

Ralph Angel
Atom Ariola
Micah Bateman
Michael Berton
Brian Blanchfield
Bruce Bond
James Nicholas Brook
Christy Davids
Carol Ann Davis
Thomas Doran
Bailey Cox Duncan
Elaine Equi
Lisa Fishman
Stephanie Ford
Shamala Gallagher
Emily Hostutler
Claudia Keelan
Rebecca Lehmann
Brian Lucas
Alessandra Lynch
Anthony Madrid
Siwar Masannat
Kate Menzies
Richard O. Moore
Laura Mullen
Sara Mumulo
Dusty Neu
Anne Pelletier
Anthony Robbins
Carmen Giminez Smith
Cole Swensen
Ken Taylor
Gale Marie Thomson
Erica Tom

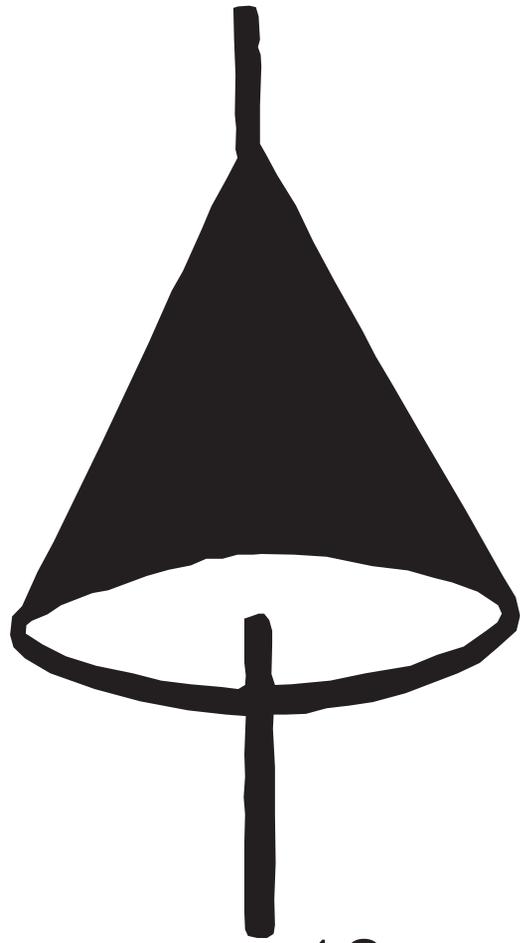
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Contents

Ralph Angel	Bright Example	11
	Holding You Sober Close To Me	12
	Conversation	13
	Fear of Death	15
Atom Ariola	By Ease of the Unbroken, Written Backwards	16
Micah Bateman	GESTURE	17
Michael Berton	Chicanery	18
Brian Blanchfield	Funny Loss of Face	20
	Rods and Cones	21
	Eclogue of Sig Alert on the Ten East	23
Bruce Bond	A Brief Guide to Metaphysics	25
James Nicholas Brook	Haïkus hâtifs	26
Christy Davids	[In City]	28
	[White Ermine]	29
Carol Ann Davis	Letter w. Plato's Extrinsic Finality	30
Thomas Doran	Sled Song	31
Bailey Cox Duncan	Sepia	32
Elaine Equi	SENTENCES AND RAIN	33
	ZUKOFSKY REVISION #2	34
	BACKWARD GLANCE	35
	DO YOU THINK A PHOTOCOPY OF A SNOWFLAKE IS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE ORIGINAL?	36
Lisa Fishman	[A scarecrow grew by night in the field]	37
	[Holding a bird you find almost no body under the wings]	38
	[The book was open, with its double]	39
	[Sun flew over]	40
Stephanie Ford	Portrait with Instruments	41
	True Survival Story	42
Shamala Gallagher	Untitled (Blue Blackfruit)	43
Emily Hostutler	Superstition or The Conductor	45
Claudia Keelan	EN UN VERGIER SOTZ FUELLA D'ALBESPI	56
	QUANT LO GILOS ER FORA	57
	A L'ENTRADE DEL TENS CLAR	58
Rebecca Lehmann	Westward Expansion	60

Brian Lucas	Morning Stun	61
	Spools of Jeers	62
	Telepathic Bones	64
Alessandra Lynch	mothers said	65
Anthony Madrid	I AM YOUR SLAVE NOW DO WHAT I SAY	66
Siwar Masannat	Pastoral Interview	67
Kate Menzies	[From] Interviews With White	69
Richard O. Moore	CHECK POINT	73
	d e l e t e 7	76
	d e l e t e 9	77
	A P A R T F R O M I T	78
Laura Mullen	Impossible Arrows	81
	Sestina	82
	Part	85
Sara Mumolo	I can't hide you—the rock cried out.	87
	I never learn the language made for us all.	89
Dusty Neu	Marimba Orchestra	90
	from i, slow expanse	92
Ann Pelletier	EACH SEPARATE ANGUISH	94
Anthony Robbins	WITCH HAZEL	96
Carmen Giménez Smith	AM I JUST A BROWN-WINGED DOVE	97
Cole Swensen	On Walks	98
Ken Taylor	what part of my tattoo were you raised?	101
Gale Marie Thompson	Cilantro Blue	102
	Houdini Poem	103
Erica Tom	what i learned	104

Ralph Angel

Bright Example

A few stones, day after day, dreamily
walked beside me. Houses
and trees and bright red
orioles, if I think
back on it, in their privacy.
For now, the elm trees
swarm with bees. Their hum
could keep me
there. Your
sky is blue and huge
and open.

I think about
the locals. Like people
screaming. I think it's a dog he's
carrying, but it's a paper bag.
She stays closer
to the gravel. She leans
against it, but
prefers the wooden fence.
Another car turns
over. Another
sputters.

And you, my dear
skeleton, in your pajama
bottoms, say
hello to everyone.
Another rock. A plastic
rose. Toy animals, can you believe it,
a flag, a poem.

Holding You Sober Close To Me

The city's
behind us. The water's calm. There are many heads
above the water.

Show me a victim and I'll show you
a bathroom—a man slathered
in honey, a carpet

of flies.

Orange blossoms
and salt. Even the creepy doorman
tastes the salt

in the air.

If a child's brought in, well, that's something
different. We don't want
our animals

to suffer.

You're the last person on earth
prepared for the death

of your parents.

Conversation

So I took a walk
inside. You're alone
when morning
comes.
Watching you sleep in
is better

than oatmeal,
even Irish
oatmeal,
that thing you do
so well.

When you were a fish
you were a salmon.
I know, I'm
slow, I
know.

November's a nice day
to be. The ocean's
near.
Your fog
is

everywhere.

So I
talked to I, I said
fuck death, everyone
I meet knows
someone

I know. I said
it's nice to be happy,
but no one
believes
me.

Take your time,
my love. The logs have lit
the fire.

The sweet scent
of your hair

kisses
my mouth, and I
kiss you back,
and pour
the tea.

Atom Ariola

By Ease of the Unbroken, Written Backwards

Because it was only to understand how close you would not come. The actual reason some story of the trade or distances between us. To assay on only what might never go away. At the worst, nobody else and every one watching. This being past the unexpected, this somehow now still. Last the nearly, then the chance that will allow us to open. See my mother, purposing the wreck, departing. How many have come to this shore if only just to leave. The more they leave the more they come. The shore now flooded with some abundance of leaving. You going always where you go. And here am I who held out my hands. And always the voices locked in the trees. That whiteness. What I without changing want. What I wanted. I once loved how you might approach the damage I seem to begin with. Easy is need and should not take this many words.

Micah Bateman

GESTURE

As of a fleet drifting
Over, airplane's shadow,
Counting moments
On the beat, wearing
Gloves that suppress
Articulation though
Insulate, ordering
So many citrusy bellinis,
One plane, two plane,
Seven. A hand
Pulls tufts from the air
It is so thick with
Fortitude, but groundward:
To let planishment
Be not of fretting
But beauty, one covers the world
In the smoothest metals
Possible, blood diamonds
Giving a little blemish,
Or your hair
Wobbling in the wind
As phone wires, sparks,
Storm's rattle. As of your eye
Stacking pillars of stars,
Heavenly columns,
Fickle stars, stick out
Your foot, she trips, the world's
Crinkling rondure.

Michael Berton

Chicanery

shiites can
shiites can can
shiites can can cans
shiites can do
shiites do can
shiite cancan
shiites do can do can
shiites do chic cancan
shiites can con
shiites can
shiites can con
shiites can
shiites can con

sean connery
sean connery can
sean connery can can
sean connery can can cans
sean connery cancan
sean connery chicanery
sean connery chic chicanery
sean connery chic
sean connery can
sean connery con
sean connery can con

chicano can
chicano cancan
chicanos can can cans
chicano chicanery
chicano chic
chicano chic cancan
chicano can do
chicano do can

chicano do can cancan
chicano con
chicano con sean

shiite chicano con
shiite chicano sean
shiite chicano sean con cannery
shiites can chicano sean connery
shiites can sean connery chicanos
sean connery can can shiite cans
sean connery can can shiite cans and do the chicano cancan
sean connery chicano
sean connery chic chicano

cubano cubed
cuban cancan
cuban cancan chicanery
chicano cuban con
chicano cuban con sean cuban con
shiite cuban
shiite cuban con
shiite cuban con sean
shiite cuban chicanery con

shiites can
sean connery can
chicanos can
cubans can
we all can
we all can can cans in cuba

chicanery
chicanery everywhere

Brian Blanchfield

Funny Loss of Face

The ivy larks on the bordello vine
are visiting one another's resting closets
like boys and men in Taiwanese baths:
anyone could be behind that leaf or must he
prefer sleep to sharing sleep the dismissed
one, flustering, not just anyone, retorts
and have him know, special again only once
his turnkey takes, before the wind top to bottom
as in a movie of itself plays the shuddering
singularity of love, selecting no one
particularly anyway, but all in las peliculas
sit deeper in their popcorn parkas down.
Everyone's in for the night except
you who had flown all day didn't want to fall asleep
here I was telling your neck relax your eyes
were going to wake up raw without solution
for lenses, so it was better you find
the little baths they had at home. Why it was
funny I suggested we concoct it from scratch's hard
to say and whether one of us or which was
good about everything. When you call and
the leaves are brighter red, it's later, nearer
the sun, and relief is that vibrant.
That you can see already where more doors
were and birds the feathery circuitry
the wall will bare is an occupancy of mine.

