracán.....	79
SANDY McINTOSH	80
David Ignatow: Notes On A Small Song.....	80
PANSY MAURER-ALVAREZ	84
<i>from</i> Legend of the Winter Trip (XXX)	84
<i>from</i> Legend of the Winter Trip (XVIII).....	85
<i>from</i> Legend of the Winter Trip (XXIV).....	86
STEPHEN PAUL MILLER.....	87
1937 INAUGURAL VACCINE	87
THE OPPOSITE OF CAPITOL VIOLENCE	88
YOUR INAUGURAL.....	90
DANIEL MORRIS	93
Glass Break.....	93
Censor Box Defunctive	95
GAIL NEWMAN.....	96
Everything	96
Braiding.....	97

Elegy	98
DENISE LOW	99
This Moment of Danger, Walbridge Fire, 2020	99
Geographic Cure.....	100
Levitation During COVID-19.....	101
BASIL KING	102
If it Fails Begin	102
JOSE PADUA	103
Rewriting King Lear	103
To the Industry As Presented on Film and for All the Distress It Inflicts, the Crises It Gives Birth to, and for All the Souls That Have Managed to Stay Alive Over the Long, Lean, Hungry Years	106
Fucky.....	107
MICHAEL RERICK	108
language data.....	108
TOM BECKETT	113
WORDS	113
TONY ROBLES.....	116
Bra Section	116
Thriftstore in Fall	118
ROSALINDA RUIZ-SCARFUTO	120
Daylight haze; Brain Waves Wave Good-Bye	120
Monday-Mundane: Weekend overrated	122
SUSAN TERRIS	123
Closet-Phobia in the Time of Covid	123
Open/Close or Door in the Time of Covid-19	124
Signs in the Time of Covid	125
MARK YOUNG	126
An iconic trapezoid.....	126
A bowl of almonds.....	127
Et in Arcadia, ego	128
EILEEN R. TABIOS	129
BLUE META PAIN.....	129

Bass in the Anthropocene	131
IF LOVE, THEN LOVE	132

NINOTCHKA ROSCA

TOKHANG

[A portmanteau for the Bisayan words “knock” and “ask”; used in the Philippines for the Duterte Regime’s “Drug War” which has killed 32,000 thus far.]

To this neighborhood where even houses are starved
Skeletons of thin plywood and ragged sheets of corrugated iron
Where the relic of rains huddled in potholes smells of the salt
Of grieving...
They come, knocking on doors, polite as only Power can be
Asking who are you, what do you do, where is this one—
And if this one’s not there, asking who’s there with you
And if no one, saying, We think you will do.
Because people here are a pack of cards
Interchangeable
In life/unlife, living or dead, laughing or weeping,
Shards of their not-to-be dreams glitter with
Sameness on intermittently washed skin—
Brown people, barefoot children, wide-hipped women
In tent dresses printed with the flowers of gardens
They will never have.
Killing one hardly makes a difference.
Not even the houses starved to skeleton can be burnt
To permanent oblivion.

Rocket Ships Not Needed

To say goodbye to a world
Just a series of dying, last breaths
This friend now who could
Unravel by Milky Way shimmer
The outline of soldiers in the foliage
Or that friend who screamed love
Above the waves screeching as
You fled patrol boats fishing
For sedition... we are overrun
By betrayals—even clouds
Discover their end in rain.

ANSELM BERRIGAN

Privacy Mutation Token

you hunt for the judge
who agrees
the reticent leveller off (too crowded & too empty)
the almost good
conducting a seminar
on coexistence
trope trophies (I'm feeling
for the unearned somewhat
the un-urned? exposed writing
this in public
(the disambiguation during a pandemic
fairy don't & having just
stop by read some Ed
no more) (but I *like* Dorn rhymes
being an adjunct) & wishing he
was alive so
I could tell
him to fuck
off in a
friendly manner)

II.

In Boulder, CO
In 1980 the
kids in second
grade didn't like
me & said so
except Roberto
from Mexico who
invited me to count
water skimmers
& dig up worms. I'd
never seen a robin
til that spring. Why
were we there, all
of a sudden in a
bigger apartment?
Dad was brought
to town as a
mediating presence
to help end the
Naropa Poetry Wars.
It was not a time
for reflection. I
went to the movies
by myself. 18 or 19
years later, listening
to Carl Rakosi read
& rap at the age of 95
I realized we were
in the gym of Lincoln
Elementary School &
five year old Eddie
performing log rolls
for the non-community
of events called past was
suddenly superimposed
over Rakosi explaining
the usefulness of
cynicism: it keeps
you from being tricked!
(Guns N Roses sucks)
Form of institutional
outlaw buddhist gent-
rification? Or more
like survival. We
survived the eighties

some of us. Allen
proposed to Alice
at some point after
Ted died. God that
would have been
weird, if Mom had
said yes (thank you).
You are part of a
group whether you
like it or not, but
the name is always
wrong. Dorn liked
to golf. His & Jenny's
kids were older
& really nice to
me & Eddie that
twisted spring. Ro-
berto went by
Bobby by the way.
It was strange to be
being there – I
don't think my
brain was fully
formed, but my
internal voice
was more or less
in place in waves.
People in Boulder
had too much space
& not enough corner
stores. The basic
kindness of certain
people became
apparent: Jack,
Jenny, Reed, Maia,
Kidd, Naomi, Kate
David, Dick, Bobby.
You know when
you sit on wooden
seats that make your
ass itch mercilessly?
I tried to secretly
scratch my ass in
class one day in that
really nice shitty

school & looked up to
see Roberto say smiling
"I saw you scratch your
ass Anselm." My one
friend my age there.
Sentiment is such a
stupid pain. All I want
to know right now
is why Dick stopped
writing poems. Did he
really? Mom warned me
not everyone would
make it, in reference to
my excitement for me &
all my friends in SF in
1995. We mostly did
though, in that we write
still even through this
abject unhappiness the
planet gets to know
together & horribly
apart. I'm supposed to
get some scallions. The
19 year old writers don't
want to read pandemic
poems. I say I get it but
dig: everything written
now has the pandemic
in it, even if **it** don't
refer to **it**. Can't just
write your 9/11 poem
& think that's covered.
Course you did cover
it. I have no idea how
to live right now. But
I'm used to having no
ideas & being bad at
project-based applications.
I mean, I'm surprised I
even got this far, &
the floating heads
below are surprised
too. June & I are very
impressed by the 99 cent
pizza place on 2nd & A

because she likes the Sicilian slice
essentially a pizza slab of
great air injection & I like
their invention of a Chicken
Tikka Masala slice
which comes decorated
with elegant lines of purple
cabbage – they charge \$4
for it though!!!

SHEILA E. MURPHY

Corpus

An avalanche of avatars renews my faith in sugar-cured aerobic enterprise. I thought you were a votive flicker in the tunneled ark. A covered call amounts to refutation of the trend cap. Make a fist your alter eggshell, proxy vote, untimely depth. Pass me on the right and go to jail if Swiss. Mimesis takes you out of circulation. New mordents patch up lost relationships positioned to seem elemental. A flurry of keepsakes bears the scent of Lenten sorrow. When a palm frond holds its place behind a mirror of mahogany, it is time to let the marriage go. The marriage is an altar cloth, a gizmo, an *entonces*. A window made to frame the middle distance from this silo on its side along the field, loose cloth among us. *Did you sail while at the university?* A little street noise goes a long way. Once when I convened emotions in this hall, you were aware of me. I slept in situ where I met you, and we slept apart. Now votive candles cost a buck. I still can pray apart from woodwinds and their brassy mates.

Collarbone, togetherness, to vocalize, apotheosize

Theresa

Theresa likes manuka honey
Theresa spans a happy globe of silence
Theresa has an eye for peaceful insects
Theresa leaves the canon on the bus
Theresa majored in astronomy
Theresa rivals the equator
Theresa sizes up the moment not quite here
Theresa seasons more than tastes the meal
Theresa interrupts this program
Theresa individuates assignments
Theresa corresponds with leaders seeking worlds
Theresa veers from dogma when allowed
Theresa is a fan of bocce ball
Theresa plays bassoon
Theresa vets the corner cutters in her midst
Theresa once interpreted leaves home
Theresa leaves a legacy in flux
Theresa conflates with yellow trumpet gardens

Play the Lute Again

Can an eraser be a dogma?

A white flower
young as mispronunciation
happens in the field
replacing language.

A secret way of holding thought
earns grace as nature
painted on the skin provides
nostalgia for eternity.

A cup of tea,
a part of the arpeggio when breath
takes in the plants all in a row.
How I loved you equals how I love you now.

I washed the water from the well.
Now song comes home to me.
A wilderness, this quiet, unvalled place.
Protecting me with grace.

BARRY SCHWABSKY

[The Shape of Jazz to Come](#)

Your eyes were lit for the sake of this window
through which things
that you thought were invisible
can be still less visible but heard

neighbors keep themselves to themselves
and day by day become less familiar with their street
where flapping wildly under asthmatic clouds
some death draws a solitary bird into its vortex

your eyes the color of seraphim
drawn or drowned in plum-colored ink
found two willing targets
soon blurred by rain

and that same death
though prudence forbid that we say it
marks us down on a long to-do list
we know him only by name

but wait! wait! that thin asthmatic sky
breathes its last tuneless music
into your open mouth
and shadows your half-closed eyes, but why?

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Winter torn to bits
flickers down as propaganda
unrecovered thoughts
gathered in heaps around cars and bushes
but who cares

fog paints you into a gray Chinese landscape
even most whitened colors
grow leaden in the shadows

Blinking Out

The moon is real
the moonlit ghost is real
but like a soft lens
unfit to be dreamed of
by philosophers of disappointment

many others know all this
and I write these lines to spite them
who knows who likes their sex with who
in place of the words you lost
the one you heard talking
it was never me

LYNNE THOMPSON

In Firenze, I Develop A Theory on Envy—

for Brennan Rae & Liviya

as it's there I realize my problem
with joyful girls when I see them

free, laughing. It has nothing to
do with Gen-Z or the Arno, lazing.

My problem is with their mothers:
how they hover, coddle, send their

girls texts 20 times a day. They may
as well be conversing in Esperanto

so foreign is their constant *I-love-*
yous hammering my ears. We could

debate: do these mothers give too
much—turn their girls limp—lose

the war as they offer clichés based
on *Roman Holiday*? Or am I just a

grape ripened too late, fallen in dust?
Because when I observe one woman

embrace her daughter and whisper her
admiration into the girl's dark dreads,

it is unconceivable, I think, that my mother
would've stooped to such singular affection.

Cliff Swallows Fly From Argentina

for Lair, d. 11/8/01

Is that my neighbor taking her morning walk?—
yes & she tells me her husband dropped dead

while slicing Kirby cucumbers for their supper.
Is that a baroque melody I am trying to compose

of the drones and earthquakes shaking the air &
when will the love I hold in my hands go to seed?

I have noticed the chicken wing I savored once
now tastes tasteless. I season it: garlic, sea salt,

bouquet garni, but the wing isn't what it once was.
In the mail box, not one letter but an ad invites me

to attend a banquet to learn how to put my defunct
body through flames, best for everyone concerned.

I think I am afraid to weep as each of my passions
declines, dissolves, because what's left when tears go?

Once, my mother, happy in her warm socks, said
death is a part of living and *please bury me in the lilac*

silk skirt but it no longer fit when the time came. The
days darken earlier now though I've been told we have

the power to change the clocks. Surely that's not true.
Do the same swallows return each year, Capistrano?

Self-Portrait Without Contact Lenses

Come morning, I feel
my way around familiar
because it isn't. I stub my toe
on a door jamb impenetrable
as Afghanistan.

How does anyone see anything—
with eyes or imagination?
On the street, did you notice
the vagrant who was, once,
a Golden Glove winner, or

the woman, her breasts tolling
time, the sorry mother of
insufferable children?
And I fool
no one.

I am blind because I think I see you
still loving me because dreams
are always better than whatever
should be seen: white camellias;
in an indistinct distance, a blue moon.

MICHELLE MURPHY

Fusion

Sometimes we stand
still, palms open,
the moon pinned
at this window
a time bomb, rigged.
To go off with the slightest flinch.
To enter a forest of atoms.
But for this messy devotion
to nicked furniture
and wine-stained books
and this listening
to satellites hiss against
heaven's spine.

Bridge

2008

Try to keep this house of cards intact. There is no way from here that doesn't start from a bridge. Words stick to the roof of our mouths, reluctant to say. Faith isn't durable after all. The streets figure out our leaving and understand more than we recognize. Peonies wave our way, bobbing their heads as we move from box to box. Lights throb a Morse code of three dots, three dashes, and three dots. On repeat for days. Suspicious, we finally pack in the dark, leave our home without locking the doors.