Rods and Cones

To be built a squirrel, to scale, to be
proportional, at the side of the shortrail
track, in the wild onions, her reflex
celerity prime, each eye circuited directly to
her cortex so, unlike human vision, hers is
not coarsened by summation: that
quick is the squirrel. When she
stands, is made to stand, one foot favored,
petite and lifted, on the three others
plantigrade and looks to god, who
stands behind his handiwork, waist high,
is made to look, she sees how significant
scale is to Papa, the back of his boy's head
the size of his own cupping hand. The track
needs to pass through something, and a town
is a lot to ask, a place that can produce
a people, enough of a people that one
in a platform dozen can be a passerby.
I-35 overpass suggestion: Kansas City.
Slow turns around coarsening, around
summation, why can't I react sooner
to what I see? (The boy pivots around
his crown his paper visor). Took me a minute
to replace my comb in the pocket of my
jacket. Benches to suggest time, benches
the squirrels comb the grass beneath, looking.
Benches are a fixture in Papa's plan.
Children of such a man carry his schedule
and watch for the time of arrival. In boys,
to track what's coming is to alert
the men they'll be by spotting the switch
ahead. The boy agitates at the vantage he attains
where his reverie tailors his stupor, and
the car wobbling that disturbs the primary
pit boss is the very thing he fills
his interest with, that and the tiny townie
articulation, an elbow out, elbow in
behavior. Some barrels here holding what,
nickel per bag, simulation mulch.
A squirrel, too, looks for what to see, her way
headed. A piping sheet of pink townies

emigrates on the rear cargo car of the main
line, slowing at the three-way
stub switch, son and station and he who
says so, and pulls into the infield, in form:
an innocuous midlevel executive
having a sandwich, a girls basketball coach
covering cross-handed his boner, a car
wobbling quality control specialist battering
a tie, everybody still on the vine.
Coverall Papa himself crawls under
the reality skirt to the primal yard to
snip them, fit his jewelling monocle, rods
and cones magnetic, and mix the liquid acrylics.

Eclogue of Sig Alert on the Ten East

after Larry Johnson

The car three back liberated itself from the line
and rolled ahead on the shoulder to the exit.

And, on this occasion when a car carrying no one you knew
or thought you knew passed your passenger door, you honked.
I pressed the horn as if involuntarily, a moment longer than desired.

You were upset?
It was a jealousy honk.

Hm.
A salute. I saluted the manumission I myself wanted.

Is that analysis of the behavior or the behavior itself?
I spoke with my father this morning, the one married to my mother.
When you come to a contradiction, make a distinction. That was William James.

William James quoting someone. Is your father, the other, alive?
Both. On the one hand a car of joyriders maneuvers out of the path
I was forging in the presumption presumably that to move is better
than to proceed.

Your father called with a matter of significance?
I called him. He has had a medical disappointment, followed by
a health setback. He said of his dire straits not to bother worrying. And
then added, this is the whole ball game.

Were you at any time pressing him to feel an emotion?
It was like the joyriders were a hustler I could
in a more mobile situation proposition. All the way,
he might say, if rolling my window down I asked—

How far were you going?
—How far are you going? That, in the walking way of standing still.

The question is concealed, expressed in that manner.
The turnoff was already in my rearview, by the time I saw
what they had in mind. It may be apparent that I admit nothing
when I write myself such a ticket.

Did your father, either, honk, in the manner you imagine?
The price is written right there under the name of the game.
The name of the game is the names of two opponents,
followed by the date and sometimes venue. Free of a charge.
I write them out myself. I might never be rid of these. Free
of a problem.

A sort of share, an issuance. In that, are you much different than
every father's daughter?

And then one was way ahead on the highway, son and heir in his hair.

Is there a problem officer? I'd like to speak freely.

I hadn't meant to say, Imagine.

Bruce Bond

A Brief Guide to Metaphysics

I see in time or not at all.
If all things die,

the invisible makes me
look

a little harder.
It says:

a dead boy who talks is another word
for reading,

a dead boy who listens is the word
you are about

to write.
If you hold the page to a strong light,

it tries to say what is
on the other

side. It says:

James Nicholas Brook

Haïkus hâtifs

boulot insensé écran bureau sans soleil bus bourré on lit

téléviseur sec de cette belle altitude nue genoux de citrouille

nos correspondances basse-cours étoilées voilées n'importe quel sourire

pour qui ange oblique ces nuages ces oiseaux de grammaire uniquement

la ville dont tu rêves une question sur tes lèvres nues table tableau tais-toi

tes ombres me font peur moi je te déclare en clair source image visage

y a-t-il des cris y a-t-il des quais déserts un ciel qui nous cache

c'est comme dans un bois ton corps blanc le feuillage noir vivement attaché

leurs machines t'admirent écho doux d'un diagramme seul dans ce vide parlant

sur scène sans voix sans rien jusqu'à la nudité de ce court métrage

à peine prononcé un mot un moi transparent effacement sordide

pour qui brûlent ces champs où un crâne dur se prend pour une pure flèche sans arc

un jour violent écrase notre désert blanc et factice caméra perdue

chemin ou refuge tes yeux flous en ce moment attendent la prière

le gratte-ciel le pauvre l'ascenseur en flammes un livre ouvert sur le lit

la nuit d'urgence passe l'année de merde se termine saisons o châteaux

une fine métaphore pleut sur le jardin public on ne s'y trouve plus

décembre 2010

Christy Davids

[In City]

Brushing teeth in the Brooklyn street; I spit in this Hasidic neighborhood—out of sight, between cars. Minty foam marks my marching boot, and the sound of plastic wheels ring my ears. Already bruised apples roll into the street: a dull thud, concrete crunch and bruise. And the wind blew up my skirt—red under the un-opacity of blue tights showed my purple to the universe in invisible gushes. Women laugh at my back, their cackles crash with each cresting wind-wave. They can count the lace scallops one by one, I don't mind so much. There's a graveyard afoot the F train stairs at McDonald Avenue where even the corpses must feel claustrophobic. Bay Parkway's chipping green paint is no compliment to the movie starlets and gangsters buried near those stairs. And brick surrounds us all, I stand there vividly un-alone.

[White Ermine]

suspended in air
bound by invisible string,
floating on her back,
wings tucked
relaxed

they like the Tropics
the southern United States
but also England and Ireland

sizable, and
delicately dotted
with black spots.
her head covered:
a majestic fuzz
black face and
wild black antennae

daylight and spider's web
together the image seemed
wrong

a moth is a creature of the dark
but light is her titular queen.

moving parts stilled,
she didn't look trapped
floating on her back

victim to the unseeable;
thread tacitly taxidermied

like the silent fall of
an abandoned hornet's nest
sad;
a confused
beautiful thing

Carol Ann Davis

Letter w. Plato's Extrinsic Finality

What else is there to say but the day's made to bloom
a word I'm fond of using room I enter
but I'm not naked I haven't tested the leaden bell
and what are my children made of
who shriek to wake themselves

too cold a question for so hot a day
field trip cancelled *due to heat* the sign reads
on the door and Luke needs
one more kiss to go into the room *bubble day*
replacing *water day* the heat again

so we dream of lake houses of ruins
with our names on them frontage on a river
or acres of woods and the book
with the picture I need isn't here
the detail of birds from the 14th century

one for each tree they are made
driven even as we are driven and made
as we are made neat as a teleology
the school-desk hour I learned that word
from a man I loved longer than necessary

if necessity comes into it at all
the *earth a vortex* the heavens
a *wide lid* dear one
while this hour though lost

still breathes as prayers summon
their makers I would summon you
yet while you live

Thomas Doran

Sled Song

With the two goats here
we had no other money
but in a red envelope
was a soft screen.
In an envelope we went.

Bailey Cox Duncan

Sepia

It was I think in a cramped cab in Wyoming
that I saw the picture of a woman with her face turned away
from the camera. only her brown cheek visible
her black hair dead on her back
while wooden planks ascended to the warped curling
edge. making me think she was waiting
for a train or on a loading dock
and the woman was not beautiful or even available
to the camera or the man who
had stapled her image to the dash board
for strangers to invent
while being chauffeured through the desert.

Elaine Equi

SENTENCES AND RAIN

The rain
waters
the sentences.

The words
grow taller,
more supple.

The sentences
previously
too dry

now bend
and reach
toward meaning.

Like us they thirst
for liquid cadence.
As the rain reigns

all morning
and afternoon,
its lullaby

hushes the sentences,
allows the words
to drench us all at once.

ZUKOFSKY REVISION #2

Upper limit thought
Lower limit noise

*

My thinking and logic
are by nature fuzzy.

If I wish to convey this accurately,
I must choose *not* the exact right word,

but rather the right inexact word
that allows for a similar amount
of vagueness and ambiguity.

*

New York is a noise Mecca
for horns, sirens, drills, shrieks,
whoops, harangues, and rants.

Here we are all Cage-y connoisseurs,
Calibans lulled by “a thousand twangling instruments”
and noisome airs.

*

It’s hard to hear, rare to see a thought
present itself fully-formed like Venus-
on-the-Half-Shell.

More often an arm or leg appears
caught in some sea monster’s maw,

or just a stray word-shoe
floats above the waves.

BACKWARD GLANCE

I live in a dormitory
of discontinued names:

Thelma, Irene, Estelle.

The combination of letters --
lost essence of another era.

Who were they?
What did they do?

They were Thelmas, Irenes, Estelles.

DO YOU THINK A PHOTOCOPY OF A SNOWFLAKE IS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE ORIGINAL?

for Joanna Fuhrman

Few know the gender of snow
or can tell at a glance, the menacing design
at the storm-center of its crystalline mind.

But Williams, our dear doctor, speaks of
“the male snow which attacks and kills
silently as it falls muffling the world.”

I'd like a meringue crisp snow
under a thick blanket of synthetic bells.

I'd like a menagerie of snowflakes
running wild in a blank thicket
of wind tunnels and glass air.

Give someone a snowflake,
like one note from a symphony,
and what can it do?

But a photocopy of a snowflake
will hang forever in dazzling obscurity
above a bed.

Lisa Fishman

[A scarecrow grew by night in the field]

A scarecrow grew by night in the field
Only the cats knew
until the crows knew

The onion forms
“in the first year by swelling of leaf wall at base of leaves”
Can be autumn-sown or spring-sown

Can't stay at the time or say at the time

childishly dressed in flowering vetch he was she was really a kite that's the chair
attached to the kite where you sit so it flies and you in the chair fly too, in the
chair attached by string to the kite

[Holding a bird you find almost no body under the wings]

Holding a bird you find almost no body under the wings

The girl entered the room

To be a tree, an axe, a fish a swan what else
she gathered her costumes—brown clothing other clothing
from dirty laundry at the foot of the bed and from a drawer

The shoulders begin
the body

Just now the girl again for a missing long-sleeved Sorry I said
about the suitcase in your way

The forest came
into the seen

Oak maple many many ever

At intervals

thin birches leaned against the other dark

They were a tale, leaning

[The book was open, with its double]

The book was open, with its double

shook / soot / look

It has no boots, is bare-

foot

leaf-rhyme / tree-line

oh and show how

a squirrel ate yellow flowers in the BAM-

BOO!

stand on Blake Street,
Berkeley

between house & fence

[Sun flew over]

Sun flew over
sunflower over

the sentence ends in

Rome?

Rhyme

more

time

sun jacket wearing

the bee

lists into morning-

glory

itself grows up the side of the greenhouse

a - b - c

At the pink-

clothed table teaching cursive: "draw the words" --meant to say "write"

& notice the error when there's laughter (James)

Under the petals the sun-golds are sweeter

than those growing elsewhere, in various

rows in various

parts of the orchard

Two hives fine out of four --subtraction

precedes cursive at the table

October twelfth

approaching, again, an election

arctic drilling temporarily delayed

Under the surface -- sun face

a sentence

frayed

Stephanie Ford

Portrait with Instruments

We joysticks, ringtones, barometric coronets

pressed like lungs in a leaden vest.
Let's trust our heads to invade and revise

what hammers, pings, and plucks us,
to see and speak of mere appearance

as rainwater inks the alder's wrists,
lusters the downspout's tin acoustics,

spoons us our daily dose of peril—

as in, even while the ceiling leaks,
our rented house falls soundlessly down

in strands of pith, in cone-shaped drifts,
and after we harvest the martyrs' wings

we bring them to our lips.
They taste like air given form and heft,
as, after the earthquake,

the too-much space between tables and chairs
swallowed the opera

of our own pent breaths.