1983

What odds out of our favor tipped west? She stands in the front hallway and tries to keep the walls from caving. Death is no stranger around here. A storm breaks in her body; her pulse caves, she draws the last heart & concedes. There is little to be saved from sticking around where you think you're not wanted. We wean our care in increments so small it's difficult to measure the distance that continues to grow between us.

1975

Our geography is askew and this deck has only so many tricks to play. Houses appear smaller than we remember but the olive trees we climbed no longer exist in anyone's memory.

1968

She can almost believe she's from somewhere else. It's obvious that happy endings aren't obvious. It is almost September and we are supposed to be gone but the ocean keeps calling us to listen one more time.

1970

South has plenty to say about his bad luck but no excuses. When his bidding gets out of hand, he's forced to leave the table without a dime. There is no good way to avoid a premise once it's been given air. Out west, orchards thick with apricots consume our summer as we split

their gold flesh open, lay them out in flats to dry. Bees swerve the branches in bunches, in bouquets. The old man brings out his salt gun and fires toward us when we take a shortcut home. Belief is truncated, abridged, even as we kiss in the shade of a walnut tree, even as we rake sour grass through our front teeth and wince.

1969

Hands fly up when the roller coaster hits its summit; the wooden rails judder, paint chips crumb and fall. Length is infinite, imperishable.

1967

My father sits in his Pontiac convertible and listens to the war. I put one foot in front of the other and upset the opposition. My shoes pinch and I leave them in the orchard for the stray dogs to handle.

1977

My heart is waiting for me at a 7-11 parking lot. We are sweaty-hands-in-pockets-kicking-parking-bumpers kids. Hesitant and suspicious of anything that isn't present. The great predictability of life has been made popular with Americans for the last twenty years. An expected trajectory; war even when there is, hypothetically, none to fight.

1985

But for the hills that tremble all summer, and the aftershocks that swim our sentences, our milky dreams, the way our hips chart the stories we've begun to catch from the deep sea and tremble.

1973

We live on quarter tips and weak soups. Bitter coffee. Our hair grows greasy. Cults crop up beside us and we've stopped hitchhiking. Everyone wants to get off this world. A man tells us not to trust strangers but everyone calls home once in a while. He focuses his camera when we climb the olive tree. We can feel the lens on our throats and swallow. We're hungry but so is everybody else. The heart revokes its hand. A quandary of our own making, eliminating some of the luck of the deal.

1987

When my brother walks the bridge one last time and climbs the rail, a hawk swoops from the Headlands to meet him in the scaffolding between updraft and the Bay's blunt surface. The unfolding moan of foghorns carpets the sky, waves swell below, persistent, almost ardent.

Drought's End

Before walls were conjured, before famine came bright one day leaving men tilling air and women raking in the remnants of dust, thirst was subjective and death was not inevitable.

I make up cocktails with the body of bones, sweep the empty roads of discarded masks.

When we fall, it takes everyone by surprise.

We patrol stranger's dreams for roads traveled, exits taken. Wonder how they embellish their loneliness to fit the contours of this room, repaint their entrance so that every time they arrive, leaving is only speculation.

From this window, brick and snow covered mountains slip away, hinged to the world.

SUSAN M. SCHULTZ

From "Meditations"

Meditation 100

The walks are a kind of normalcy, unless they aren't. Today's involved an egret taking flight, mushrooms resembling flowers, Lilith scrapping with a mother hen, cops in our parking lot. "It's personal," the woman in shorts and a towel-turban says, when I ask if she's ok. Even when you see things, you don't know what they are or mean or where the story came from or is going to. The moment's a cocoon, silk scarf tossed around a wound. Like the seed pod before it opens to reveal a toy canoe. We take our wounds to the bureaucracy, and wonder why we never heal. It would take too much paper work to cure us, too many reports on our credit, our status in Antifa, character studies composed in law enforcement templates. Testimonies freeze time's skin, then slice it into transparencies, but what we see through them is more skin. The wide angle lens shows us more of the living room, but there's very little interest in that among the masses. More an audience of poets wondering why their books haven't sold, why the boxed gifts at their doors are full of their words, neatly piled inside. There's no correlation between value and sales, between sales and poetry enforcement issues. If you call to ask that another poet stop stealing your formula, I will attend to your call, note down your sorrows, and then I'll shrug. The burden is all material, but the way out is to go back to the word field. She said she liked big words, though they proved to be short ones, like "land." Words become heavy only when they're bound. I caution my students not to look at Abu Ghraib photos until they feel strong. A friend sends me a more recent photo of a man in sunglasses, wearing an American flag around his head, mask limp at his neck, as from his mouth spittle sprays. A lawn sprinkler shoots poison toward freshly laid turf. The way fertilizer, taken out of context, is explosive. Another neighbor uses electric clippers to neaten the grass beside his shed; he trims his patch with a push mower, edges the sidewalk with an unmotorized blade. Bryant says it's like he's tending a grave. At the back of the cemetery, I find a plaque to a couple who "loved life to its fullest," but are still living in Arizona.

—15 November 2020

Meditation 101

Ding dong! Don't ask, it tolls for thee. Dying is a transition, long denied. I AM NOT DYING, he yells. As I lay not dying, I imagined the power of a deathbed on which there was no death, just endless waiting. The pings of machines matched, in miniature, civil defense sirens, and the boy who played "A Love Supreme" to mirror them. When is a mirror also vehicle for sound? The lake's face broke into splinters, leaving the barest asemics for us to puzzle at. I looked it up, after posting a photograph of a palm trunk from close range. Resembles words or tangles and plaques to no ambition we can recall. The shape of no meaning is as lovely as that of a line of verse, the arc of whose words you misplace. In translation, you choose either to convey meaning (with unionized labor) or to engage with the play of a broken belt, flinging its conveyances like a gorilla in a suitcase commercial (labor anarchized). The deathbed's a conveyer belt, from which souls are sorted and packaged for later consumption. I said "soul" does not violate separation of church and state, because souls exist without knuckling under to icons or strangers. The toy that grinned at me from the gutter surely a sign of something, if only of laughter, contextualized by chance. My death shall convey me, whether or not I deny it. She refused to cry when my father died, and so began my fascination with rituals of release. Catch and release grief: it keeps the ecosystem stable. She tottered into tangles, refusing a rebirth of grief postpartum. Bryant tells me the witch's green make-up burned, so Oz wasn't without pain. You mean it all happened because she hit her head? our daughter asks. Dreams look better in technicolor, and the red of her ruby shoes shows better outside the television. She was young then, but never grew old. She's caught in time, but only if we keep pushing the remote.

—24 November 2020

Meditation 102

I put masks on my memories. What was said to me no longer has a mouth. I can't lip read, push my left ear toward a muffled sequence of words I know to be a sentence. If the sentence is an A-frame, I can imagine its sharp attic, the crazy slope of its predicate. Our predicament recasts history as social distance, a line you stand in, feet planted firmly in their icon toes. You in the frozen food aisle, and I in the Hispanic. Both of us peering at the beer cans. If can can. If no can no can. A page on which everything's erased except the

punctuation. You'd never know it had been a sex poem, now that it's stripped of all flesh but commas and brackets. An exclamation! Consider what these forms of punctuation mean apart from words, or what a page of pronouns signifies without verbs or nouns. A detective novel written to find out who removed the sounds, left only pauses and digressions. How can I compose my memoir as a writer, if I don't think of myself as one? Art is excess, a flower in the cap that requires nothing more than to cover the crown of the head. We do not need what cannot feed us. I will feast from now on on warships and submarines, cooked in their own nuclear stew. A wart grows on my left little finger's knuckle, sensitive when I reach into a bag of cat food. It's the knuckle's hat or mask, a covering like black print on paper. What shall I read, now that I've finished the book about my last year? Learning to read is about taking off the mask, unshackling thought from type from word from breath. Anti-maskers make the best readers. My student zooming from his car in Reno says he dropped Ben Jonson because he couldn't figure out what it had to do with job loss. I want to say everything, but not now. An Iranian nuclear scientist was killed yesterday. Who done it? We done it! That's call and response, I say to Radhika. Pilgrims get such bad press this week. (Losers and suckers.) The dog's collar resembled RBG's symbol of dissent. I teach creative writing as a form of resistance. No one buys that line.

—28 November 2020

Meditation 103

From the empire of bad passes to the exurbs of yellow cards--groves of autumn trees--our goals stay put until the day we wake up to a blurry sun, having shed ambitions like jerseys, wandering into the streets of Manchester or Sheffield, nostalgic for pre-industrial fields we never saw but through the scrim of chimneys or an imitative pitch. Metaphor at the center of the latest twitter war, as if. We can make hills out of holes any day we please. "Sue fell in the hole!" someone yelled when I felt the canoe on my shoulders hit the ground. When she looked in the mirror, she saw her mother-in-law. The man on a horse called for a pogrom against family resemblances. The friend who pulled my Tarot cards found several knights of various qualities. The contradiction's not in the card but in the cave of the heart, distinguished from the hole by its rhythmic embrace. Blood relations spilled, the picker-upper a sheaf of paperwork and a notary behind plexiglass to affirm your signature; your handedness puts you in a different family, one that includes the girl tortured for five years into writing right. If torture is an opera, then what's a string section doing out on the street beneath the stars (those that appear in too many poems) rubbing their bows across tunes

of influence. When your music assimilates to standard, then you've lost it. The ref steps in to give you time on the pitch to heal your twisted ankle. Pitch transferred to another sport before it turned to tar sands, a poet tried in a court of law for blocking the pipeline with his words. The question of activism intrudes; what can this poem effect in the world when our factories of art are shutting down, their chimneys cleansed of performance. One knight's a messenger of creativity, but what are the stations of his cross? When he returned from a Christmas bombing raid, he landed on one. It was runway, not hedgerow, a constructed symbol rising out of the Pacific night. We flew over southern Japan, an illuminated text of water and island; you could almost play it on a flute, if you knew the notes. I bought Bryant a tin whistle at the Cork Airport as I talked to a man in a fedora. Days previous, he'd been Tom Raworth vacuuming a floor at dawn, mint julep in his left hand. Someone at the hostel said he came from the Taliban.

—29 November 2020

Meditation 104

If I am one self on Facebook and another on Instagram, then who am I on Twitter? And am I to myself who I am to my audience? On Proust's twitter I read the problem of happiness can be solved only by desiring less. Marcel and Marcus Aurelius walk into a bar, but neither is inclined to be in a joke, so they sit quietly and take it. Wisdom literature is as redundant as a London taxi driver in the pandemic; even sentence structures come up against the sign for repeat, two dots denoting a wall, at least for now. A boundary is always abstract, yet lives inside our bodies. Is it we who mend the wall, or the wall that mends us? Is mending what's at stake? Ask most obvious questions only. The answers will astonish you. Someone has put up a large painting of the holy family on their fence; what I notice are the fat fingers around the body of an adult baby. It's so awkward as to command faith, or at least drive skepticism in that direction. Joseph has his other arm around Mary. Was she cheating on God? My daughter uses the word "immaculate" in the English soccer sense, denoting a perfect pass. "Let it Be" came in a dream; Macca's a great rememberer. I dreamed that all the lots in Volcano were cleared of hapu`u and ohia, even the invasive ginger that punctuates green with red. Make transitions using colors, or the metaphor of a forest. Then ask to go back like a filmstrip in reverse, tree after tree re-membering itself. They communicate, you know, suffer tree nostalgia, share recipes for sap, warn others of drought conditions, lend a root. Socialists, you know, these tall and silent types. Uncanny as Kwan Yin, who's seated just beyond a vinyl fence up the street. Does the renter take up the owner's faith, knowing it bounded by a lease?

—6 December 2020

Don't admire me for having survived the Unnameable Event. Listen to the tremor in my voice, but know it as symptom of the Other Thing I'm not telling you. Hear out my secrets, those I keep to myself, and watch my affect as performance. A young man tells you nothing, though he shares a house with you. You worry that he might rehearse a two-years-ago spiral, while feeling that you need to let your lenses down. The softness of bad vision is sometimes preferable to the clarity of hindsight. Don't ask questions, because they inspire more not-answers. She saw the sunrise from grandma's, though she doesn't say what it means to her. My letters were sheer projection into the landscape of London, circa 1980, though I felt that I felt them, so why didn't she? To give care to one who had withheld it is like scouting a route you've already stepped on, while wanting to bushwhack the rest. The road is the habit, and that's a bad pun, as my mother said, in her bun. If the Unnameable Event is communal, do you share it, or cock your head and say "da kine"? He'd lost nine members of his family in the blue building located between the place his father was killed and the restaurant where we ate in Battambang. Admiration's too simple a word for my response to him on that day. Though I wonder what's wrong with finding the sacred in a man who laughs so easily from the mouth-door of an unimagined morgue? If memory is habit, then be a slob, hoard so many hurts you can't ever find the one that hurts the most. Don't like hierarchies? Go for the social history of pain, the wounds that afflict the least among us, not celebrities, though god knows they hurt, too, on either side of fame's mirror. The Unnameable Event, once spoken of, can be released like mouse in a field. Our affect, upon release, raises us like the balloon in which a neighbor's inflatable Santa rises at nightfall. Hot air makes him generous. Our speech shall make us admirable, though that is Not the Word.

—in response to "a philosopher and a professor" in the *NYT*, 11/30/20

—7 December 2020

To be afraid of air. To air it out. To take the old words with the new, to voice them where voice stands in for self, not identity which comes from the outside, burrows into skin, lays eggs, and leaves again. The kids evicted a mud wasp from outside their rooms. Hadn't paid their rent in months, and the feds will only give them \$600 to tide them over in their tent cities. Behind the chain link fence beside the Pali off-ramp, tents lean against the steep hill down to the freeway. At least the way is free, because nothing else is. You find those two paths in the woods and they're blocked by toll booths with mechanical arms that block you from entering the wood. When Yogi Berra gave directions to his house, he said you'd get to a fork in a road and you'd take it. Wisdom so often divorced from sense it should be a warning that thought ends at the atmosphere's limit. You go up in a small tub attached to a rocket and become a Guardian of the universe, while still packaging your voice for public consumption. Capitalism's strange bedfellows lie on fancy mattresses; if you like an angle, you get one. If you sleep on your side, the mattress form-fits to your folds. Invent another need; work in needability studies. I read Marcus Aurelius at night, watch Marcus Rashford in the morning. The wisdom that feeds is sometimes food. Her students objected to the sex in ancient Greek plays. Our students are counseled not to do the reading if it gets in way of purity. It's a kind of stripping away that doesn't reduce us to spirit, but takes away the flesh. Acceptance is a mode of reduction; the "to be" verb is all we need, even if it sounds weak. To love what one must leave 'ere long. Leave the longing to others, accept weather patterns as they line up like planes coming into LaGuardia. There's a train into the city; I paid a profligate amount for my ticket to enter its nest. The broken-hearted man went to a mattress store each day and lay down, over and over again, seeking comfort on flat surfaces.

—21 December 2020

WILLIAM ALLEGREZZA

hidden word boxes

we pile markers
in distillation of
 thought
on a table that we hide
for fear that we'll be
found.

destructions is the word,
but our beginnings are older
than these conversations
in verse.

i have danced and now
create, and in that, i
learn to breathe.

we pile what we hold—
an oar, a line, thread—
on an island coastline with
no map or trace so the
generations will forget.

i have believed and now
gather, and with that, i
pull together these words.

grasses, belief

they die and
 are born
brief before the threshold
caught in a season
 after a voice
sings in the dark
just beyond
where the tides goes
silent in a room
no longer considered.

our predictions root away,
settle in decay for nothing,
so let us close,
one last time, these
shapes.

nel mezzo

I have forgotten
the act that
 brought me
 here, but I remember the
themes, the plotlines.

 somewhere the singing is
 true, and the words are
 carved in a stone
 we know.
but here, we have
the undone
 in piles--
 and the garbage has become
the measure,
 the map is
 imagined among it.

BILLY T. ANTONIO

class reunion
the many shades
of hair dye

*

father's hands
thick with callouses
gnarled bark

*

gravestones
the comfort
of green moss

JANE AUGUSTINE

February 28, 6:00 p.m., on watch

From the third-floor sky-corner window
---only outlook on this world
these days---late light is going

“When the deep purple falls
over sleepy. . .” not garden walls
but one sharp white brick vertical

opposite rising from the horizontals:
boarded-up Verizon’s red neon sign
and the sidewalk with its trash can

half-hidden by parked cars. A man
comes and gets into one, which swings out
onto the street and turns left up the avenue

passing on the right the now nearly invisible
warm brick façades of highrises in which
little squares glow in orderly rows, and where

the car was parked the psychic’s ornate
full-glass doorway is lit up. A slice of light
over the transom shows she’s there for anyone

to phone for a consultation, for hope, and
to her left, behind the laundromat’s safety-grill,
a lamp shines as in a country farm-house window---

all in sight from this sky-corner
in the last hours of the last day of February,
and tomorrow sudden March, one year almost

from the day enclosure and the watch set in.

CYNTHIA T. BUIZA

COURAGE

*To look life in the face
and to know it for what it is, at last to know it
to love it for what it is, to choose life for what it is...*
—*The Hours*, M. Cunningham.

Sometimes when I cross the bridge I see her
just above my field of vision
or under the shimmering cool surface of the water
waiting, it seems.

For every splinter that makes me bleed
there is a memory of her and him
of loves that died
those I murdered, those that murdered me.

Hang or drown?
Grieve or forgive?
Live or
go on living?

What did I lose that is lost forever
that I am condemned to search for it?
At the end of the bridge is a precipice
always asking me to step over but I digress,

I walk back towards where I came from
towards everything
that I already know
the only weapon I already have.

AFTER ELIZABETH HARDWICK

It is July 2020. This is what I have decided to do with my life:

1. Survive. The harsh light slanting through my window, arrow headed for a bull's eye, me at the center, leaning towards oblivion, alert as a target eager to be spared.
2. Walk. Stealing the souls of Montana roses in my wake. Grateful for their beauty and indifference. Nothing is ever lost between us. It is just as well.
3. Move. To a hostile climate. All the better to never ever want anything again. Because certain dreams died long ago in a country oblivious to its ghosts.
4. Still. The revolver heart of this chaos rising and falling in my chest, tuned to the hours and days I cry: whenwillthisbeover whenwillthisbeover?
5. Exhale.

PATRICIA CARLIN

HE. SHE.

The man lay down.
He lay down.
His sad hands, his happy hands.

A kind of marriage:
Poles of a magnet.

Attraction is endless.

The clock of their lives,
hands always moving,
moving to midnight.

Never arriving.

Their life is a circle, is saved by a circle,
round after round, numbers like light.
Midnight is morning.
Night is a lamp
lighting up nothing.

Some thing. No thing.

AILEEN CASSINETTO

Legacy

—for Nanay, Naomi Patridge, Ginetta Sagan, Jackie Speier, and all the women who made San Mateo County what it is today

To tell her story, you must know when
to put courage in a matchbox and conceal

it in a loaf of bread. You must learn how
a message betokened deliverance

when courage is simply a word someone
wrote on a slip of paper and the sweet

scent of bread could no longer sustain you.
You must grasp your other hand with what

grit remains, growing and unyielding.
To tell her story, you must walk in her shoes.

If forced out of your leased farmland,
don't forget to bring rice if you can pack

only what you can carry. And if
your mother did not speak inside the bus

with the windows covered with brown paper
on the way to the barracks, it was only

because she was praying that you would not be
housed in the horse stall with the manure

whitewashed over. And if you were, she was
deciding what to do about the smell.

To tell her story, you must remember
the landscape from behind barbed

wire fences. You must gaze at your body

and know its history, look beneath
the tender, ridged scars and see the bone
protruding out of your right arm
and hole the size of a football
on your right thigh, wondering how
the lights never went out. You must
look at the image of your grandmother
with the weight of rammed earth against
what you survived. To tell her story,
you must say a prayer, not of sorrow,
but of grace. You must loosen the earth,
pick daffodils to the base of the stem,
remember your roots and ordinary days,
and the grit under your fingernails,
the way your grandmother taught you.

Kiss Me Over the Garden Gate

find me a forgotten footpath,
meet me by Water Dog Lake.
Wooded cleft and waterbody
startle me with starthistle
and Christmas berry, holly-
like and evergreen cherry.
Let me tarry, tiger salamander.
There's something I wished to find.
From the gathered seedhead that grew
the heirloom bloom, a heart-shaped
leaf, the life and pith and journey with.

(Belameda Park Public poetry installation (2020) by the City of Belmont)

LYNN CRAWFORD

KIP

(morphed sestina)

*After artist Matthew Zacharias
Simone DeSousa Gallery, Detroit*

A blizzard whips through the forest; its trees snowy, thick, sticks. Rooted, solid, stable, despite the fierce wind. Kip trudges through the storm, blinking, sleet stinging his eyes, seeping under his lids. No food since early this morning, the oatmeal, from Cook, in a cup. He could have had more if he had got back in line. But was in a hurry, he considers, stomach grumbling, holding his wool school scarf over lips.

I didn't think I'd get so hungry, and I I could have asked for more oatmeal in a bowl, or even a plate of toast, he mutters, licking chapped lips. What use is my hurry when I just cut myself short, I would be quicker, more efficient, maybe inside that house by now if I had eaten something that stuck. But I had to get out of that place, its bad smells, gruff staff, crowded food and shower lines. Ok, time to shift gears: divert myself from discomfort-- it is unproductive-- appreciate the sound of this wind. It is musical, a kind of symphony, and I am thirsty (he stops, leans against a tree, unscrews his canteen, drinks from its cup). Dehydration is probably more dangerous than hunger, he thinks, resealing the lid.

He pulls down his hat (covering his forehead, eyebrows, the top of his eyelids). Snow pounds his back, head, cheeks, lips. He takes off his gloves (frozen, useless for warmth), forms his hands into a cup. Blows and blows, hoping he can generate heat, enough to stick. Blow, he tells himself, blow as hard as the wind. Believing this will warm him, keep him safe, focused in line.

He hopes he heads in the right direction (spent long, careful hours plotting out map lines). So tired, his lungs hurt, legs feel heavy, he is barely able to keep open eye lids. There is a new ferocity to the wind. He tastes blood on his chapped, frozen, lips. Let it out, get rid of this boiling feeling he tells himself as he picks up a stick. Screams, whacks the tree hard, mentally turning its massive trunk into a little doll house sized cup.

At home, his mother serves tea in sturdy cups. Not tiny ones, with delicate lines. But large ones filled with tea, sugar, milk, along with muffins, bread with jam; not quite a meal but a snack that sticks. Mom's mugs have lids. This means they stay warm for a long time, if you need to go to the bathroom or do a chore you can return to your drink, still have heat passing down in your stomach, through your throat, on your lips. Thinking of mom reminds him of the day things turn bad, and how she predicted the coming dark time when she awoke, leaned out her window, sensed a peculiar wind.

The kind that signals trouble, and--indeed-- that was the day he raced his cousin, and lost because he got abruptly, unaccountably, winded. It just came out of nowhere, this breakdown from him, a champion (winner of the Town Running Cup). But in the middle of this race he lost his breath, use of his legs and could not keep snot from shooting out of his nose, covering his lips. Could not keep his eyes open, keep his focus, his mental discipline, what he refers to as his drill lid. His parents called the doctor, then there was a trip to the hospital, and they learned he had an illness, learned he had to move to this hospital/school, to stay away from his friends and family (*healthy people*) and heal, here, with a medical staff and swarms of sick patients, puking into bowls and cups. The doctors tell him he must follow every procedure and rule they give him exactly, precisely, for this cutting edge treatment to stick.

He follows the regime carefully, yet, yet, despite this obedience, he always hurts; wakes up this morning with pain in his shoulders, knees, lips, eyelids, skull, ankle, groin, as if he had been beaten by a stick, even sipping blessed water from the cup, listening to the nice, powerful sound of wind, saying his prayer lines, does not help, the intensity of what feels like swords, needles, poking him everywhere crosses a line, so he decides to leave the place, to run, run, run, until his lungs give out or until he finds a little safe house with a fire and smoky chimney (he remembers seeing it on his first visit into this place) or, if he cannot find the dwelling, he will run until he falls into the arms of the blizzard, as long as he is away from the building (its smelly beds, embarrassing night robes and day suits, gooey food) and the medical tables nurses make him lie down on so the doctors can apply their specific procedures.

COACH

By Tom

For my Dad

Down a road, through woods, up a hill, stands a house.

Tom (cap with an A on its brim, jersey, pants with side piping), stands to the side of its front picture window, sees two Pewabic vases on either side of a clear glass water pitcher. He is outside, just behind branches of a small, recently planted tree.

The lot is filled with pine, maple, oak, some are new, but most are old, thick, towering. He takes in the room's familiar nautical themed wall: flags, ships, an anchor.

At its side, two—he thinks new—photographs, apparently of the same garden: one snow covered, one in summer bloom.