True Survival Story

To a boundless
aloft
I

cross a trestle, fall
not for yonder
up and up

azure as

as air so wide
and so

to prospect,
pitch me easy into

a lexicon maybe,

hitch mind

to low and kind
exactitudes—

rock, pinecone,
this,
your,

earthworm, please

any ballast,
grasp.

Shamala Gallagher

Untitled (Blue Blackfruit)

home pressing
on yourself

so you'll
become full

press full on
the boredom
of you

.

.

.

.

.

.

red flicker of ants

scared wet eyes of the

blue blackfruit you ate in the crazier dark

.

.

.
.

two fingers you steep in yourself

.
.
.
.

but why can't I
shake until splitting,

junebug shell

elated mumbler
through thighs

.
.
.

blinds pulled up
to see the drenched yard

waste of evening

but I just wanted
to open a door in my unsobbed chest
and walk out

.
.
.

Emily Hostutler

Superstition or The Conductor

“Sir, you will need: a yam, a white votive, a black votive, Borracho powder, Cast Off Evil powders, 7-11 Holy Oil a charcoal rin’—for safely burnin’ it all up. An’ finally, a representation of sumpthin’ dat symbolizes de cravin’ you wish to cast out, sumpthin’ from de source. Firs’ you purchase de objects from my store. You mus’ wait until de wanin’ moon and cast an spell I include for free wit de purchase of de Santeria items. You come back de following week at same time, an’ I customize an incantation an’ blessin’ for you. Finally, durin’ de next wanin’ moon, you again return de store and purchase a Macutos. Dis powerful amulet you will carry with you always fe stave off de evil dat caused your cravings, and den, you will be free. If you do not follow de directions exactly as I convey you, deh will be a grave consequence. I kyan tell when I look on your eyes dat you believe, and eyes dat believe are essential for de magic work. I kyan offer you crucial price.”

Moses had been keeping an eye out for his “Shortie.” For the past two years, and every subsequent morning for the unforeseeable future, his deep brown eyes reflected the many uniform lines associated with the SEPTA Regional Railroad: rusted rail tracks, beige pleather aisles, bold parallel directional arrows, consecutive foggy oval windows and thick rubberized overhead cables. The lines, often overwhelming to him, burned like a screen saver into his retina, forcing his brain to reconfigure from multi-channeled into a singular neural pathway: Point A to Point B to infinity, day in and day out.

The West Trenton Local begins its daily sprint in New Jersey, at a station originally established by the Reading Railroad in 1929, situated in Ewing, or the armpit of the “Armpit state.” The line extends out from the pit and through the rural suburbs of Pennsylvania, then barrels through the many layers of Philadelphia until it arrives in University City. The passengers of the WTL span a vast socio-economic cross-section from the pastoral Amish teenagers to the teardrop-tattooed-recently-incarcerated aging hoodrats. Their vast collective physicality, figures and colors juxtaposed together, burst through Moses’ linear haze.

His favorite example of this “bursting effect” took place exactly one year into his employment with SEPTA. It was the day a small dirty-blonde haired boy with a *Muppets Take Manhattan* lunch box boarded in Woodbourne (Stop #3) with his young mother. They took a seat across from a wrinkled, shrunken older man in a green-striped suit wearing thick spectacles. While his mother, adorned in Rockabilly garb with jet-black hair coiffed into an oversized pompadour, chatted away on her cell phone and stared out the window, the boy and the old man became aware of one another. The deeply pleated hands of the hearing-impaired man began signing to the little boy.

The little boy smiled and returned the signals with a made-up version of his own sign language, as if he encountered old deaf men everyday. The two strangers played this way, communicating only with gestures, until the boy was rushed off at a later stop. Moses had

witnessed the spontaneous exchange between the two when he punched their senior and child-designated holes and eyed the oblivious mother's TransPass that day. The moment touched him, provoking nostalgia in him that he couldn't exactly place. By the time the clipped white circles of paper had touched the ground, he realized it was only another bought of nostalgia for a time that never existed. These waves of false *déjà vu* had become more frequent over the last year, but overwhelmed him nevertheless. Emotions were still new to him, as was the profound change that had rapidly manifested both externally and in the deep subconscious levels of his psyche. Since he had gotten clean and sober, Moses was a living entity for the first time in many years.

He now fully embodied the persona of the old-school classic man-of-the-rails. He once envisioned this idyllic black man as a child while scribbling in a steam engine-themed coloring book. He would select a crayon called Sterling, and then imagine a rounded train conductor winking at him, calling him by his name, and sharing brief legends while taking his ticket. Moses once heard that when you get clean, you return to the age and mentality that you were when you first began using and drinking. This was more than a stunted maturity. Moses indeed returned to that time, but upon his awakening, he had also recovered every known identity and ambition that went with it. Suddenly he was catapulted into a future that didn't match the imagined one of his youth. Fossilized as child in the mid-50s, he slumbered through the Civil Rights movement and the Sixties subculture. Apparently, his deepest self-induced coma was during years that were better to sleep through anyway. Moses noticed that many people held misperceptions about the addict, or at least about him. He saw this romanticism in his sponsor, who perhaps should have known better, and other outsiders when he was first getting sober. They would ask him unanswerable questions like, "what prompted you to start using in the first place, what are your deeper issues?" They asked him to get honest about what he had lost by choosing the junk over everything else. "What are your 'isms'?" They assumed that the years he had spent homeless in abandominiums were the result of a long, slow progression. Counselors prodded him about his relationships with others. Surely, his life had spiraled out of control resulting in loss after loss—there must have been a cause, a reason, for the fall. But that wasn't how it went.

Simply, once he had found the unmatched pleasure provided by dope and booze, he spent the following years as a full-time consumer, fumbling around between the highs. He never had a marriage or kids to lose; there had never been a high-roller job to blow off. He had made a commitment to that lifestyle so early on that he missed his coming of age. And then one day, thirty-five years later, Moses walked out of the brown stone half-way house at the corner of Frankford and Somerset and filled out an application for SEPTA at Suburban Station (Stop #21) in Center City. He wasn't "Mo" anymore. Now plump and greying, Moses was the Conductor: a shepherd of commuters, a transportation facilitator, and an exceptionally humble hard worker—an archaic thing, trying to grasp, or connect, with the contemporary.

He hadn't seen her at any of the meetings recently, his Shortie. He also hadn't seen her during his a.m. shift in many weeks. Today, like every other day, his run had begun as a haze of machinery and chilly wet air. He was pushing buttons, manipulating brakes and watching the reflection of his thick mud-colored neck and chin bend in the foggy aluminum gadgetry of the 7:03 a.m. local. This first shift was his particular favorite, the one Shortie frequented. For Moses, even in their stupors, the morning rush of commuters was always a vibrant and eclectic group. From 7:03 a.m. to 8:22 a.m., the daily melting pot was a silent symphony of inner thoughts, regrets, secrets, daydreams, and unforgettably expressive faces on people who likely believed themselves to be expressionless.

He had developed a sort of mental filing cabinet of regular passengers, like his Shortie. He would manage this index system in between his ticket clicks; doling out transfers, opening and closing the train doors, checking his watch and the sound of his own muffled loudspeaker announcements. The passengers provided something less monotonous to think about, something to prevent him from thinking about the past. If he sat still with himself long enough, the regret trickled in. Much like with the nostalgia, he would remember the potential for things that never happened, like the emerald-eyed, skinny ashen-faced girl that asked him so sweetly,

“Well, dontcha wanna go wit me to the sock hop?”

She had been too simple, still a baby girl. Taking turns sipping from a stolen bottle of stale cognac with the boys was instead his date that evening. Moses shared the innocence of the girl despite his resistance to it. One’s coming of age cannot be cheated or skipped over, and now in the post-millennium, Moses returned to it. His whole identity had diminished to a crying out for the world to take him to the sock hop.

When he was on this first run of the day, he had grown to anticipate certain morning regulars; instead of being simply passengers, they were more like characters in a play for which he had been given front row seats. Before he knew it, he was pushing his red speaker button and announcing:

“*WEST TRENTON LOCAL TO 69th STREET TERMINAL, have your tickets and passes ready pl*—“ He clipped off early and was the only one hearing the *ease* part.

As he had anticipated, his most reliable commuter had just barely made the route. Often dressed in signature purple prints, a feisty woman in her later years who always referred to him as “Reds,” pounded on the nearly shut exterior of the door.

“Hey! Hey! Help me up here Reds—hop to it, hop to it!”

It was the two frail arms reaching up to him from under one of her many wide-brimmed hats that appeared to speak to him. He did not remember this particular hat and made note of this on the mental card he had been developing for her. He reached out to help her, and even though she asked for his help she would inevitably refuse it. She straightened up in the hydraulic elevator-like entrance of the cabin before making her way through the second auto-shut door to her favorite window seat. The double door system, and the claustrophobic passageway to the train always reminded him of oppressive institutional entrances.

“You look lovely today, new hat?”

She either did not hear him, or ignored his question as he held the door after her. While the hat lady held the first position in his interior catalogue, she was far from the most intriguing. There was the (once skinny) pasty thirty-something woman whom he had never considered attractive until she gradually began growing outwards. She was a sporadic passenger, but he guessed by the severity of her facial expression that whenever she was on this line she was on her way to a place of incredible significance. There were others like her too, although most passengers carried gazes of the apathetic variety. *Were they headed to jobs they hated?* Besides the dominant body of going-to-work stares, there were unlimited styles of scrutinizers, daydreamers, and squinted eyes of confusion. There were the drained caretakers talking loudly to their parents with resentful glares. Hundreds of teenagers who all looked alike and often shared the same catalogue space in his mind; their eyes were always turned inward: fixed on the self. White men in white shirts with gleaming white teeth who peered into their magic glass screens while eating Power Bars. College students with gaping mouths and highlighters and heavy overflowing messenger bags with deep, hopeful, wondering eyes. Overweight perverted oglers who stared provocatively and sweated profusely

while acting out a variety of inappropriate self-stimulation rituals.

Sometimes Moses was so convinced of the ogler's inherent creepiness that he would spend his evening clicking through thousands of images on the Megan's Law search engine looking for a match—his attempt at modern heroics. The most haunting gazes radiated from the empty, ambiguous and grey eyes that bulged from empty hollowed-out faces. Often those expressions came from those without tickets at all, or tickets they had found on the ground. The desperate ones would try to pass off trampled dirty receipts that resembled tickets, or they would attempt to reuse "transfers" that were intended for a different line. It was these soulless eyes he understood the most. He'd had them himself once; he was sure of that. Shortie had them too.

Shortie stood out to him not only because of her dead stare, but because she was the only patron who had ever crossed the threshold of regular passenger to real life acquaintance. Shortie became special when he started seeing her at meetings; if he had never seen her at meetings, he could never have been sure any of his passengers even existed. Their five to ten seconds of interaction when he glanced at her monthly TransPass at 8:06 a.m. graduated quickly from mental Rolodex of habitual behaviors to spiritually significant.

He remembered first seeing her board at Jenkintown (stop #14); a raw smell radiated from her oily white-girl dreadlocks; her sunken skin was melting away; her cat-eye eyeliner smudged as she jittered—he identified with her down to his marrow. As different as their skin and forms appeared around their bones, they were both former junkies, or at least he was a former junkie. She was still using when Moses first saw her: scamming and scavenging. Even though she was dope sick and sweating, she would attempt to flash her "bedroom eyes," hoping for a break on the fee. He gave her more freebies than any of the others, even before he came to know her outside of his sphere; he had an unexplainable fondness for her. But on the days when she was really high, he resented her and would kick her off early. On those days Moses almost—*almost*—envied her, as she would nod into oblivion. Her whole body would sometimes hit the seatback in front of her, the sound of her forehead clapping at every stop, even if the train had coasted with deliberate and slow precision. She hit it in her ankles and neck too, places he'd never even shoot up.

"Look little Shortie, you look pretty bad today and again no ticket? I'm kick'in you off at Wayne Junction (stop # 17)."

He'd leaned down so she understood him, and he could almost smell the remnants of the dope that had entered the ant trail of dots dangerously patterned around her main artery, above the collarbone.

"Come on, come on, just one more stop. You don't understand—."

You don't understand. He would grin at this. He couldn't tell her, and he didn't want to. Besides, her gray eyes would haze over like a blind dog, and she would fall back into the haze of junkie purgatory before he could respond to her anyway. The conundrum for Moses was the awareness that he was free from the horrible life of the withdrawing apparition, yet was equally jealous that she still got to feel that first wave of warmth. Regardless, he knew in his gut that his former life, one that was buried underneath the commuter files in his mind, was never worth returning to. He embraced the structure of his job, its lack of drama, and its simplicity. Simultaneously, it provided him with a space to slowly learn how to re-integrate into the flow of the universe.

"Langhorne Next, Langhorne Next."

He had time between stops to be alone in the only semi-private space on the train and do his own gazing. In this space, separating the entrance from the platform to the train, and then the train

to the cabin, he would give himself permission to daydream before the train became impacted and bustling. These moments of solitude were priceless, and today his mind was just on her.

The day he saw her at the 4021 Club Easy Does Group, he recognized her as familiar but chose to react to her as a complete stranger. Breaching the boundary of passenger/conductor and her change in physicality from panhandler to sober-person was jarring for him. A hat covered her dreadlocks, her makeup was appropriately subtle, and her grey eyes had been replaced with sparkling blue sapphires. She appeared years younger than he assumed she was, and this made him feel a little uneasy and guilty. *Was this really her?*

“Hi, I’m Moses, I’m an addict.”

“Hi Moses.”

When it was his turn to introduce himself, the collective “Hi Moses” echoed in choral unison off the wood-paneled converted West Philadelphia home. He looked to her in this elongated moment for signs of recognition but there were none. For the entirety of the meeting, he caught only fragments of other peoples’ shares:

“I’m gonna get my son back, one day at a time, I put one foot in front of the other, they say sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly”

“God is good.”

“All the time.” (*In unison*)

“I’ve been feeling some type a way about somin...”

“I am on fucking Step Four and...”

“My cravings are not getting better, I guess I am not in the middle as they say...”

“Next stop Somerton, next stop folks.”

Moses recalled the embarrassing disappointment that had weighed on him during that meeting with an intensity and accuracy that was typically reserved for larger life moments, such as missing a pass at the most important football game of the season when you’re fifteen, or after he decided to shoot up the first time when he had promised himself he would only ever snort. On the black and white checkered tiled floor his buddy Randy, a starkly pale, white boy with a crooked spine, had whispered to him remorsefully,

“You know bro, it will never be the same again—your life I mean.”

Moses hadn’t digested the weight of that comment at the time. He was instead struck by the irony of his unlikely partner in crime, and the checkeredness of their skins paralleling the tiles of the tiny bathroom. The simple inevitability, of the relationship of lightness to darkness, the polarity, represented his addiction perfectly; he either went all the way or he didn’t, there were no grey-scaled in-betweens. He had made the decision and had felt the reddening heat come into his cheeks: a combination of ecstasy and humiliation.

The similar tugging in his gut now, over Shortie, couldn’t represent the same thing. But it was likely some brand of resentment toward her. This feeling he couldn’t place was aggravated throughout the meeting, as she continually didn’t acknowledge him with her new crystal eyes.

The meeting space was a stuffy one. A mist hung in the air like cigarette smoke in a room full of smoldering half-extinguished butts. The dust cloud in middle space haloed the heads of the circle of drug addicts. There was something dingy and oppressive about the room, the stained folding chairs and the loud maple floor. In all the meetings prior to this one, he had marveled at the life and hope contained within the space. The stories inspired him, as did the sheer survival, the honesty and authenticity of people who had once been liars, con artists and sometimes murderers. Shortie looked so clean, white and naïve. She had belonged so well on the train; he had understood

her pain then, but in the sacred space of recovery where people really had it bad, he felt she was a tourist. This distracted him, and a bitter taste began to creep from his throat into his mouth. It tasted just like dope.

Pacing the aisle between Jenkintown (stop # 14) and the Elkins Park (stop #15), he spotted a sprout of blond dreadlocks peeking over a seat facing the back of the train. This is the stop where she often boarded. *Had he been so lost in thought that he didn't even watch her board?* The train was filling in now, and he didn't make it all the way to the reversed seats before he had to return to the door and prepare the train for the next stop.

"Elkins Park, Elkins Park next."

Moses thought back to that meeting as his pulse elevated. She had spoken that day. In the pause, between shares, right before she raised her hand and introduced herself, his stomach had rumbled loudly. The groan was significant enough for his friend Joe C seated next to him to smirk. The sound of her voice was that of a siren in the gruff of the wild; the soothing and rhythmic sounds had enchanted the group, or had enchanted him. He hadn't made out a word she said that day. There were lots of "Uh huh girls" and "Share thats" but he never really listened to the content of what she was saying. He was struggling to keep her in the catalogue and, therefore, not really know her. Moses had even thrown out a "Say it, Shortie," feigning his appreciation of her private thoughts and struggles. His pre-pubescent reaction to her was confusing yet felt inevitable; Moses had no idea what it meant or what he was longing for, but her simple acknowledgement of him might have resolved it all.

"Fern Rock Transportation Center, Fern Rock."

His walk down the aisle was hurried and almost panicked. The guilt of what he had done after that meeting, and the weeks following, when she had appeared at almost every meeting he attended, threatened to compromise his crafted, conductorly disposition. He had abused the time between stops with his daydreaming and was falling behind schedule. However, he had to say hello to her; he was convinced that confirming her eyes were still crystal blue and clear would resolve all of his building anxiety.

"Hey there Shortie, long time no see—"

"Sir, excuse me, *Sir!*" A hand tugged at the back of his blue piped uniformed leg before he could finish greeting her. She might not even have heard him. He hadn't seen the hand coming because he was in the reverse seating section. A slight vertigo overcame him as he turned back around to respond to the commuter. Riding backward is always unnatural. They were approaching the city now. The buildings were funneling closer on either side through the windows, creating the illusion of twilight approaching, even though it was actually morning—as if someone had hit the rewind button. In the time he could have been saying hello to Shortie, Moses had instead had to explain to a confused commuter that he would have to pay for a transfer in order to take the subway at the next stop. Moses had lost his rhythm. For a conductor, the pace and accuracy of a run functions much like the repetitive base riff of a classic jazz song. Although it is chugging along in the background of the song, subtly and almost undetectable, the riff is an essential component of the song. Without this backbone, the rest of the melody sounds empty. Dominated by treble. Distorted—off tune.

On the days he missed the very precise timing of his announcements or when he didn't have enough time to collect all the tickets, Moses felt like an incomplete song. Heading back to the door to prepare for the coast into the next station's platform, he was obsessing about getting himself back on track. Then he did something he had never done before on the train, he tripped. The moment

was preceded by a loud crunch and pop (the startling pop of a car tire running over a milk carton) and then down he went, his right foot slipping first toward the door, then his left. It was a graceful skid, one that allowed enough time to hear a collective gasp from the more alert passengers. When he finally stopped sliding he found himself with his heels against the door and the culprit, an empty Aquafina bottle, neatly attached to the arch of his booted right foot. Moses cursed under his breath. That bottle had been floating around the cabin for weeks, haunting him. His failure to take the time to clean it up had resulted in the uncomfortable embarrassment he had just suffered, and now he heard the passengers one by one chime in:

“You okay sir?”

“Damn! Ole’ head busted his ass!”

“Take it easy man.”

“Do you need help? —Someone help him for God’s sake!”

He brushed himself off, waving away the multiple hands extended to him, and in an act reminiscent of his former aggressive, less-composed self, he kicked the squashed bottle. When he did so, he forgot that the bottle would now remain a floating hazard.

The episode had cost him; he had run out of time to check on Shortie and had to manage the large influx at Fern Rock (stop #17). Fern Rock, although it has no ticket office, acts as an interchange of six different transportation lines from which one can reach virtually any place in Philadelphia. The earth’s magnetic field can be charted in what some mystics refer to as ley lines or power points. These points can be mapped on the earth’s surface and are thought to cluster in places of spiritual significance. Moses had overheard a discussion about the ley lines in Harry’s Occult Shop, a store he had visited that very day after he had first seen Shortie at 4021. Although it hadn’t occurred to him today, often he had thought that if train stations charted their own version of a cosmic map, Fern Rock would have the most concentrated intersection of ley lines.

Fern Rock marks the official transition of suburbia to megalopolis. The perpetually dimly lit station is by no means ornate. Overhead catenary lines dominate the sky scape and there are three platforms, two islands and one side platform that welcome several regional rail lines and the subway. Each of these structured tiers cast angular shadows on the others, so that when the passengers wait for the train, it always appears to be twilight. There is a bus stop, and a large, always-full parking lot. The surrounding area is a poor, albeit stable, community. 1920’s-style row homes in poor condition line the streets surrounding the station. The incoming foot traffic is always hurried and aggressive, and the passengers are always at odds. Just as Moses climbed behind the last passenger, he suddenly found himself held up.

“What’s the hold up Bud?”

“Some kid spilled his coffee everywhere,” a large square shouldered and tailored back responded to him, without even turning around. The timing would be off by a few minutes now, and Moses would have even less time to make it to the back of the car to visit with Shortie.

While kicking the empty coffee cup and other abandoned objects under the seat to clear the aisle (not including the bottle from earlier), he caught just a glimpse of his usual round face and five-o-clock shadow. Now it was framed by abandoned broken warehouse floating by in the background. But then he honed in on something. He had to squint across a row of bobbing millennial teenage boys to see it, but etched into the dirty glaze of the window across his reflection was the word *cursed*.

There was nothing really strange about etched graffiti in train windows—Moses had memorized most of the etch art on several of his runs, but now he had his last visit to the witchcraft apothecary, Harry's Occult Shop, on his mind.