To the left he sees them, the twin sisters, both fast approaching mid-adolescent bloom. They come here often, to their grandparents house. Both sit on the ornamental rug cross legged, hold cups, cite baseball stats, wear visors labeled: ANCHOR. One stands, circles her right arm energetically, then flings it straight, as if throwing a pitch. Tom has jiggled the window just open so he can hear when she says,

"I cannot wait to play tonight at my favorite diamond, the one by the water tower."

"That whole diamond used to be covered in trees."

"You mean, a forest, those kind of trees?"

"Yes, with needles on the ground, bushes in bloom."

"Are you sure you mean the diamond with the water tower?"

"Yes, and that little wood house."

"I thought the house was new, that it was built by that pitcher."

"It was, he built it, and when he disappeared he became famous and so did the place he lived, Grandpa told me they de-forested the lot, but kept the structure as a memento, just like they did with the fishing boat anchor."

"They should have kept trees instead of that shack, it isn't as important as our town's fishing boat anchor."

"You mean, why was his structure greater than the trees?"

"Yea, trees are more important than any wood shack built by some phantom pitcher."

"But once he disappeared he became so major, around the world major, anyway, maybe people were just mad when he evaporated, the people who did all the chopping, why else would someone kill trees, plants, bushes, flowers in bloom"?

"Yes they had to be really mad to kill nature but leave a dumb house."

"And to kill nature at all for a dumb water tower."

"Well they also wanted the baseball diamond, and anyway it is for our consumption, that water in the tower."

"Both could have lived with trees, they could have ringed the diamond, been far enough away for a game, anyway, grandma and grandpa did not grow up with big water holders, either did mom or dad, now that construction seems to be this whole area's claim to fame, our big claim to fame, our town's name is on it, like it is a geography anchor."

"They did not need reserves then, things were different when grandma and grandpa built and first lived in this house."

"Even if they did need all the water ,they would have figured a way to build a baseball diamond plus a reserve and not kill all the trees."

Lightning flashes, thunder booms.

"If it storms you won't be able to pitch."

"Don't jinx it, there are hours to the game; hey, don't I look like a professional pitcher?"

"More like someone who believes she is important, even towering."

"You think my self confidence is back, after the accident, you think I am back to my reputation of having courage, the kind that blossoms and blooms?"

"It was so awful, finding you there, bruised, nearly dead at the bottom of that tree, anchored."

"I sometimes remember things but I don't know if I am dreaming, like, I think someone or thing was chasing me so I ran, climbed, fell, but the detective said I would not have landed that way if I'd fallen down from the tree."

"Well, whatever happened I hope who or what ever did it does not come back, and stays far, far away from us and this house."

Rain comes, the house, table, trees, shake. Tom has been concentrating with no overt expression, but he smiles, when he hears the young athlete say, "Maybe I made this up, but, I do sort of remember running up the tree, then falling, but some one or thing catching me towering over me, wearing a t-shirt dotted in anchors, I thought he was a ghost but there was something, maybe a hand, stroking my forehead, and a voice whispering in my ear how I was born to pitch, how he will help me perfect my skill, help me press my talent to grow, develop, bloom."

My Dad: Guardian Angel, watching out for kids in danger, directing them toward good things.

JON CURLEY

Lives of the Imaginary Poets

For Robert Kelly

“Poets are beings who have nothing to lose.”
Roberto Bolaño

Arrayed in unvanquishable configurations:
My verse vigilantes —synched
like a mix tape
 & ready to roar

Parrying prosaics; even worse forces met with:
those creation deserters
so far from sense
 or what one calls

Companionate figures—far from that quality,
full on fascist foresters
laying waste to branch
 human’a’trees

Bedeviled eco/ethos-sphere beginning to make
one wish for an non-army
of poets to purge dirge
 with supreme light

Of awakening, redemption, incandescent modes
to mold poems into grace
notes that our poets

pattern with scope

The scope of hope that transcends many hoops of hell so
Those poems refuse all link
with the dark sink
of designs made

Bold by ardent exponents of infinite egress.
Some poets (I'm told)
are up for Act >>>>
What might it be?

Who knows! But who goes forth to speak our truths will g(l)o(w) still.
Imaginary poets:
You are not Shades
You are here, yes,

And elsewhere too activate that olden state of you,
dear predecessors. Let us
now gather our
forces, oppose night—

Its seductive realm predominates pandemically
(not a viral reference—
but to us!)—&
must be strophed/stopped!

Imaginary poets I ask that you return
and bring vocabularies
burnished in sense,
reinvent, be

Revenant of those irrepressible poets who
once gathered to sing for some
other world in some
other words. Your

Mission is clear: a call to action and passion
to raise the dead and the fist
and insist on
lines of unfire

Left of the dial, bereft never of grief, belief,
Or the need to think through form
in many ways.
Poets, join me

In the fierce project to protect possibility
and horde hymnals worthy
of the effort
non-ending. See,

Recruits, it is all stitching and unstitching like your
lines. It is here with its refrain:

Mending Ending Ending Mending...

Reverser & Remover Song

(...where shall it be sung?)

That song which Europe let out of its heart so long ago, to be sung on ships, and to cross all that water, is now coming back to Europe, perhaps to drive Europe mad: the return of the song will certainly render Europe obsolete, and return the North American wilderness—yet to be conquered!—to a truth which has nothing to do with Europe.

— James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work*

1. Watching your P's: Pandemic, pandemonium.
Your Q's: Questions; more questions.
2. Cue up more cretins in creation, pencil repeaters
of skewed practices, went viral many moans ago.
3. What's my line? Where is the line drawn? Draw
a blank? Damn, done drawn a gun again!
4. The problem of the color line? Dubois line redefine finger
repeater on the trigger. Go figure:
5. We're drawing lines in the sand? Where? Near
the firing lines, vectors of violent
6. State: the state of affairs, of fires, frayed lines,
our composite complicit with forces
7. Habitually immune to the allure of any instrument
except endemic shriek-machines
8. Set for sting-song of bodies obliterated over and over.
Era over? Grave error beside the grave?
9. Near the spectacles cue the specter; expect the era's
erasure brought on by those voices
10. Next to those bodies; the real estate is the property
of justice, just us, memory, the spirit economy.

HEATHER DAVIS

Porch Sitting

On Saturday, we sit a while, watching the cornflower blue sky and clouds
buxom as peonies. You rock in the chair beside me, drinking peachy tea,
wanting to know if the ends of the oak's limbs remind me of open hands.
What will our machines do, I ask, when the black stuff's all dug out?
No more black gold, no more magic rocks. Everywhere these days, we're beset
by plastic-fork labyrinths and soda-can nudes nestled among the foliage.
We make a pact to die for these hillsides as they roll dotted with creatures
holy in their absence of greed. I tell you my deepest secret: every night,
I spoon with the Blue Ridge because I anticipate its demise. I offer you
a slice of rhubarb pie and two fingers of bourbon in the lemony afternoon light.
By sunset, we'll know it's time to go and take our leave leisurely as old timers
who've seen enough of this world, who agree finally to ignore the ripping sounds,
the ancient skinned mountains keening in their slow-motion tongue.

Asylum Story

From the verdant island
of his mother's arms,
the sturdy breeze
of her breathing, the boy
is taken and cast
into the vast ocean
of America. No time
to master strange waters,
he will sink swiftly
as a Salem girl proving
her innocence, then lift
into a dead man's float,
eyes swollen red
behind black wire
in the slow hot cage
of separation, watched
by the yellow-haired agent
with a gun on his hip
and other armed men
who prowl like rulers
of a two-faced nation,
hands frantic and
mouths on fire. Now
and forever, the boy
remembers. The boy
watches and waits.

Because Front Royal is Our Paris

—*for José*

If Front Royal is our Paris,
the Shenandoah must be our Seine,
the gutted mansions on Main
gathering mystery about them
like the abandoned palaces
of some fallen bourgeoisie.
Their shattered glass reflects
time perfectly, revealing
otherworldly beauty in decay.
We've learned to lounge
in the gazebo downtown,
to laugh at our angry neighbor
as he waves his twisted stick
and rants in a language only
mountains understand. We love
to fly up Skyline Drive, polish
off a bottle of Rappahannock wine.
We've come to speak in tongues,
mouthing words we're fond of:
clementine, chiaroscuro,
emancipation, seduction, dusk.
From Dickey Ridge, late
at night, we can't make out
the X of Confederate flags
jutting from dusty pick-ups,
just stars millennia old
and this forked river
snaking through the light.

MELINDA LUISA DE JESÚS

Requiem for my Pre-COVID19 Life,
or Keep Your Worries in Here

I.
I'm not sleeping well
so I make lists:

Things I miss
- seeing friends and colleagues
- teaching face to face
- singing in choir
- parties
- travel
- community

Things I'm grateful for
- health and health care
- family and friends
- pets
- gardening
- employment
- music
- CBD

II.
we will never
be the
same

don't forget who
we once
were

don't forget how
love defines
us

in this mourning,
our new
normal

Pantoum for The Movement for Black Lives

Amerikkka, where are black folks allowed to be?
Why are you calling the police?
Two black men wait for a friend at Starbucks
He just wanted Skittles and iced tea

Why are you calling the police?
Holding his phone in his grandma's backyard
He just wanted Skittles and iced tea
She forgot to signal a lane change

Holding his phone in his grandma's backyard
Two black men wait for a friend at Starbucks
She forgot to signal a lane change
Amerikkka, when can black folks live free?

May 9, 2018

for

Donte Robinson and Rashon Nelson, 2018

Stephon Clark 2018

Sandra Bland 2015

Trayvon Martin 2012

and all killed through America's racial terror
Ache!

CAROL DORF

Act(on) Street Mornings 17

Rising pitch marks intake
of breath—exhale a sigh

Mottled rose—which may
or may not indicate a virus

Light between branches illuminates
the pauses in our talk

Stamens and pistils present summer love
beside the overgrown path

Fennel's fractal history—
overlapping record of growth

In this landscape find balance
between bucolic and flammable

Little yellow no-things low to the ground—
splash of sunlight

Gala apples begin to ripen
too heavy for their branches

In my backyard (as we say)
late afternoon's shadows—two chairs

In the dream line—mothers and their children
jostled—refused distance

The cat pursues a fragment of sun—
morning returns

That Kind Of Famous

My neighborhood is famous
for its abundance
of streetlights

Interrupted nights
fold into each other—who am I
to complain, to speak?

First you are
Cassandra
then events catch up

Rarely can it be said
that your risk is my risk
my dear

Here, crows
space themselves evenly
on overhead wires

Even more in this era
in sickness or in health
reverberates

One Accident In January

Lights reflect against
the laundromat window—

promise of clean, of change.
View from the hospital

parking garage—rain
possibility of hills, trees.

Before the after-party
rain scattered petals

blew away dead leaves.

THOMAS FINK

HOW THE BODY WORKS

is not how we
wish it to as
often as we'd
like. "If you
did not request
this information. . . ."

I welcome ecstasies
to the table that won't
press unseasonable
demands. Default
pressures rise for
fixed income. I have
to turn this painting
around. In the name
of liquidity, modest en-
hancements should suck
power out of previously
untended nooks. A torrent
hasn't come. But delay easing
of countermeasures. I contribute
to the economy by averting a
heart incident. Many thanks
to those who do no harm.

NOVEMBER 7, 2020

Could you scooch

over & pass
me that sunset?

Dice mustn't be
so desolately decisive.
A democratic pastiche

may defund pollutions.
The powers that
are not yet. Saving
millions with new detergent.

ROBERT GIBB

FOR THE LAST PINTA ISLAND TORTOISE, REMOVED FROM THE GALAPAGOS, 1972

after Melville

i.

Apples of Sodom, lees of fire,
The vitreous inland rocks worn down
And grooved into deep ruts by ages and ages
Of the slow draggings of tortoises.

ii.

The Isles, sackcloth and ashes as they are;
The tortoise, dark and melancholy as it is.

iii.

Black as widower's weeds, heavy as chests
Of plate, with vast shells medallioned and orbed
Like shields, and dented and blistered
Like shields that have breasted a battle,
Shaggy, too, here and there, with dark green moss,
And slimy with the spray of the sea.

iii.

I have seemed to see, slowly emerging
From those imagined solitudes,
And heavily crawling along the floor,
The ghost of a gigantic tortoise, "Memento * * * * *"
Burning in live letters upon its back.