After his regular Monday and Wednesday meetings, Moses would head over to the Market Street Subway line then transfer to the Broad Street Subway, get off at Broad and South, and navigate by foot the cracked cement of the run down sidewalk. As he would every week, on his way to Caribbean Delight (a food hut he frequented), he would pass the gigantic familiar mural plastered on the sidewall of Harry's Occult Shop.

The mural's focal point is a twelve-foot tall masculine angel, with a blurred out face and wings that span the entire length of the row-home style building. The faceless alabaster angel has a fist raised into a pump, while his other hand holds a long staff topped with a cross. Covering the bottom half of the angel, so that it looks as if he is rising out of it, is a gothic stained-glass window. The window is impressively saturated in color and is an extremely believable depiction for spray paint, on which is painted a pictorial of a black Jesus. Jesus is holding the same staff as the angel above him, but also cradles a small white lamb—a lamb that Moses had caught himself associating with Shortie. Below this icon-esque window, where South would be located on a compass, is a large slithery and intricate graphitized word. A word Moses has never been able to decode. In each quadrant where N, E & W directionals might be, there are also three other words similar in style, but these are also still illegible to him. In the top right corner, faded, and obviously existing years prior to the contemporary religious tribute, is the sign for Harry's. In vintage typography and white lettering the words "Since 1917, Harry's Occult Shop, We Aim To Help" are easy to overlook.

Typically the scent, traveling several blocks from the Caribbean joint, would make Moses start to think about what he would order when he arrived there. But the hours following his sighting of Shortie at the meeting, triggered at the first sight of the mural, instead gave him a distinct and disturbing full body hunger. After several years sober, he had been fairly confident that he would never return to the temptress sauce that enslaved him for so long. But for some reason now, an urgency, much like that he battled in detox and isolation, overtook him. The craving wasn't like a typical dope craving though. He had been meeting with his sponsor, going to meetings, following the book—all of his actions, from a psychological perspective, indicated he would never return to his habit. He was taught that most relapses start long before the user succumbs to his or her addiction (they are planned, anticipated, or are part of a gradual decline in behavior), but this compulsion was sudden: an undeserved attack: an assault on his psyche. Shortie's failure to recognize him at their first encounter outside of the train had unsettled and flustered him. Somewhere inside himself Moses was becoming convinced that their encounters were significant, a sign of something larger than the train, or his sobriety, or their contrasting colors. Stunned by his own vulnerability and sudden loss of appetite, he sought comfort in the shop. He walked into the unassuming chime-adorned door as if he had always intended to go in.

On that first visit to the store, his eyes had adjusted slowly, just as they do when walking out of the brightly lit outdoors into a dark and cluttered space. The store was larger than he had imagined, three or four rows of stack style bookshelves occupied the center of the cement-walled interior. The walls on either side were lined with occult shop staples: powders, candles shaped like clawed hands or women's bodies, cone-incense, hollowed out skulls, tarot cards, pentagram jewelry and lizard-skinned pipes. There was no counter or salesperson in sight. As he stepped further into the shop to inspect the inventory of Santeria paraphernalia, Moses felt both ridiculous and intrigued; Ridiculous, because he could still imagine himself talking smack and loitering with

his old boys on the corner where he used to hustle. Before his habit had humbled him, he would have openly balked at such a store, perhaps even stopped in to heckle the owner, for no other reason than to show off to his friends and to be a smart ass. However, the part of him that was intrigued he attributed to “softening” as he dried out over time, but also to his earliest recollections of his mother.

Although she died before he was even an adolescent, his most vivid and recurrent memories of her were her rituals, wherein she would light candles and hum hymns in a corner of the house that resembled an altar. Although his childhood was hazy, the iconographic photos of Saint Mary that his plump and devote mother would pray to were still graphic imprints in his mind.

“God is good,” she would say. Her dark eyes and skin would glow from the match she would be lighting, and she would turn to him for the correct response.

“All the time, Momma, all the time.”

Moses never inherited his mother’s faith, even though he recognized his survival was a miracle. He believed in the tangible, Good Orderly Direction, his work, the massive power of the earth, blackness, and steel machinery—like the train. Although he believed himself to have no faith at all, especially not his mother’s deity, he had been brainwashed by his attendance at countless meetings that he must believe and depend on *something* in order to stay sober. So he supplemented his perceived faithlessness with something he thought to be distinct from it, and that was superstition. Much of his superstition was subtle. His mental catalogue of passengers, for example, seemed much more compulsive and methodic than superstitious. However, there was an underlying causality. Although it was not always obvious even to Moses, it was intrinsic to his need to continue keeping tabs on everyone. Simply, if he did not keep them ingrained in his brain they might not go on, or he might not—either or. On some deep level, he believed that his commitment to memorizing them somehow affected their existence. It would never occur to him consciously that it was possible that the collapse of this system, enacted by Shortie’s agency outside of it, was what was tearing him apart and provoking his cravings.

“Wayne Junction next folks, Waaaaayyyne Junction.”

Moses had barely recovered from his fall and the spilled coffee setback as he opened the door at Wayne Junction (stop#18) for the boarding passengers. He squinted and stood on the tips of his toes to make sure he could still identify the dreadlocks peeking out of the seatback at the other end of the car. They were still there, and he felt reassured that he had time to get back on track *and* get to check on her before she would get off. This suspended animation of the outline of her body at the back of the train convinced him that she wasn’t sober anymore. Her stilled posture must equate to her nodding out.

“Brother, kyan I help? I am yahso in de back.”

The counter of the shop was oddly positioned in the rear of the store, and Moses hadn’t even noticed it. He had been entranced by an array of bath salts in glass test tubes on a rack on the wall; one tube was a cleanse for wealth, another for passion, and most were for vague notions or trivial states of being, like “weightlessness.” Moses followed the accented voice to the back of the store. Moses wasn’t surprised to find a bald, deeply wrinkled man whose posture was bad and whose ethnicity was hard to determine. He had an islander-esque accent, but Moses could not determine where he was from. Something about the man was authentically peculiar and enchanting, just like the shop itself.

“Brother, why is dat you are yahso? If you is lookin’ for Janis she isn’ doin’ readings today—she has de gout. Besides her clients, I know every face dat come in here, puttin’ away for di tourists, but

I know dem faces too. You be looking for a specific spell?”

Moses acted as if it was completely natural to request a spell from a stranger in order to cast out the unbearable craving that had been provoked a few hours earlier. What felt like moments later, Moses had found himself eating his favorite beef pie at Caribbean Delight while staring at the black bag of powders and candles across the table from him as if it were a long lost brother. *Why not?* There was no reason not to follow through on the old man’s incantation and subsequent instructions. Superstition compelled Moses, but the augur’s warning of dire consequences should he not follow the directions precisely disturbed him. Intellectually, he understood the ridiculousness of the spell, the money sought by the man at the counter, and mostly his own pathetic desperation. Emotionally, he was unspun—as he had during most of his active addiction—he acted out of panic.

“Temple University Next, Temple”

The college students always line up at the front of the train car preemptively as it is still moving. Moses typically prepares by limiting ticket collection to the front car after Wayne Junction (stop #18) and waiting in-between the doors so as not to get stuck behind the rush once the twenty-somethings begin getting up to de-board. For this reason, he again could not reach the back car in time to see her. While standing on the platform ushering out the anxious students and chanting “West Trenton Local to University City,” he again returned to thoughts of the previous months. After first seeing Shortie, and having the spell cast that evening, he had continued to see her at what felt like every meeting he attended, and she continued to not recognize him. Once she was clear and sober and someone that Moses resented, he failed to see her on the train at all. However, as time passed it was as if Moses had not wanted really to be recognized at all. When he spotted her in fresh clothes and new outfits he would seat himself in the rear of the meeting or what his sponsor would refer to as “the aisle of denial” or “inventory row.” He would keep his fellowshipping after the meetings brief and skirt out quickly under the guise of resting up for his early morning shifts. He would rather reject her than be rejected. In the meantime, he diligently followed the spell, yet his cravings for drugs only worsened.

He had waited patiently for the waning moon, and when it arrived, he loyally returned to Harry’s Occult Shop for the second stage of the “incantation.” The old man was out on the day he promised to say the incantation, and Janis hurried through the customized blessing that had been promised. Before she allowed him to leave the store, she pitched him on the power her personal readings could have in his life. Despite the declining reputation of the shop and the spell, Moses was determined to follow it through to the end. On the day of his regular 4021 Club Easy Does It meeting, which was the same day he needed to return to the shop to purchase the Macutos, or the amulet that he was to carry with him always, Shortie was not at the meeting. This did not particularly disturb him, but as he made his commute toward South Street, he was overcome with an intense relief. The peace that overcame him as he rode as a passenger himself on the subway to Broad and South was intoxicating, and the awareness came that he no longer had the urge to get high. The underground safe lights of the subway tunnel flashed in his peripheral, and it occurred to him that perhaps the spell was truly working.

“Market East Station, The Gallery at Market East.”

The time between Temple University (stop #19) and Market East Station (stop #20) was approximately six minutes, one of the more lengthy distances between stops. Before stepping into the car to begin his descent into his rapid ticket collection routine, and with the intention of finally putting to rest his curiosity and facing Shortie, he instinctively reached into his left pocket to fondle the amulet. Rolling the blue and white beaded Macutos shell between his first and second fingers

had become second nature almost instantly. He had continued to reach for it even on days after having thrown the amulet away into the tracks between the narrow dark crevice that separates the train and the platform at University City (stop # 23—the final stop). He had felt particularly guilty that day about the absence of Shortie. His compulsion to throw it away had come on suddenly between shifts, and he had acted rashly. He began to suspect he was somehow responsible for her disappearance. Maybe the spell was casting *her* out.

Returning to his duties with an uncomfortable shudder and with increasing fear of the potential consequences of the broken spell, he made his way down the aisle. Moses even had enough time to check in with his regulars, make mental notes about their changes, comment to them, and nod and smile. His timing was impeccable and with just a few minutes to spare he had reached the reverse cabin and the head that he assumed belonged to Shortie. Tapping each aisle end with his palms lightly and alternating his right and left hand, he slowed to a stop when arriving at her back. Just as he was about to round her left shoulder and look down to see her eyes, he stopped himself. The head did not seem to sense his presence, it did not turn and was motionless, stuck in the very same position it had been when he first became aware of it.

“30th Street Station Next, 30th Street.”

The Trobaritz

translated by Claudia Keelan

EN UN VERGIER SOTZ FUELLA D'ALBESPI

Under the Green Leave of the Thorn Tree

Balada
(anonymous)

Under the green leaves of the thorn tree
A girl holds a boy by her side
And when the guard sees the sun rise
Oh God, uh- oh God, the night flies

Let what's Endless keep our dark alive
And my guy for now by my side
Let the guard miss the sun's rise,
And what is god, Our God, slow the night's fly

Beautiful man trope, let's do it, you and I
Down in the green where little birds sing
Though sex is where they say we die
And God, oh God! Swat the night's fly

Lovely serial love, we'll play new games
Down in the green where the little birds sing
Until the guard blows the whistle
And God, oh God, the night flies

What air comes from death
From my many manmade men
I have drunk centuries of his breath
And God, oh God, the night is day's fly

The girl consents to her descent,
Her face forever in magazines
Swears to love only You, the precedent
And God, oh God, the night flies

QUANT LO GILOS ER FORA

Balada

(When the Husband is Away)

(anonymous)

When the husband is away

Beautiful boy

Come to me

A dance a groove so sweet

When the husband is away

I play to you for free

When the husband.....