VINCE GOTERA

writer's block

—*hay(na)ku*

gap
between blank
paper and nirvana

brow
sweats red
screen still blank

no
good no
good no good

squint
pen skritch
fingers click keys

paralyzed
no help
search empty sky

wingbeat
falcon yes
heaven sent gift

muse
pomegranate seed
universe universe universe

come
to me
come to me

mirage
oasis parched
wingbeat gone fled

empty
sky horizon
dry huge empty

sysyphus
roll boulder
uphill cracked mud

lexicon
fancy words
swirling dance moves

jazz
thump thunder
slap and pop

meh
boulder stuck
no goddamn help

one
two three
four five stuck

bulosan
brother poet
where are you

bulosan
bring me
water bright sustenance

light
lightning flash
thunder flood water

ocean
surging wave
wash over me

bulosan
wash away
mud cement inertia

cheetahs
lady gaga
olivia newton john

no
no good
no damn good

don't
force it
zen zen zen

om
om mani
padme hum poser

stare
at paper
paper stares back

Bedridden Aunt Returns in Spirit

For years our Aunt Nena would peek
out her window, trying to hide
from curious eyes. She had been sick
for years. Our Aunt Nena would peek
out at us kids, sweet smile so meek.
After she died, shy ghost outside
for years, our Aunt Nena would peek
in our windows, trying to hide.

Dream Life

I remember a dream. Mama and Papa and I are strolling through a park. It's green and well-cared for. The lawns are bordered by flower beds: orange, yellow, white blossoms. There are large metal statues of human figures, probably bronze, green that's almost black, with a patina that roughens their exteriors. It is quiet. Then the statues begin to move, creakily and with jerky sidewise movements. Papa and Mama don't notice. The statues descend from their stone pedestals. They move slowly towards us. I tell my parents we must run, but they laugh and converse, not hearing me. I start to run away. The statues move quicker, close in.

I remember a dream. I'm probably twelve or thirteen. I'm with one of my friends; who it is changes from dream to dream. Sometimes it's Jimmy or Joe, other times Ronny or Mike. We wield toy machine guns with olive drab bandoliers. We come upon a submarine, moored to the earth, half-submerged in dark gray water. We board the craft, descend from the conning tower into a control room. There are twinkly colored lights arrayed on machine banks packed against the bulkheads. The control room is empty. Somehow my friend and I realize there's a war, and it's up to us to win the day. Absolutely crucial in order to save not only the country but our friends and families. However, none of the controls work. I climb up to the top of the conning tower, poke my head up through the hatch. The submarine is in a small lake, perhaps a pond. We are completely surrounded by land.

I remember a dream. I'm in college. I live in a dorm. It's gigantic with banks of elevators and long hallways. There are passageways to an equally gigantic mall, with stores displaying all sorts of colorful products though I can never quite see what they are. Just that it's all glitzy and space-opera-like. Reminiscent of the Jetsons but with a lot more gloss and dazzle, shimmer and coruscation. Detail upon detail pack all surfaces in all directions, like a Steven Spielberg movie gone wild and renegade, out of any conceivable control. I'm lost. I can't find my way back to the dorm. There are hordes of people but I don't know anyone. In fact, they don't seem to notice me.

I just roam and prowl, as if I'm in a *Twilight Zone* episode,
as if I'm Cain or the Wandering Jew. Some nights I find my way
back to the college campus but not the dorm and am lost
among huge limestone buildings. Whenever I do get back
to the dorm, I get trapped in elevators or can't negotiate
the Byzantine elevator system. Other nights,
I'm still at the mall and it's as large as a city;
I take monorail trains that get me more and more lost.

I remember a dream. Not one I've had but one I'd like to have.
I am standing on a sidewalk, immersed in deep chilly fog,
the San Francisco kind. When a 6 Masonic trolley bus
emerges like a mammoth from woolly fog, I realize
I *am* in The City . . . "don't call it Frisco." Foghorns
trumpet out in the Bay like lovesick walruses.
In the distance, I hear the N Judah streetcar,
its metal wheels screeching shrill against the rails
as the car swivels towards the Carl Street Tunnel.
These are the night sounds of my childhood. I am home.
Although Ocean Beach is a good three miles away,
I turn my face toward the west and taste salt,
feel the massive Pacific throwing its heavy waves
against the promontories of Land's End, the Cliff House.
I stand with my arms by my sides, hands against my thighs.
I lean forward, point my chin toward the moon that I know
is up there, full and blond, and I start to lift off the earth.
Breaking through and finally out from the fog, I soar and
pivot in frosty air, the crinkly lights of downtown skyscrapers
and the Golden Gate Bridge towers glittering in velvet sky.

AYO GUTIERREZ

TANKAS

The new snow on top
Of frozen dirty snow mounds
Chokes down the new grass
Rows of frozen car headlights
This winter will never end.

*

People bring flowers
To add beauty to their life
And die in their homes:
Beauty is disposable
When it does not have a root.

*

Manacles of gold
Made for our wrists and fingers
We gladly accept:
Without them, we feel naked
Their chains are invisible.

LUISA A. IGLORIA

THAT HORSE, THAT BODY—

it pricks up its ears at the sound
of trains or thunder

Its tail flickers like a flame
caught in a doorway of grass

It quickens at the sight of water
and braces for the jab

of a heel or knee in the space
beneath its muscular heart

It stands in the dreaming rain
and steams in the sun, waiting

for the smell of hidden sugar,
the nettle-sting of flies, the gun-

powder screens, bodies in the dirt
beneath the shadow of bells

AT THE CHASTLETON HOTEL

(Isabel Rosario Cooper, screen name Dimples)

Every man's fantasy,
girl in a box,
girl in a robe,
girl in a lace-trimmed gown;
never a raincoat, never a pair
of boots or sturdy walking
shoes. Girl waiting
among heavy cane-
striped and mahogany furniture
sorting telegrams and notes.
Girl eating room
service
for four years
with a silver knife
and fork, ordered by no less than
the General himself. Yes
I am that girl of the first
grainy screen kiss, only fourteen
when tipped back
and the camera caught
what people liked to call
the first lips-
to-lips. When he said I
shall return, I knew
I was not the only
one addressed.

ODE TO ELIZABETH RAMSEY

Gap between her two front teeth;
her signature song "Proud Mary."
In the '60s she won a singing contest
on Student Canteen. Had it been part
of your vocabulary, you might have used
"Afro" to describe her head of wiry hair.
You might turn out the way she did, if
your father was a Jamaican marine
stationed in the Philippines, and your mother
from the Visayas. You might think comedy
a way to deflect attention from the features
everyone loved to point out jeeringly—skin
of darkest brown it was nearly black, lipsticked
overbite glowing under stage lights. "Negrita,"
they called almost lovingly; she'd strut across
the stage, belt out rock & roll and rhythm & blues
until their seeing drowned in thunderous applause.

BURT KIMMELMAN

From *A Plague Calendar*

Parapet Mid May, South Mountain Reservation

That they are there!
— George Oppen

Branches bend toward light —
trees reach up in prayer —

their small leaves sprouted —

soon the green canopy,
all of them as one.

Night, Late Summer

Through the open window
the crickets' din, black night,
invisible trees still

breathing, the nights are cool —
day's hot sun — the empty
dark full of life, waiting.

JULIA ROSE LEWIS and NATHAN HYLAND WALKER

Training for the Grand National

You will need a horse trailer, a rented stall, a lounge line, and more than you imagined. The aim of preparatory medications is to turn a cancer patient into a horse, because horses can generally not vomit or otherwise regurgitate. See Zofran and Ativan now. In need of succeeding, these medications will include intravenous Pepcid, Solumedrol, Benadryl, and Demerol. Goggles, tall boots, gloves oh my!

Saffron Zofran

In the dominion nausea,
see saffron crocus sings autumn,
and the crows flower a darker lilac crocus sunlight.

Sun bright, satin knows what needs be done
and watches until it is the fragrant hay.

First style, I see saffron fresh,
I see one-hundred and fifty flowers dried is real life;
I wish in crimson,
I wish the stigma of witches in the distance,
I wish in triplet styles.

I have this wish for red maroon down to yellow dishes;
I wish for colors sargol, pushal, bunch, and konge,
with all this might.

Well make a window,
a week or two, and do as crimson dried and threads
sealed in dreams
and all the stigmas, all the wishes will come true,
will thread through saffron nurses.

Beignets Benadryl

In begetting,
use sugar reverse beer,
if feeding let alone ten minutes and it will foam.

A little feral besting the eggs, salt,
evaporated milk, and then mix the two measures.

Stir half the flour for the shortening
for the stirring into this meaning before others.

Lightening needs.

Transfer to fat and bowl with towel,
and do not disturb for two hours or here.

From the bed of the problem, roll out tired bodies,
they are fried in the deep sense of tried.

This feral lift off will leave inside the hollow lies
as the beignets are finished
in kind to wooden boats.

After dry draining they are given to satin navigation.

The sugar coat will let the sailboat into the wind
and begging the vigor of history I mean.

MARY MACKEY

Scavengers

the sun is scorching the horizon
each step crackling like candy wrappers
above us the stars float
grimy and abandoned as cinders

your tongue tastes like apples
and the secrets of the north
written on glass

in this city of our abandoned bodies
death leads the way
pipping on a flute of bone

Hurricane/Huracán

you made us from clay
and we melted
you made us from wood
and we burned
you made us from flesh
and we destroyed ourselves

SANDY McINTOSH

David Ignatow: Notes On A Small Song

Born in 1914 to Russian emigré parents, Ignatow grew up in Brooklyn without much money, but with a single-minded desire to write. Like other writers who came of age during the Depression years, Ignatow was engaged in social issues. He worked at menial jobs and in WPA projects, edited an activist literary review, and was briefly a member of the Young Communist League. With the publication of his first book, Poems in 1948, he began to earn his reputation as a poet oriented to the life of the city. He was the author of eighteen volumes of poetry and three of prose. While I knew him, he received Yale's Bollingen Prize, two Guggenheim fellowships, the Wallace Stevens Award, the Shelley Memorial, an award from the Nation Institute of Arts and Letter, and the Robert Frost, John Steinbeck and William Carlos Williams awards.

I.

When he bought his house near Barnes Landing, Ignatow said, "Here I am. I've come to join the exiles." He was a city boy, and the trees surrounding his country house made him uneasy. "They're like prison bars."

He'd tried to understand this new place. He wrote poems. One began, "About my being a poet, the trees certainly haven't expressed an interest, standing at a distance. I'd expect that at least they'd try to learn something new besides growing their leaves...."

II.

Sitting in the woods across the picnic table from him I said: "My last year in boarding school, I hid in my dorm room and read more than 1,000 books!"

"What?" He winced, putting down his forkful of tinned salmon. "You actually read 1,000 books in one year?"

"Well, perhaps, not a thousand...." In fact, I'd meant, I'd read maybe fifty or sixty books.

"Fifty, sixty or 1,000?" he demanded. "Which is it?"

Why should he care? I'd said "1,000" for effect, the way medieval historians reported the casualties on the battlefield. If I didn't care about the exact number, why should he?

But he frowned as if I'd hurt him. "How can you use language so irresponsibly?" he wanted to know.

"Well," I retorted, "you write in your poem, 'This tree has two million and seventy-five thousand leaves. Perhaps I missed a leaf or two...' You're not going to tell me you actually did the counting. Maybe my books are like your trees."

"Impossible. You want me to believe that you read a specific number of books in a year. My exaggeration is a higher truth; yours is just a lie. Anyway, a writer uses language at all times forcefully, saying exactly what is intended, nothing more. Why don't you understand that?"

III.

I stopped off at his house with a new poem I wanted him to see.

"He's teaching at the college today," said his wife. "But come sit at the typewriter and wait for him."

In the next room I could hear a radio announcing the death of General Eisenhower. She was surprised. "I thought he'd been dead for years."

We listened together as the announcer read off a list of complex funerary events. She remarked on how chilling it all was. "They couldn't wait for him to drop dead."

That gave me an idea. She encouraged me to use her typewriter. "Go ahead," she said. "Type all you want."

My father had admired Eisenhower and always voted Republican. At his death I'd been fascinated with the preparations for the funeral, especially the process of embalming the corpse. I was thinking as much of my own father's funeral as of Eisenhower's while I worked at the typewriter.

Ignatow returned from teaching in an acrimonious mood. After supper (canned salmon on dry lettuce; water), he motioned me to hand him the poem.

I gave him the one I'd arrived with, something I'd worked on for weeks. This, I wanted him to know, was finally the real thing.

He made chomping sounds, cleaning his teeth with his tongue as he read. When he looked up it was with a sour expression. "This is crap," he pronounced. "Why are you wasting your time with this garbage? You can write better than that."

I was devastated. I couldn't breathe. I felt as if he'd shoved me backwards through the wall; that I was being pinned to the menacing trees in his angry forest.