Singing notes complete

You first sang to me

One night into the day

When the husband...

Love, if you I find

When the husband

In the room made with you in mind

When the husband...

We'll do more than kiss

Since I could freely die

In your words the other day

When the husband....

So the green man bully

He's the husband

Or beats and clubs me fully

He's the husband...

He won't defeat me

I love just you or not

My heart is yours for free

When the husband...

A L'ENTRADE DEL TENS CLAR

At the Start of Spring

Balada

(anonymous)

At the start of Spring--*la la*
To begin again in joy--*la la*
Her envy left to things or Kings--*la la*
Regina begins to show
The Tao of her desire.
To life, to this paradise
Leave us, leave us,
Dancing together, together

She's called everyone--*la la*
From the land to the sea--*la la*
All new girls and boys--*la la*
To come to her for free
To dance the happy dance.
To life, to this paradise
Leave us, leave us
Dancing together, together

Roy comes from another where--*la la*
To destroy what he'll never share—*la la*
The April Queen Regine-- *la la*
The dance, the sex
Stolen freely from the air.
To life, to this paradise
Leave us, leave us
Dancing, dancing together

King Roy can't wreck her or the dance--*la la*
Regina only breaks--*la la*
For love, for real trance--*la la*
For the perfect boy whose touch
Is god's mist, sun's-hair, divinity's fuck
To life, to this paradise
Leave us, leave us
Dancing, dancing together

See how she is dancing then—la la
All mist all sun all god began—la la
We who share her now have been—la la
Inside a day made whole again
Inside Regina's new found body.
To life, to this paradise
Leave us, leave us,
Dancing together, together

The Trobairitz were women poets, the wives and daughters of the lords of Occitania, who lived and wrote between the years of 1150-1250. While the lives of the Troubadours are widely known, both through their own poems and the *Vidas* of medieval historians whose writings survived, the biographical details and many of the poems of the Trobairitz were destroyed during the Albigensian crusade, when French crusaders massacred the heretical Christians living in the south of France, where the Trobairitz lived and wrote. During their lives, Occitania was a varied mix of territories which welcomed many different peoples and thought, importing music and poetry from sophisticated Al-Andalusia to the South, France and Europe to the North, and exotic Byzantium to the East.¹ Girls between the ages of 12-16 who had been sold into “good marriages,” the Trobairitz were the Lady to whom the Troubadour devoted his love. “She” obviously understood the nature of her role in the feudal system, as did the itinerant poet troubadours who relied on the lord--the lady's husband--liking his song for his patronage. Writing--or performance in music, as we are not certain that the poems were written or performed--in the highly ritualized forms of *fin amour*, or courtly love, the poems of the Trobairitz are the first living examples of the Lady speaking as a historical subject instead of as a historical object. While scholars had debated the actual existence of these women for centuries, it wasn't until 1976 that Meg Bogin published a translation in English of what has since become the known Trobaritz corpus, which included several anonymously authored poems assumed to be written by Trobairitz. The poems published in this edition of *Volt* are also anonymous, and appeared originally as transliterations in Carol Nappholz' *Unsung Women*, a critical study of the anonymous female voices in Troubadour poetry. While many of the poems of the Trobairitz are debate poems called *Tensos* and involve more than one voice, the **Balada and Dansa** are poems in a single voice.

¹Figueras, Montserrat et al. *Le Royaume Oublié—La Tragedie Cathare*: Bellaterra: Spain. 2010. Print.

Rebecca Lehmann

Westward Expansion

In the saw-toothed western
days we manipulated the land,
drove ore and timber into mud.
The darkness was a tea
we brewed each morning,
the morning a rash of fever-pink
clouds at the horizon. There came
wasps, plastering nests
in the canvas folds of tents,
and coyotes slinking through
weathered garbage heaps.
A motor is one thing, a human
hand another. We tried to hide
our black-stained lips with
quaking fingers. Don't tell me
how you learned your letters.
In the kingdom of god each man
is illiterate. The militancy
of progress is many handed
and travels in a penetrating line,
ever star-ward. Land spreads
like a whore's legs, and the insem-
inating force dwells in each of us,
danger-blown like a fire. We
caravanned through surveyed land.
We followed the whims of the map.
A whale made of grass breached
the horizon. It dared us to recollect
the thousand bones choking the mother-
mouth of the sea, that fecund other.
We ran from the private hairs
of her waves, across muscled days,
into the bowels of the continent,
the wind tonguing our faces,
the rain offering no eco-baptism.

Brian Lucas

Morning Stun

My home
 a metal nest
hums as I lactate

The sun
stares down my throat
plants children in my belly
their radars wreaking havoc
 with my transmitter

In the center of my body
is a mountain where static is grown
 I have developed a way around this morass
by floating in a moat to the other side
its greasy trees and dull shade
future luxury for plastic eyes

There's something wrong
with my mind when I speak
glaciers whittle down
to nubs when I stop thinking
I can hear stars
activate my nerves
 they allow me
the aroma of what's to come

Spools of Jeers

Come and see me breathe
in fact, breathe with me

Those who oppose me shall
mate with my worst aspects
the tentacle at the end of my hole
the lens-size hole in my heart
my laughter filled with bone saliva

The boat has left and I'm holding its udder
my palps aflame as I exit the box
on orders from innermost swirl
aura pummeled by assassin

Come see me give birth to a password
in fact, pass into this with me
shine but only
when I cry real spools of jeers
those spectral germs dipped in aether

Come see me breathe into lamb balloon
my crystal eye versus your mental throb
And here language burrows into reflecting pools
coughs up a nighttime tuned to abrupt dust

I stood in line with my ticket to a lost cause
they refunded me to myself
in a currency made of roses and hair

In the gleam and glow outside my door
I spied the maid bending over
her quim-labyrinth god welcomes

Quiet mandrake puzzles set out at noon
wheel of fern aflame this ashen buzz
in subtones where a question is stained
with the answer embedded in white churn

In hands filled with blood
the language of spores
conducted by eclipse in animal form
he told me it tastes like an aquatic dog
failing of a lost species
hands washed in black suns
its be'ebbed and diminished throne

Telepathic Bones

(excerpt)

I have *your* eyes
mine are scattered
throughout
an emerald cavern
veined with
every known form of
unreality
 a toxic germ
close to surface
disguised
as dense equation
 tactile maze
inhabited everyday

The last hurrah
of all that is known
 is now
within system's marrow
is collapse
 collective nod in unison
repeated indefinitely
I am emerald green
veined with catalysts
an all-seeing eye
 burned to a crisp

They found one part
of my brain
in the recent excavation
of a solar lodge

 From the other half
has sprung a tree

Alessandra Lynch

mothers said

mothers said:

van means evanescence means the planet will
evaporate his cruddy hand will
yank you in he will tie you with his yo-yo
string pack your mouth with magazines

gas-scum leaking-oil rot city sludge
mothers said: evanescence wears
a banished scent you draw back from that whiff
of him bottle-cap eyes and slit grin pink
rattling dashboard chains mothers said: look
around every bend every swing of road
for a blue van black van what's windowless scare fast

from the sky sulphuring itself he won't refuse
his impulse but make refuse of your flowers
incinerating rainbows and lunchpails
little shoes dirty lace patent-scuff
ditched like black tires approximately size 6
bloom-rot won't vanish mothers said
quickly dropping their faces.

Anthony Madrid

I AM YOUR SLAVE NOW DO WHAT I SAY

EASILY impressed is easily fooled, and easily fooled is often. I would have my Coffin carved from a tree in which no songbird ever perched.

What is thy body but a swallowing grave or a chew on a leaf of lettuce?
Being a girl has its advantages. I am your slave; now do what I say.

Last day of May but one and it's | the bottom of the ninth. We
Split open the Big Bad Wolf, but the girl inside was very strange . . .

The girl who stepped out from that chassis was not | the same as the one who went in.
This new one got into Northwestern and majored in International Finance.

“The Princess is always in it for the pea”? That's cute, but it's fairly misleading.
Verily I say unto you: It's the *pea* that was doing the thinking.

L'objet petit a! L'objet petit a! Uppity little MacGuffin. You
Control the minds of the nation's youth. You lash them ever upwards . . .

They all gonna die a thousand years old, rich and covered in sugar. But isn't it
Better to eat it like MARLOWE, twenty-nine and a knife in the brain—?

Twenty-nine and a knife in the brain before he could lose his lack of faith.
Oh! if only the same fate could have been visited upon Rochester!

And what is your solution, Shmendrick Numskull?
Sitting there like a mermaid, legs tucked off to the side . . .

You IDENTIFY with Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger—but as for me,
I'm *through* with these wise men who smile and condescend.

Siwar Masannat

Pastoral Interview

What is causality,
For x to lead to y? What
Is loss of land?

*A morning dew, then
Dismantled home to house
To tent. A process*

Am not privy to.
What is it that works?
An olive orchard, grapes, lots

Of tomatoes, grown to taste.
How do you move with both arms
Broken, fingernails pulled?

I walk.

Pastoral Interview

Why stoop to kiss this doorstep?

*When land brought to pause disregard
The scriptural view of earth. It is fallacious.*

This wind here not intruding on earth surface.

Ishmael is only a man from away.

Fadia, are you too woman, small & significant?

No goat-hair tent here but house of brick & concrete.

This house not of guns, but of you.

Kate Menzies

[From] Interviews With White

the blind rage of children running down the hill their red legs
kicking like an infestation chewing up the flesh of the streets
draining the world of its blue

the eye was flat but gelatinous like a coin that had been skinned
the outside was rubbery and calmed and salty dead on the wet
deck spray coming up from the moving water threatened by the
hemorrhage of cranberry red and blue

they hoarded around the dull minded river like wolves it was
1906 in the clay slab summer of Missouri their faces glistening like
rubies and they dunked themselves fiercely into the water so that
I stuck to their skin they were howling irises inside a newly grown
eyeball

I eat water like a parasite eats its host drying its wet heart with my
bony suckers and I land on her chest and drink down the clean of
her until all my orifices look like crystal rings

I cannot be killed I grow like a weed determined to poke earth slab
swallow your plans and close the throat watch my long bearded tail
behind me dropping feathers over the land like pips

There is nothing high enough in calories to keep me alive thought is
the only thing dense enough when the hands of an orgasm fill with
milk and the brain floats away when you are terrified I am feasting
like a florescent animal

I don't know to whom I belong it's been too long to know for sure
I'm very old so I am related to water and most fish I am also related
to the guillemot's egg we have the same precarious curve in our
personalities & it can be hard to pick up on our mood change that
curls like the pink of a nostril but it's there

I feel like I am being called by my full name like the raw wool of fog is giving me a bed to rest I am a lie only those who have risked something know what its like to really love something to understand what's at stake the scaring of mothers after they have their first child or someone who loses a limb when they dream they have their leg back

every day I am glad when dusk comes because the world leans into itself folding in all its creatures like paper each of them with glazed eyes of relief that another hunt is behind them

Richard O. Moore

CHECK POINT

“Lord, when shall we be done changing?”