"Come on," he chided. "You can talk. You're not going to die."

But I couldn't talk, his condemnation so forceful, unexpected. To play for time, I opened my notebook and offered up the new poem I'd written about Eisenhower. It wasn't much. I'd just been having fun with it. But that's all I had.

He grabbed it. His expression softened and he looked up from the typewritten sheet. "Now, this is something," he said. "This should be published. Why didn't you show me this the first time?"

IV.

He asked me to help with a poetry magazine he was editing. The manuscript pile was daunting. We waded through it for many hours. Later, at dinner, I suggested we go to an open poetry reading at the Whaling Museum.

"Aw, come on," he sighed. "Do you really want to go to some reading after all the crap I've made you look at today? Okay. We'll go. But if I don't like it, I'll give you a signal and we'll leave."

I was surprised at his attitude. Having arrived at our destination, he led me to the back of the gallery, to seats nearest the exit. "The best seats in the house," he confided, eyeing the exit door.

He held court until the first reader reached the podium. Several young poets came up to him for autographs and blessings. The lights went down and he tugged at my sleeve. "I've had enough," he whispered. "Let's go."

"But no one's read yet."

"All right. You stay. I'll meet you back at the house." He glided to the door; a silent, practiced exit.

When I returned, he was sitting outdoors on the patio with a pile of manuscripts. "You know," he observed, dumping the pile into the trashcan. "There are more people in the world writing poetry than have ever read a poem."

V.

"I regard this poet as if he were my own son," he once wrote recommending me for a teaching job.

Then once, at three in the morning, when I found I had no place to sleep, I inched my car down his rocky drive, being as quiet as I could, intending to sleep in the trees, but the tires on gravel made a racket.

"What do you think you're doing?" he hissed, holding a flashlight to the car window. "You've scared us half to death. Get the hell out of here and don't come back until you're sober!"

VI.

Allen Ginsberg was reading at the library. In his old age, even a modest staircase was impossible for Ignatow. I'd driven him to the library, but we'd need someone to help get him up and through the door. Happily, Ginsberg was getting out of someone's car. Between us we hoisted Ignatow over the steps, our arms interlaced in a fireman's carry.

Ignatow's health continued to decline. Yet one day I saw him walking down Main Street, smiling and waving at people in the shops. "What's happened to you?" I asked.

"The doctors," he told me. "It's a new medication. I feel great!" Indeed, the next time I saw him he was driving his car, running a traffic light.

One afternoon I brought him the news: Allen Ginsberg had died.

"Ah," he answered. "That's too bad. But then he was quite elderly, wasn't he?"

VII.

Ignatow was dying, laid out in a rented hospital bed in his writing room.

He turned to me and said, "I'm here to die."

I didn't know how to answer, so I looked out the window at the trees.

He joined me in silence for a few moments. "I'm enjoying the view," he said. "I finally understand the trees. They're like the crib I slept in as a child. They won't let me fall to the ground."

Finally I asked if there was anything I could do for him.

He thought for a bit. "Yes," he answered with his sly smile. "Trade places with me."

VIII.

When it was over, technicians used a bone saw to remove his brain. His doctors wanted to study the effects of the disease that killed him. "I imagine it will be a big operation, bright lights, medical students watching," Ignatow had told me. But, in the end, it was quick, non-dramatic: Two men alone, going about their work, efficient valets unpacking the contents of a modest suitcase.

PANSY MAURER-ALVAREZ

from Legend of the Winter Trip (XXX)

A new path thick with
Unexplained ministers
Towered by the way gravity
Feels unknown composed of
Commonplace spectators
Clinging and fitting into the word
Superimposed modified

Dancers on the stairs of Sénégal
Social sports in a ring
Dissolve sweating pride
And public envy
Elsewhere the sea is exact
And divides the circus
Into spotlight kicks
And static meetings

from Legend of the Winter Trip (XVIII)

Don't run dumbstruck and ruin
My very best kiss is belief in fire
Slide lunch petal pearl caress
Power cuts guttural substance
Rinse petals bilabially
And piece the prizes together
Another dead tree remains
Under pressure a sign
Unusual commercial support of street art
Faust in the center of his skeletal wedding
Books frame attraction
There's a motive in lashes in tears
In forehead eyes and hairs
There's technique underneath
It matters it flickers and smells
Anguish split up like stained glass
To tide you over to flourish
Crepuscular barrier

from Legend of the Winter Trip (XXIV)

The west front decorated with thousands
More emphasis on walls
Omissions sidelong trespassing shadows
Each wrestling with error
With phobias and nightfall
The wrong book in a smaller place
Mosaics formerly proud
From every stone stream
Political golden apples

Narrow the dash, the next city
The path indicates
A leaf a boundary a drop
In temperature inside the hands
Inside the street torn up

Electric optic morning
At the center of the building
Some things you touch and some
Are transparent buried
Arms reaching lost parents
So much light passes along
The length of a leg
Headlong sadness and fire

—3 excerpts from a book-length poem, "Legend of the Winter Trip"

STEPHEN PAUL MILLER

1937 INAUGURAL VACCINE

We of the Republic sensed the truth
that democratic government has innate capacity
to protect its people against disasters once considered inevitable,
to solve problems once considered unsolvable.

We would not admit that we could not find a way to master
economic epidemics

just as, after centuries of fatalistic suffering,
we had found a way to master *epidemics of disease*.

We refused to leave the problems of our common welfare
to be solved by the winds of chance
and the hurricanes of disaster.
In this we Americans were discovering no wholly new truth;
we were *writing a new chapter* in our book of self-government.

See

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5105/>

and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8Eiq3CmsCc>

THE OPPOSITE OF CAPITOL VIOLENCE

At the '63 march on Washington

A. Philip Randolph says
“racists seek to strangle Congress.”

I find myself so between. On January 5, 2021,
We march to the sea in a good way,
Taking Georgia to roll back the 2006 voting rights rollback
Getting back to Reconstruction before we gave up on

The non-violence at the electoral heart:
What investigation must be taken?
My students can't tell the difference

Between civil disobedience and violence.

For as long as they remember
Non-violence has been a copout,
An establishment distraction.
Truth makes nothing real.

For as long as they remember
The big lie has broken windows and
The big lie knows where it's looking.
And the big lie is I don't know....

The big lie goes off without a hitch,
Acquitting on a technicality,
The big lie actively encourages the big lie
And sleeps with a convenient one.

“Look for the *enemies* of Medicare,
Of higher minimum wages, of Social Security,
Of federal aid to education,” says A. Philip,
“And *there* you will find the enemy of the Blacks,

The coalition of Dixiecrats and reactionary
Republicans seeking to dominate Congress.
We must develop strength.”
And that strength makes you look at the big lie through
The impressions of the impressionless: the truth of creative nonviolence
washing through us.

Even if the lie is going away, even if it's not here,
Even if you can't remove it, impeach it.
The big lie is you don't matter.
Join the March on Washington now
Like you are it forever, says A. Philip.

See

<https://www.jacksonville.com/article/20130820/NEWS/801247969>

and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZGroHBk5kE>

YOUR INAUGURAL

for you grads (a real June 2021 liberal arts convocation address)

Keeping vigil with one who has left

Never again responding

Not recognizing the time of death

One's face in starlight.

What's a poem?

A bunch of words

creating feedback

and taking off on it

not slowing on the curves

then climbing over

overtones in the valley's midst graduating for now

now looking down—there's global lit

where astral cams zoom hmmm you

are the stars in the night settling

down near a virus and a flu

both too tired to infect anyone—

they fall asleep in each other's arms—

making it in New York—

Their camera is the star of

Busby Berkeley's flying rug

Friends call him Buzz,
You know—the mind-altering choreographer
Of *Gold Diggers* '35 when
At last they let him direct
Even the non-dance
Parts in synchronized story rhythm—
Capturing multitudes flowing up full circle
In budding phantasmagoric Keynesian
Lenses as the first macroeconomy
Becomes us from sixty feet in the air—
Buzz punctures holes in every Warner's studio ceiling—
and you're now this dancer/camera mind meld
you you you too have been looking
down and still are though now you're in it—
 in everything for the first time—
 and out—
 the dancer and the Busby one.

Those flicks are superhero ground-zero—
in '38 *Superman* creator Jerry Siegel
adapts "Lois Lane" from *Lola Lane*—
star of Buzz's '38 *Hollywood Hotel*

and maybe even takes "Clark" from
Jimmy Cagney's *Footlight Parade*
torn producer/hoofer role—"Kent."

From those mythic heights Busby films an
ethereal "Shadow Waltz" in *Gold Diggers* '33—Please see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAH0IKUk3aE>:

You are spiraling on wooden ribbons,

dancing in and out of hanging mirrored floors
becoming one and many neon violin(s),
with one and many glowworm bow(s)
pulsing through Buzz's dervish kaleidoscopic
eye till someone buzzes
 Buzz's Sufi perch and
just as with
our current pandemic...

and THIS is a true story! See

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_Diggers_of_1933#cite_note-tcmarticle

...lights go out
as the magnitude 6.4 Long Beach March 10 1933 quake
rocks LA,
throws Buzz from his flying carpet
30 feet up....
Hanging by a hand
his cinematographer pulls him back up.
Hearing dancers falling from
dark slanted vertical runways
Buzz shouts
"Open a door! Don't move
till there's light!!!!

That's the president we need that's you

DANIEL MORRIS

Glass Break

What means a dream when you are expecting
How do I register to vote
How old do you have to be to work at Target
What does a dream catcher need to do to get
 a screenshot around here
How old do you have to be to rent a moving van
What does a Dremel tool do
How do I delete my facebook account
How do I change my password
What means a dream when your teeth are falling out

How old do you have to be to get Medicare
How do I renew my passport
What means a dream when you miscarry
How do I live without you

How old do you have to be to get a tattoo
What means a dream within a dream
How do I get a passport
How old do you have to be to work at Starbucks
What means a dream when the world goes black
How old do you have to be to babysit
How do I apply for food stamps

What means a dream when you lose your rental in
 An infinite airport lot
How old do you have to be to sit in the front seat
What means a dream when your spouse cheats
How do I apply for unemployment
How old do you have to be to work at Walmart
How old do I have to be to work at Game Stop

How do lyrics breathe
What means a dream when you are falling out of trees
How old do I have to be to retire
How old am I
What does it mean if I lose your purse
How do I block my number when I call someone I shouldn't
How old is the Earth

What means a dream when your small boyfriend cheats on you

How old is Cher

How did I find your i.d. on him

What means a dream when you are being chased

How do I find out my blood type

How old is Vanna White

What means a dream when a black-and-blue lover is yelling your name

How do I get an absentee ballot

How ol dirty bastard die

Censor Box Defunctive

Censor bot dylan
Is bobby dee daring to stay
Censor bomb haircut
Is which alive but yet to marble
Censor bop darling
Is boredom digging yew box style
Censor bot toner
Is your luv in conjugal vein
Censor boom bot
Is boolean a martyr logic
Censor beep deep bollocks

Was bob dylan autistic
Was bob ross beat in the military
Was bob Dylan husband heroin
Was bob Dylan black in tow
Was bob Dylan shrewish lass
Was bob Dylan jewish precedent
Was bob Dylan jewish camp

Censor meaning bot cramp
Was boss hoss a sizzlin christian
Censor tic bar tok
Was bah bah wah wah a bleach
Censor pros and cons

Was baal shem tov a sham mandolin
Is boba fett a Hope Republican

GAIL NEWMAN

Everything

My father brings home a dog
who guards me in my cradle,
growling at my mother
when she steps close.
My aunt is in the house, baking.
She sets a broken pan under the stove
for safe-keeping.
My mother has gone off to work—
I don't know who she is,
mistaking my father's sister
for the one who loves me best.
I cry and cry until the doctor says
to my mother, *You don't have enough milk.*
My mother looks down at her breasts,
small as apples. It is too soon after the war,
and my parents want so much right away.
Everything they own is in my body.

Braiding

A mother, braiding, says, *Be still.*
Says, *Here is bread. Eat.*
You are tired. Rest. Take this umbrella.
Outside it is raining.

The mother closes, at night, the door.
She rolls down her stockings, unsnaps
the brassiere. Turns down her side of the bed.
The father, already asleep, does not wake.

Outside, the moon is full, spilling
as if from a bucket of warm milk
its luminous light through the window
of the room where the child sleeps,

dreaming of the blue mist above the ocean
and the blue velvet dress her father stitched
on a treadled Singer, dipping
his foot down on the pedal,

guiding the fabric between his hands,
the needle dipping in and out like a bee
inside the honey of a flower.

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.