Herman Melville – letter to Nathaniel

Hawthorne, November 17, 1851

Assembled in faded garments of our words
a century’s splintered aftermath
tabbed for retrieval pressed
between the mind’s eye and the heart’s desire
a collision of forgetfulness
and a desperate “need to know”
without compassion meaning
collapses like a wall whose building
has been bombed rubble falls in upon itself
lodged in the debris of particulars
disposable truths : political reality : nothing
flows easily : not water : not fire
not even our sacred envelope of air.

We have brought our bloodland ways
into a century we shall not outlive
opened sores upon this body of earth

Aomori · Augsburg · Baedeker Blitz · Bahrain · Barrow-in-Furness · Belfast · Belgrade · Berlin ·
Birmingham · Braunschweig · Bremen · Breslau · Brighton · Bristol · Bucharest · Budapest · Caen
· Calcutta · Cardiff · Chemnitz · Chişinău · Chongqing · Clydebank · Cologne · Coventry · Danzig
· Darmstadt · Darwin · Dresden · Dublin · Duisburg · Düsseldorf · Essen · Foggia · Frampol ·
Frankfurt · Frascati · Fukui · Fukuoka · Fukuyama · Gelsenkirchen · Gibraltar · Gifu · Greenock ·
Guangzhou · Haifa · Hamamatsu · Hamburg · Hanau · Heilbronn · Helsinki · Hildesheim · Hiratsuka
· Hiroshima · Hull · Innsbruck · Kaiserslautern · Kassel · Kobe · Königsberg · Kure · Leipzig ·
Liverpool · London · Lübeck · Mainz · Malta · Manchester · Manila · Mannheim · Minsk · Mito ·
Munich · Nagaoka · Nagasaki · Nagoya · Naha · Nanjing · Naples · Narva · Nottingham · Numazu ·
Nuremberg · Omuta · Osaka · Pearl Harbor · Pforzheim · Ploiesti · Plymouth · Podgorica · Prague
· Rabaul · Remscheid · Rome · Rothenburg ob der Tauber · Rotterdam · Saarbrücken · Salzburg ·

Schaffhausen · Schwäbisch Hall · Schweinfurt · Sendai · Shanghai · Sheffield · Shizuoka · Singapore ·
Sofia · Southampton · Stalingrad · Stettin · Stuttgart · Swansea · Taipei · Tallinn · Tel Aviv · Thessaloniki
· Tokyo · Toyama · Toyohashi · Treviso · Tsu · Ujijamada · Ulm · Vienna · Warsaw · Wesel · Wieluń ·
Wuppertal · Würzburg · Yawata · Yokohama · Zadar · Zagreb

Area bombardment · Aerial bombing of cities · Terror bombing · V-weapons

Into a void always on download
faith into faith all structures of belief
trembling not one wall left unshaken.

Say, “Tea kettle or dying animal”
rhetoric against the house arrest
of age nettle sting of memory
that in an old man loses out to sleep.

What is the past but a failed retrieval
of what at the time seemed relevant and true
arriving through a tangle of dendrites
an invasion of beta-amyloid as reported
in The New York Times and hardening to dogma
– mumble mumble mumble pop –
at last you have explained it all.

“If I want the door to turn
the hinges must stay put.”
not that a life depends upon it
but that it works that way the door
remains closed and the hinges quiet.
A wolf within escapes his chain
and shows his teeth and claims his turf.

“Set keel to breakers,” that optimistic metaphor
and with it the voyage itself until a full circle of the horizon
reveals nothing as in fog this blindness is my inheritance
marginal at best mostly memory and flat-out inability
a distorting lens as with a winter’s storm that hurls water
against the west-facing windows obliterating hillside
ocean and a bent wild gesturing tree
at one time I would have walked the cliff pretending
to be closer to the event but not now I’d stumble
into another metaphor : Old Man Lost in a Storm.

Gimbal broken and the compass lost
a different equilibrium arrives off-center
and never for a frozen moment real
but grown tipsy with reality an overdose of self
with fluid navigation points, false poles
of a non-navigable world.

It is a misdirected enterprise to call upon the dead for wisdom
we have their words but the speakers are just that: dead
along with their enfeebled gods and ghostly shrines
yet the sword slices the same meat of the same animal
that fought at Troy and the ghost that rushes from us is the same.

We have our seasons and our instruments of perishable joy
our shadow metaphysic of the transient soul
our virtual realities dislodge the arbitrary gods.
We build our temples with the stones at hand.

delete 7

So mon lecteur if you insist upon truth at least admit that it must be made up not lying there in wait like a golf ball or an explorer with vision just before death in turn made up by a biographer whose mind was made up before the first sight of snow freedom is all you've got poor thing watch how the local *supermercado* appears infinite to the explorers to those with little or nothing at all : your famine is on TV and what if your *truths* insist upon equality where are you then in the made-up language tour? Cruelty and self-destroying pain need not be delivered by your hand to work their best there are always others for that job "they do it to themselves" is what you'll say yesterdays truths are physics out of date and unemployable but for the moment relax and look outside : storms "batter" the north coast spousal abuse Poseidon Slugs Mother Earth not exactly : Poseidon no longer sells although Odysseus under many an alias is alive as any of the written-up immortals on the page meanwhile attend to the morning shopping list check out TV for rape earthquake and war oh! And don't forget sports with its mortgage points they cost money and why not you'll pay : the ball is in your court dearie decide on a leveraged forehand or an overhead smash too late! the ball that you let go just caught the line its game at love the umpire says and little mirror-face if this won't choke your chicken you'll need a taleteller like Shaun or the other one Shem for after all you are the living breathing tongue-tied son thereof what? Ho? Those bats have come again to show just *you* the entry/ exit of what may become your only shelter a survival kit is what you'll need but it won't last long comprised as it is of old assumptions dead you'll need new words for night and strangers armed with all that you don't have switch-a-rooney : tonight's game is the Barbarians versus the Hunkers as a fan watches for rats beneath the seats it adds a certain edge as the pawns are moved : robed Sisters of Mercy care for this crowd long past their hour of bedtime leave theology for what gets trashed avoid contamination the plague changes in fashion tb aids : your flaming cross shows off fresh metal teeth.

delete 9

You keeper of coins and keys press on with that cart one wheel not tracking hard to steer pick up some beer some bread some low-fat cheese and split this market for the great and green outdoors : a fast track stimulus/response has brought this jay that you see to this specific tree troubles you doesn't it that you matter not one feather to that bird : mon voyeur : my Wordsworth : please don't mutter teleology like a heathen spell it ill becomes you to speak in tongues all tied together in one noisy lot like jays but hey! comparisons don't wash today so don't be frightened if the walls seem greener than they were before a rainy Tuesday you may recall but that word's not important what's in a name? not much but maybe more than you'll admit like your passport picture that can't possibly be you with that silly smile : nameless you do a modern kind of harm move-on old tool-user to the next aisle it's clear that a balanced checkbook exchange will not turn this trick flatten the hills straighten the curves be intimate as earth and air : nonsense once again : it is hard to make way against history's unfocused projection for instance who have you invited for diner tonight? A month ago you wrote a name down on your shopping list so much happens between then and now you live with what doesn't care a fig for you floods and earthquakes for starters and there's always the fire you learned in childhood metaphysical flames it's not that you're separate from nature it's just that nature is all you have to live with now : at birth you saw it as the enemy now it's you and all those other mammals so much like you most of them worse off in your popular mechanics commercial for the earth new birth is not an odds-on favorite here you cohabit with the jay a continuum of accident and necessity now the jays have flown to another tree the noises you make little drummer are all noises that have been heard before time for a new tune that can't be played on the old drums but don't expect folks to give up their loyalties their comfort level when they hear your latest noise it is of course the same old tune only distorted reserved : tell me tom or tad or two-penny-tush does anyone understand you enough to say you're selling a scam a fraud although you call it the secret of life?

A P A R T F R O M I T

“...No, it is impossible to convey the life-sensation
of any given epoch of one’s existence...”

Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*

The angel of memory is forgetful,
does not keep score, but plays the game
as if all existence is at stake,
as if every waking is the first
to break the freeze-frame
moments, all frozen smiles
and tintype mimicry, fading
come daylight, so quickly gone.

Keeper of fiction as the pure event,
an angelic imperfection of a perfect game,
the aeroplane in the box of Cracker Jack.

Never the closer for the saying of it,
locked into freedom, a universe of one
arrested, imprisoned in time past.

Hillcrest, stucco, French doors and garage, fireless cooker; an entry into the new century, certain to be the most glorious. The Yanks will make the difference. Wheat will win the War. Patriotism has a patent on prosperity, just wait and see. The Yanks will encamp in Washington, the Bonus Army, but that’s getting ahead of the story, times were good before the fall. From the sleeping porch in the new house, new everything, a child heard a scream. “Go to sleep. It was only a rabbit, probably an owl got it.” Ever after, he was poised for flight. “Too delicate for his own good.” Such was the verdict of the doctor, the neighborhood, his school; his parents were perplexed – “Nothing seems to be going right, the job, the house, the child” – a premonition easily fulfilled in 1929. The loudest voice, the auctioneer’s. Home became a matter of month to month rent, a pursuit of anything that paid. The family disappeared under that weight. On the road in broke America. The rumor of jobs was mileage on the road. South to Hamilton. North to St. Joe. East to

Connecticut. South to Ohio again. Southeast to Asheville. Far west to Albuquerque, all the way to L.A. Tuberculosis took over a mother's life. Travel toward a never defined western dream became a daily hope, along with prayer and healing rituals, alien foods and sputum cups. Life held for another seven on-the-run years ending in LA and a mother's final hemorrhage. Not prayer nor any belief in country or in god survived that fugitive year.

Face it. There is no getting away from it.
The back roads are packed with waiting sensors.
A spider in my cap panicked and ran.

A church doorway suggested a way out.
Inside, the eye of God reflected candles.
And a mother dead from TB.

An event "not lived through" and therefore
Not found in life. Don't tell me that again!
A slippery metaphysic – the eye of God –

In the narrow daylight of a needle's eye
Reflected intimations never met.
Unreal and sexual at the core of it.

A spider in my hair panicked and ran
But it was only memory
And nightmares past.

There were other lives to be imitated, perhaps to be lived. Ancestry vanished like a glacier into the sea. There was nothing that was not new or stolen. There were shoes to be tested, paths to be walked. Fainting from hunger, possessed of a larger hunger for the years to come.

Who pauses to remember?

A further estrangement
in the midst of chance.

Evening swallows in saw-tooth flying
warn us of night's advance by crying.

They leave although they crowd the sky
no cut or imprint where they fly.

Upon the air each flick of wing
is an accomplished fragile thing,

But grace and art too soon give way
to the exhaustion of the day.

Light gone, the swallows end their flight,
abandoned, we must face the night.

North by northeast into the permafrost, the climate change of age. We are as rhizomes tangled and holding fast, then let go, never let go, moved beyond to other latitudes and temperatures of place until, deep into the fiction of a “taking place,” a darker fiction of identity takes hold, ever directed toward the end of it.