Poems are from the author's collection, BLOOD MEMORY (Marsh Hawk Press, 2020)

DENISE LOW

This Moment of Danger, Walbridge Fire, 2020

Crows on pavement hop sideways, one-footed
like the powwow dance Crow-hop but zig-
zag. In the half light, feathers shine taffeta black.
Smoke from burning redwoods muddles sight.

Masked strangers walk by us not threatening
but shielding from an invisible plague borne
on breath. Lungs quiver inside our chests,
thudding a two-step song of murmurs.

Ts!u'nno Mountain sits wordless as haze
circles its ridgeline of pines and live oaks.
Morning sun barely remembers to return
to this moon valley of vineyards and goats.

Months ago I crowded into a bar to hear
a band sing "La calle está en fuego," a song
for dancing crows and me, "Fuego, fuego,
fire, fire!" Streets aflame. Danger. And beauty.

Geographic Cure

Pinking-shears cut hippy Brazil
to fit Africa's curved Atlantic harbor
into one rough-seamed continent.

The Arctic and Antarctica
shadow each other. Winter is summer,
summer winter.

I touch your everyday skin of netted pores
A quick flip and I touch wet plum,
your inside mouth.

Take me to bed where we no longer rest.
I left to go walk the beach's
intricate crisps.

Fractals of mollusks litter a shoreline.
Trace here the gritty shallow where
we once settled in salt.

Levitation During COVID-19

*In Breughel's Icarus, for instance, how everything
turns away/Quite leisurely from the disaster....*

W. H. Auden

My paired shoulder blades should be wings
for flight among new angels
arriving after virus deaths.

Like Icarus I should soar over the bay
until the dead appear as distant waves—
my friends and Menominee brother-in-law.

At that height, the sting of grief will fade.
Rolling lines of surf will be strings of pearls,
rippling and luminous in sunlight.

Yet my flesh arms flail without feathers. They cannot
lift me high enough to see the horizon
where sorrow ends. Instead, from a hill,

I see Icarus fall, splash. And the others. I am unable
to calmly turn away from the disaster.
Gravity pulls me into Earth's dark center.

BASIL KING

If It Fails Begin

Haiku, Zen, Minimalism, nothing is wasted there are no excesses, beauty is never forgotten,
Haiku, Zen and the willingness to change

Work is minimal
An obsession
That demands
Constant attention

If it fails begin again
Purity was the curse
Of the twentieth century
If it fails begin again

Yellow
Before Green
Before Blue
Before the field
Turns Brown
And the earth
Vibrates
Yellow
Before Green
Before Blue
My mother
Tongue
Spoke to me
And told me
If it fails
Begin again

—from *"The Twentieth Century"*

JOSE PADUA

Rewriting King Lear

When Neil Diamond sang about packing up
the babies and grabbing the old ladies
was he thinking about taking the kids
to some county fair where he'd find an old
woman whom he could love to the end of
his pop-star life if she ended up living
as long as a red sea urchin?

The older
ladies are a treat at the county fair
where most of the women are aged young and
middle or child in the age of innocence
or regret, wearing perfume that makes them
smell like funnel cakes or cotton candy
or foot long hot dogs with mustard and cheese
that were made outside the county and sometimes
out of state for someone living in the
city.

But this is the show we came to see,
the show he's been singing about for over
fifty years. Would Neil Diamond need socks to
play the lead in Marlowe's *Faustus*? Me, I see
him playing King Lear, wearing the same tight-
fitting glittery outfits they wore in
medieval England and in the 1980 remake of
The Jazz Singer. Neil Diamond's big face, filling
out the screen.

*I'll make you feel something anon,
if my art fail me not.*

"Hands, touching hands,
reaching out."

*Why, how now, Sir Knight! what,
hanged by the horns! this is most horrible.*

"Song sung blue, weeping like a willow"

Then
will I headlong run into the earth: Gape, earth!.

“Got a dream they've come to share They're coming
to America.”

Neil Diamond, the process
of America, the process that turns grape
into raisin and plum into prune,
the drying out of the senses. If I
were a master of fucking people up
how badly could I fuck up Shakespeare? I
see a world where I can wear my pig mask
like heavy makeup and feel that I'm making
the scene in my hometown, that my almond
eyes and wide nostrils are the new blue eyed
and blonde, the new crack, the new Neil Diamond:
hold on to my dick, friends, I need to pee.

A thousand years from now will future gen-
erations be baffled by Neil Diamond?
Will my rewriting of *King Lear* be all
that's comprehensible anymore to
humans who know nothing but electricity,
breasts and bombs? It was 1972
when I saw my classmate walk by in front
of the embassy where his father worked
and we just looked at each other without
saying a word. A few years later his
father was blown up in his car a few
steps away. His father came to America
and America killed him because it
was in America's best interest
to kill him because sometimes America's
best interest is to kill.

If I could rule
the world the way Neil Diamond ruled the air-
waves, if I were born like his star, if I
had a way with Bedlam, would the world be
fucked forever? Or if I had my way
with Bedlam would reason overcome blunt
force?

On a hot August night when the leaves
hang down and the grass on the ground smells sweet

you move up the road to the outside of town
and the sound of that good gospel beat. When
the show is over you sit in your chair
with your hairpiece in your hand as time falls
flat on the carpet of a hotel room in New York.

To the Industry As Presented on Film and for All the Distress It Inflicts, the Crises It Gives Birth to, and for All the Souls That Have Managed to Stay Alive Over the Long, Lean, Hungry Years

I remember where I first saw Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*. It was at The Circle Theater on Pennsylvania Avenue at 21st Street on a brilliant day when I wasn't taking shelter from the heat so much as looking for other ways I might be illuminated. I remember the Key Theater on Wisconsin Avenue where I first saw Monte Hellman's *Two-Lane Blacktop*, a film without much of a plot but which like a road that winds through odd scenes and strange places takes you somewhere you'd never been before. I remember seeing Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *In a Year of 13 Moons* at the Biograph on M Street in Georgetown and feeling as if it were winter when the film was over but it wasn't, and I was walking into a warm evening of purple-blue skies and onto a light gray sidewalk that was sturdy beneath my feet in the spring and I was feeling the need for a drink or two or more and in those days there wasn't a meal that couldn't wait until my drinking was done. What I can't remember is where my wife and I took our three-year old daughter to her first movie, I only remember how we sat, how we watched her eyes watching the wide screen in amazement, watched her enter the story as if she were walking across a border into a new country or a new style of living or just a new way of eating strawberries. I can't remember where my wife and my children saw *Curious George*, *Jurassic Park*, or anything involving superheroes and all-powerful villains, much less the movies themselves, while a slow, older, dirge of a film in black and white will pop up in my mind as easily as a sad thought or panicked notion, helping to push the bad things to the side. Sometimes it's the recalled image of Monica Vitti looking into the distance in *L'Avventura* that helps drive off an overarching sense of dread. Other times it's Rüdiger Vogler and Hanns Zischler in Wim Wenders's *Kings of the Road*, riding through the landscape in a motorcycle and sidecar, that makes me think I'm getting somewhere in those moments when I'm convinced I'm not and there's nothing I can do about it. It's like one of those strolls down the boardwalk I took this past summer on limbs and knees that aren't nearly as steady as they used to be, like an ocean taking its time to move, letting its power gather from the depth and breadth of its reach, before falling over the shore under the early evening sky, the waves catching the blue and yellow light, then letting go like someone entering a state of sleep whose hand opens slightly, releasing everything that isn't a dream, everything that isn't motion or flight, everything that makes one feel less than alive.

Fucky

I found out today that someone found
my webpage by typing in the words
“dwarfs fucky.” I don’t think it’s someone
I know. Anyone who knows me would
either type in my name or “the real fucky fucky”
not “dwarfs fucky” to find me. Anyone who
knows me knows that the underlying theme of
everything I write is “the real fucky fucky.”

When I first heard the word *fuck* I was amazed
like deaf Beethoven, turning around to witness
wild applause at the premiere of his ninth symphony.
To see the word turned into *fucky* was the great insurgency,
the trembling that led to the collapse of the old regime
and forced Napoleon into exile. It was the wearing
of leather pants to the prime minister’s wedding,
the painting black of towers and monuments
to those who always had the voice and so power came
to fucky and power was real
and fucky *fucky*.

I take from you these old days
and you give to me your search for me.
All loose undergarments presented
on the page, I am in the middle of this invention,
the hull of my sailing ship,
the grind of my reductive argument,

and you are electric and loved,
and you move like a cat and you type
in the words that reach me
as I sit here in the middle of a winter with words.

MICHAEL RERICK

language data

case # 4

methodology:

case, hypothesis, site, set, algorithmic set, set chart, conclusion, discussion, problems

hypothesis:

litter is a waiting game
train tracks bait with
chewed blue plastic caps
breaking foil detritus
and unreusable toss

site:

Portland, OR Hollywood MAX Stop ID 8373. Waiters, freight train tracks, junkies, high school students, workers, interstate traffic, murderers, hospital windows and parking levels, hopeful murals, detritus, shopping proximity, and shrubby litter about. Air drowns. Bus mall, dirt bridge bank, and green overgrowth trails attract the homeless. The MAX tracks' grey granite rock collects colored debris.

set:

Hollywood MAX track ballast plastic pen
baggie of baby carrots saggy red condom
caps (marker, bottle, cigarette, syringe) straws
straws straws
surgical glove candy bar wrappers
white plastic fork floss handle
shattered locally brewed IPA beer bottle pill bottle
mini-wine bottle brown oak leaf

algorithmic set:

Hollywood {city-sphere, wet store glare, theater, pizza and beer}
MAX {loose camera monitors, murder, Metropolitan Area Express, whizzing platform}
track {long lovely silver line, off and on the rails, romantic hobo path, set with labor}

ballast {grey shipping waves shiver in the waiter's eye with scotch broom toss freighting mice
 and matted newspapers}
 plastic {xenomorph compound, world blanket layers}
 pen {bled dry white tube, another, another}
 baggie {peanut butter smeared, of change, dried school cranberries, battered in ballast}
 of {spies}
 baby {vegetable tender, mouldboard stroller priority, nickname magnet}
 carrots {friend's hippie parent lunch with a plain bagel, frozen with peas, high school
 agriculture class pulled dirty roots washed and crunched, sold in plastic quivers}
 saggy {surreal solid limpness, primate body, hammock droop and swing}
 red {taillights, dot look and lookback, fall, eyes in a bush}
 condom {giddy at the corner store, flaccid plastic objet petit a, late night ballast fun, fertility
 border}
 caps {snaps, lost pens, blasts, head traps, stops, plastic shoe straps, lids, pants}
 marker {waiter plant, mailbox X, gps highway, bench drop}
 bottle {afterschool Mt. Dew chug, broken glass handled beer, cold Seoul coffee, water,
 blackberry sock wine, monkey paw wishes, vodka caps}
 cigarette {litter trails, rollies outside the art gallery, butt pools, bum then quit}
 syringe {MAX junk}
 straws {up the nose, paper then plastic then plastic go, cold shot to the mouth, ubiquitous
 detritus, clown striped}
 straws {floating with bottles out to sea, thoughtless sucking machine, wedged in sidewalk
 cracks
 and along curbs, awkward with coffee, not to be mistaken for a stem}
 straws {Starbucks carried off by a crow, crazy with childhood, compostable brown like the
 earth}
 surgical {hospital security, brush combed for bums, white layered curtains}
 glove {milky limp sterilization, a hand for a hand, wool lost all over the tracks}
 candy {crinkling in the pocket, childhood crush, bright chewy movie pleasure, super power pill
 offering}
 bar {preposition opportunity, track lingering around the bend, redacted information, drink
 counter, metaphor in a poem}
 wrappers {tossed down the tracks, mc beatbox deaf lyrics, emotional litter blankets}
 white {specks in ballast, humming in the rails, waiter in passing MAX windows}
 plastic {compost, condensation bag, float, fluid identity}
 fork {lost river siren, switch, plastic food weapon, cliché, Top Ramen not restaurant ramen,
 heirloom}
 floss {waiter: no}
 handle {bloodless connective maneuver play, ties, slick white plastic train covers}
 shattered {scattered glass, home eye contact illusion, dry maple flecks}
 locally {power label, with economic shifts, transforms into an ideal}
 brewed {late night backseat Fleetwood Mac streetlights sliding over the windows, teapot gifts,
 a
 waiters' batch}

as Medieval European aura forks ↔ floss ↔ the waiter's aunt flossed with her hair ↔ handle
 ↔ shattered ↓↑ but for a moment
 murder on the train, drugs, and the homeless in the shrubs ↓↑
 waiting ↔ locally ↓↑ brewed ↓↑ IPA ↔ a local
 the North and TAVERN gentrified ↓↑ witches in the pines ↓↑
 moniker ↔ beer bottle ↓↑
 like a 2 liter cola refilled at the outlet store ↔ orange pill bottle secrets
 ↔ mini-wine ↓↑ bottle from 7-11 ↔ for longer evening
 walks and
 the MAX off in the other direction ↓↑
 waiting where a brown oak leaf ↓↑ falls
 significant on the waiter's bookshelf ↓↑

conclusion:

MAX means gathered for a waiting tension. Waiter train tracks catalogue crushed blue pen caps, a red used condom, grey ballast, brown broken bottle shards, yellow cigarette butts, and a black and white flyer that lifts away. Interstate traffic glides blunt wind and air brakes at arm's reach. A fresh bright blue, yellow, and red tolerance mural with "love" calligraphy reminds the waiter of recent murders. But the waiters are not murderers today. Phone screens ease the absence of overheard talk.

Hollywood Transit Center
 1:30 p.m.
 Red Line, Blue Line, Green Line

Trader Joes, bibimbap, and the hospital triangulate socioeconomic waiter diversity along bus and train lines. Tickets sporadically verify. Homeless coats and tents mill in grass and under the interstate footbridge. Families wait in sports gear for the game. Suits, scrubs, uniforms, and bicyclists ride downtown to transfer home. Suitcases haul to the airport. Teenagers yap to the mall. A waiter motions before the train door opens.

discussion:

Gathering blurs particular living conditions.

A particular piece in the debris field, a blue pen cap, connects the waiter to adolescent love talk under the lover's bed.

Waiters watch a grocery list quickly bleed and dissolve.

Human litter lack takes conscientious care.

Future detritus diviners will pick through ballast, garbage dumps, after-storm curbsides, floating sea patches, and satellite paths.

Mass transit attracts mass.

Waiters ignore waiters with lost fedora and television summary stories.

Alongside murder plaques, work cycles tamp violence.

Grey sky interstate rumble brightens a small clover patch crawling through ballast toward the waiter like a summer park.

problems:

When a thing (Lincoln Logs, lava rock) imprints on identity, loss haunts the waiter. If a thing (a wet bunched red shirt under a bush) does not imprint, it is colorful debris in the waiting field. A waiter constructs porkpie sweat stains and little holes a long ago lover gave in holographic language. Thousands of lost ballpoint pens float in a foggy jet stream of lists and forgotten phrases. Quantum position cigarette ghosts phase in and out as regards the waiter's reality.

TOM BECKETT

WORDS

I am
Being straddled

By words,

Ceded to

Them, seeded
By them.

~

My body
May be

Forgetting how
To sleep.

~

My ~~body~~ body
Mimics giving

Birth to
Words that

Are always
Already living.

~

I am
Wildly awake.

~

Words >bodies
Within bodies>

Going in,
Coming out.

Words are
Playing pinochle

Right up
My alley.

~

I am
Being straddled

By words.
I am

Being saddled
And written.

And yet
Still not

Quite legible.

~

Activity and
Passivity are

Not opposed.

Just forms
Of weather.

~

Aching parts
Of speech

Reach outside
Of themselves

For purchase
Or release.

~

TONY ROBLES

Bra Section

At the thriftstore
the essentials come
in through the back
door

used once, twice
and perhaps not
at all

in a cycle

And I too am
deemed essential
as are my co-workers

and sometimes there's
a respite from the face
i present at the counter

the latest was at the
bra section, a short
detour from long-sleeved
tops

Some passing, good natured
conversation:

Hey bra, i say

"Hey"

"How's it hanging?"

"Look bra, don't you have
anything more original than
that?"

"Sorry"

"No problem...I'm just your
big bra, looking out for you.
I mean, we're both essential,
we have to look out for
one another"

"Yeah" another voice cut in
Who's that, I asked

"Oh, that's your little bra"

I stood with the bras in
the bra section in solidarity
with bra's, here there and
everywhere

among the
bruhs
brehs
bros
and other
assorted bratheren
(And bretheren)

before heading
to housewares

Thriftstore in Fall

The garments
Fall

as do idealogues
Great powers
Dynasties

A season's second
skin, slipping
unclothed

At the thriftstore
suspended in
memory

We hear our mothers
in the distance call to
us, be careful or you'll slip
and fall

and her voice fell
on the shell of our
ears

My father
Fell

in love
many
times

and tears
fell and dried
before he could
pick them up

and the garments
that fell gently on
our skin continue
to fall

from hangers
that once carried

weight

Suspended in
milky luminance

before hitting
floor

ROSALINDA RUIZ-SCARFUTO

Daylight haze; Brain Waves Wave Good-Bye

Into the Sea,
I dive to the un/known,
Un/der the waves,
where coral lives, calmly
Tropical fish swim near
tiny bubbles a-bound...

I am in their dream,
Twilight hues,
twilight moves,
twilight soothes...

Serenading my five senses,
Open to the 6th,
pulsating colors
reflected by sun/rays
I see the surface of water
Ebbing and flowing over/head.

Life on the shore continues
Never-the-less,
I am in *Everland*,
hours pass over/me,
ripple in time,
1,000 per/hour
reduces down to...
an hour, a minute, an instant, ONE.

Sea-time is Goddess time.

I tumble deeper,
into the sway,
of the sea grass tune.

As I go,
an in/visible presence
guides me
by the hand.
I can no longer re/sist,

the force of the swell,
I let go of the fishing line.

I am alone
In a familiar place.

Where am I?
(querying innocently)
I see the shore
Dis/torted.

Me in the arms,
In HER arms way,
En-gulfed by the Sea.

I am barely a/wake
I am bare.

Monday-Mundane: Weekend overrated

Mondays are never my favorites,
Lyrical melodies drum it in from early age,
“Rainy days and Mondays...”
“Monday/Monday”

Not this Monday, I was looking forward
To the weekend being OVER!

Not so lucky, lingering into Day 4.
Fever hides out somewhere,
In the bedding! Gotta wash it out!

What a drag...drag off the sheets,
Drag them down the hall
Drag out the washing liquid
Wait to drag them out and hang.

Meanwhile chop the soup contents
Meander to dreaded dirty sink
Who’s afraid of dishes? Me...

Siesta time, 3pm.
Sirens whistle outside.

Is it time to clap for medical staff?
Now it’s 8pm!

Day gone...sunset falling down
Good news; clean sheets!
Is it Tuesday, yet?

—from *A Poet’s Survival Journal in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Mind, Body and Soul Reflections*
(2020)

SUSAN TERRIS

Closet-Phobia in the Time of Covid

Opening her closet door makes Miranda feel
as if she's staring at the clothes of dead people.

Who bought or wore those items and why?
Who will wear silk, wool, or silver shoes again?

Yes, now she's seeing a dark shudder of ghosts
there. Calibans. She doesn't know or love them.

As she watches, they seem to shift and whisper
to one another. Seem to wonder who she is,

as if asking, *Do we know her? Is she dangerous?*
From the doorway, she can see that the scarves

want to snake around her neck. And zippers
all seem bright-hot, as if they'll lock her in,

snap her bones. Moths rise, gray ones,
circling the ghosts' missing heads, resting on

their invisible hands. She steps back. She'd like
to throw lit matches into the eerie darkness.

Aware not of whispers now but of the scrape of
wire hangers bending into sharp fire pokers,

Miranda slams the closet door. Newly brave
then, she locks it, flings the key out the window.

Open/Close or Door in the Time of Covid-19

About a door, yes, mine, as I live now alone and under house arrest
But if opportunity is not knocking, I may have to break it down
Can't help pushing at this door or any door even if I should be pulling
Do not believe, shut in as I am, that this leads to opportunity
Each open one should be, Rumi says, a boundary we must go beyond
Freedom is not at my door, though—only a package from Amazon
Going mad, I tell myself, I'm not meant to be married to darkness
Honey, I say to my absent lover, you are the only one I'd admit here
If necessary, closing the door is only a prelude to future openings
Just because it's been hijacking my future for months, I loathe it
Key— yes, I tell myself, inside me I have one to unlock and escape
Lives will open at last, C.S. Lewis says, so keep knocking on the door
Maybe, knock wood, I will be able to get a vaccine—a way out
Never expect that if this door stays closed another will open
Opportunities, they say, await beyond the virus—but do they
Please excuse my obsession with how the door to real life slams
Question May Sarton's belief that love opens it for everything
Remember how it was to open so your son could change a light bulb
Say what you will, that door is blocking my light and life
Though this scares me, I hope it will open into freedom again
Undo all, Campbell says to follow bliss so doors will open
Very well, but if the door isn't safe, don't suggest the window
Who knows if I can stay in without breaking but will not be broken
X marks the spot where I—masked, newly brave—may go out
Yes, and Stoppard says any exit is an entrance to somewhere else
Zip open/close then in a changed world I'll seek and keep seeking

Signs in the Time of Covid

Lovers, separated by time and distance, by a novel virus, often take refuge in common street signs.

They see **Emergency Signals Ahead** and only **One Way** to proceed. No dual showers with **Soft Shoulders** that are **Slippery While Wet**. And no **Curves**, no **Roundabout** or

Low Clearance. No **Deer Crossing** or **Trail Head**.

They may yearn for **Crossroads** or a **Rest Area**. Or might want a **Side Road**, a **U-Turn**. To **Yield** is to be desired

yet missing. Yes, lovers may **Look Both Ways**, be aroused by a **Signal Ahead**. But everything and everyone keeps saying **Stop**, instead of **No Stopping**. The boldest signs

might warn of silliness like **Turkey** or **Toad Crossing**, but they will still insist there's **Black Ice Here** and **No Exit**.

MARK YOUNG

An iconic trapezoid

Her legs are congruent, have an experimental approach to materials & colors, has something to do with her love of horse riding &/or those crumbling monuments to Pizza Hut's stylized roof & other relics of the West's in-

dustrial heyday. Her quietness has a bell inside that mimics the phantom noises in the ears associated with tinnitus. When magpies began to call she turned & ran.

A bowl of almonds

The road ahead is full
of a glare her eyes had
never become accustomed
to. Animal corpses on
the tarmac. An ubiquitous
photographer who, for
the moment, is still
standing or standing still.

She looked up, looked down;
realized where the ancients
got the names of their con-
stellations from. Music of the
90s wafting across her nos-
trils caught her unawares.

Et in Arcadia, ego

The Wagner was in full voice when she arrived. She made the words out & mouthed along with them for a few moments. *Er naht: sie bringen ihn getragen*. So, *Parsifal*. She

couldn't be bothered hanging around. Grail stories had become too common, too far-fetched, too often pitched at future cinematic treatments. *Star Wars* &/or *Star Trek* now

more her go. Classical themes: & the music isn't bad, either.

EILEEN R. TABIOS

BLUE META PAIN

—*for Ilhan Sami Comak*

My heart becomes
weaker
with the years

of seeing you
grow in a jail
separated from

parents who aged
into white-haired
twins of concern

My heart
was not well
-positioned to see

You, crouched
in jeans and blue shirt
become bent line
colored sapphire
as if you
are the sky

You, crouched
over a bird
with its own cell

Both of you—
a man, a bird—
separated from sky

who would love
men and birds
with as much blue

as vision can project:
sapphire, cobalt, lapis

lazuli, azure...

My heart, weakened
by human history,
still imagines—I see

You, standing
looking up
at a sunlit sky

whose infinite expanse
lacks constraints
from any horizon

I see you, standing

Written after the images of Ilhan Sami Comak in prison in Turkey where he is one of the country's longest-serving political prisoners; more information at <https://ilhancomak.com>

Bass in the Anthropocene

—after “Mass die-offs of birds in south-western U.S. caused by starvation,”
The Guardian, Dec. 26, 2020

Sky
weeps songbirds
emaciated after eating

their own muscles—
Oh deafening
Silence

except
for bass:
corpses hitting ground

corpses hitting ground
corpses hitting
ground

IF LOVE, THEN LOVE

—excavated from *“The Professor and the Madman,” A history of the Oxford English Dictionary*

I.

All I need are books.

Every word in action becomes beautiful in the light of its own meaning.

When I read, no one is after me. When I read, I am the one who is chasing, chasing after God.

What I know of love: the sickness often becomes the cure.

The brain is wider than the sky...

II.

“I can, because of you.”

III.

Madness gave us words.

Sometimes when we push away, that’s when we need to be resisted.

IV.

I wanted to document the history of each and everything, to offer the world a book that gives a meaning of everything in God’s creation.

V.

The book—it’s not yours to quit.

I know the answer to the widow’s question.