Old Man, breathe-in your daily ration of
sweet air before the wobbly column tumbles:
nine decades, stacked and placed off center,
your building blocks, before the metaphor
collapses to chit-chat evidence of life;
your legs will not support this pilgrimage
admit that this is now and recognize
that this is real as it will ever get.

And then what? The sum of “that which is the case”
becomes a salvaged fiction of the real,
a distillations of belief, held
hard in the indifferent embrace
of chance and circumstance, harder still
in life’s divine, obliterating love.

Laura Mullen

Impossible Arrows

“Otto, you are awfully good at building things, but there seems to be something strange about their construction.”

“It’s fun making the possible impossible, but some of my creations have turned out to be pretty ugly.”

The man in an impossible window thinks about an impossible cube. The sides of this cube seem to twist in a paradoxical way, and this room has a strange extension. Everything seems to be at the same level, but at the same time not at the same level. This graph is impossible. This is a sculpture of an impossible ring. (See also the following pages.) If you extend the impossible triangle, you get this type of impossible figure. There are several impossibilities: can you find them? Each step of this staircase is level with each other step, which is impossible. Are you seeing this balcony from above or below? Are these stairs possible? Can this ramp really exist? This meander is impossible. Also, this ladder seems to twist in a strange way. In this strange window, you can look out in two different directions simultaneously. Another strange figure. How could this possibly be? There is something peculiar about this birdcage. Is this possible? Can you arrange wooden blocks in this way? This knot may not be possible. If you start climbing this staircase from a vertical position, when you arrive back at the starting point, you will arrive in a horizontal position. Lots of paradoxes here.

A set of impossible blocks. Can you connect these beams in this fashion? Can you arrange physical blocks like this? There is something strange about the block’s relationship to its shadow. Although it looks entirely possible, it is not possible. In front of the mirror you can see an impossible triangle: each piece of this impossible triangle seems possible, but when combined, the triangle itself is quite impossible. This construction is impossible. Can you see why? Can these gears really turn? What is wrong with this shelf? Can you find all the impossibilities here? These three rings twist in an impossible way. Notice how the figure connects with itself. Another impossible meander. This figure is impossible right side up, and also impossible when you turn it upside down. This is a physical model of the impossible triangle. How can this be? How can a solid block of wood pass through the other two blocks in this way? Are these trains going to collide? What is wrong with this garden fence? Try covering either side of the fence. There are a lot of impossible stairways here. The two lovers Romeo and Juliet are connected in an impossible way. These two figures are connected in an impossible way. Can you find both male and female legs. Can you find what

is impossible here?

Ponder this set of impossible stairs. They will flip-flop if you stare at them. The little male figure on the right sits on top of a ledge, but if you follow the ledge to the left, the female figure sits in an indentation. What is wrong with this figure? How many prongs can you count? What happens to the depth of the middle prong? Cover either side of the figure, and each side will appear perfectly possible, but when you uncover the two sides, it appears impossible again. Larger pieces are fitting into smaller pieces in this impossible triangle. The arms simultaneously go away from you and toward you, yet they somehow meet. Separately cover each corner of the triangle, and see how differently your mind interprets this figure. What is impossible about this window sill? What is wrong with the buildings on top of the roadway. This is probably the most famous impossible figure, known as an impossible triangle. Is the top of the building connected in a funny way to the bottom of the building? This is the solution of the impossible crate found on page 46. This is a physical model of a set of impossible columns. There are some strange things going on with this building. Can you find them all? A lovely variation on the impossible triangle. Another impossible meander to leave you thinking. This man is holding an impossible cube. The reflection reveals how it is made.

Sestina

Blacked out: bright Blacked out: shaded
Held too close to the held In where repeated uneven lines
Waves of a shroud or veil cast aside Indicate flow, horizon, a boat? Lies
Before the arrival The snow job, the sob story, white
As I know and then no as those shades A songbird briefly stills

No river this crosses one
Alive no one reaches this side side this reaches one no

Turning. This aside
(Stage whispered) introduces that procuress whose repeated lines
And gestures should--while remaining "line" and "gesture"--make wet the river
Of "we're sending you up the river," referencing some remembered water over this white
this white Still
 Finer shades
 barely audible almost sighed
 as if the speaker still
Failing to understand her memorized lines. Begins, sometime before the hero, riven
 By sorrow arrives

Speaking. There should be something more than a little shady
About the whole thing. White On one side black on the other
So turning reveals a line Are you still

There? Listen. Show him a series of stills
 From the river
Of images. So he chooses one says he knows her so I know you know he's a liar
 Say she shadows
This guy all the way back up to the right side
Of the tracks acts like she's lily white snow white

"*And then I drifted*"—still goes to show
You find the rest of the body down by the riverside, down by the riverside, down by
Lying Open and shut black and white white white

B E
D C (right it)
F A

- A** white / why/ while
- B** stilled / still
- C** aside / side / beside / sighed
- D** arrival / river / rival
- E** shade / shaded shades / shadow
- F** lines / lyre / liar / lies

Part

Attention

Long held taut by fear

“At last”

This latest diagnosis

Snaps

Not frayed

Cut

Now we see we see

To the end of it

“Dear”

Another test

A sudden

Shakiness and then the new

Results

This shadow

Shadow pressure in the skull’s

Fastness *see*

Straining *these*

White

This increasingly

O stop

The heft

Of promised years life

Alone should slowly

Loosen

Comes

Slashing all at once

As weightless

Lash back

Leaving us as if
Conjuring an abyss
Whose used blue
Seems a section
Of sky trapped
Beneath our feet

From which
All calls return
As echoes
Echoes

If

Sara Mumolo

I can't hide you—the rock cried out.

Because the mechanism of surrealism is an activity

not an image—I find embrace in description.

Where a staging of hours counts closer stars

and fails capitalism

—so we may conjoin where air does not—

in San Francisco's parks,

a fog confetti. We unfasten

lids to open brief eyes

across lawns. This is where we ask:

What's the matter with you rock!?

We mouth: P o w e r!

Ducks beak away their feathers,

their plume—in limbo—insults clouds

under this state: how we bankrupt

separation in lieu of—

burning cigarettes through cotton-

money. Breath cleaves

your peering through these holes
when every tree suddenly scents of
cultivation.

Variety is the plastic we make invisible, industry
is everything, even gardenias.

I never learn the language made for us all.

Everyone's face strapped on by collars of incognito.

How would we sign when altered by slips in coordinates...

I'm crying in an airport food court where

we construct approval of my emotional desperation,

which occurs from lack of exchange. Maybe I've heard

death news, the father. Peering

into this court: Here, a table

because my hand sleeps on it.

Action. Not narrative

and a napkin crumpled beyond my abilities.

—it skids. Poussin's *Landscape with a Man Killed by Snake* erects

around me— 3-d resembles our world now,

only more stylish. What voice

we allow out of the house and how we leak inside it.

Dusty Neu

Marimba Orchestra

The mirror, first then
with the then with the cigarette in of
smoke and the band of smoke,
then with glasses. Then the
top button unbuttoned,
then with the top button buttoned,
then with the top two button two button.

Then

with the cigarette in the mouth, then
the cigarette in the hand button with
the then mouth and all buttons buttoned.

Then

with the thought of marimbas
the cuffs around God,
God to be mallet mallets on marimbas.

Then with

the thought with the cigarettes and buttons all buttoned
amber cufflinks blessed must be the damned
dressed to be damned, good damned,
born into fingering the belly,
flaw or born growing into flaw,
born grown already flawed.

Then with mirror,

with a marimba, with the with the
looking at the mirror, and the door in the
background with a look of fear, cigarette in the hand,
with cufflinks. Good hand with a band of head and hand
in the without glasses and buttoned the bottom wrists
of hands that smoke billow from and cufflinks with unbuttoned

mallets and hands.

from i, slow expanse

i often stand on the edge
of a curb waiting for gravity to take me.
difficulty. alchemical. a pithless letter of resignation.
you've left a few things here and they won't stop reproducing.
they're piled on my bed so i slept on the floor with my arms
at my side and my working ear to the floor.
on the floor, yesterday, i slept for 36 hours.
the floor, lost in conversation with. when i woke, i looked
from the floor and saw the door,
my first experience of threshold.
i often feel i could be of better use.
i often think this page is better suited as patch paper
for a gun collector in eastern oregon.
the paper, and i with it, wrapped around a pointed cartridge
and shot from a beautifully rare and well kept rifle.
the three of us landing between the 2nd and 3rd
circles. and the man places the rifle in a heavy
case with velvet lining.
at home cleaning the barrel, thrown away rags
and this.
and.

and i am memory at threshold, and threshold, and i will let my ending tell my story:

his gravestone read:
"when we swim we think of womb."
his gravestone read:
"i kept busy."
his gravestone read:
"i kept busy."
his graces, his virtues:

“i never paid too much for anything.”

his gravestone was blank.

his gravestone read:

“very famous, very handsome, drooled too much.”

his gravestone read:

“unknown, poor, and where has he been?”

Ann Pelletier

EACH SEPARATE ANGUISH

over a question of whether the nanny did or did not taste of
Turkish delight after completing her sentence to stand in the yard
without food & without sleep for three days

awfulness aplenty the limits of
my cruelty may they never
be tested

stench
burning flesh [corpses on the field]

[Iliad Book 10 Odysseus & Diomedes telling Dolon he will come
to no harm only to lop off his head]

Hannibal's wife slapping

long-lined, her body; precise features
international admiration for her beauty

["It is an undisputed fact that both man and woman are human beings.
Woman eats and drinks as man eats and drinks. Woman feels hunger and thirst
as man feels hunger and thirst." Muammar Qaddafi, Green Book Part 3]

She'd hit me if her children cried

I may not know all of what I am capable
what I may let pass
but I *know* I could not

as Aline did
wife of Hannibal
(who is in exile)

son of Muammar
(dragged from the drain pipe)
(betrayed of his people)

over this question of Turkish delight Aline
ordered her servants

yes, Shweyga Mullah did come into the kitchen did drink juice—

she called me a liar

to bind Shweyga Mullah's limbs tape her mouth
to boil water to—

it was too much pain

(that scalds me now — that scalds me now)

alive, fragile
her life, ruined

(Aline is in exile)

(I fear I am unable to write out the word)
p-o-u-r
I push down each letter now
appearing as the answer in a game of hangman

Note: Except for *betrayed of his people*, the italicized lines are quotations of Shweyga Mullah as reported by Jon Lee Anderson. The poem's title and the line "that scalds me now — that scalds me now" are from Emily Dickinson #193.

Anthony Robbins

Witch Hazel

Why was my great aunt
named for *hamamelis*,
the beautiful *virginiana*?
I asked. I hadn't noticed
she was the darkest *accisimata*,
in her dangles tannin,
gallic acid, kaem
feroal proan
tho cyaning, eugen
ol, quercetin, caravol, choline,
saposin, hexanol, and bitters.
I accepted the certain distance
and her rigid swing and her cold shoulders.

Carmen Giménez Smith

AM I JUST A BROWN-WINGED DOVE

am I just a brown-winged dove and can you translate your pop to accommodate my precious
otherness outside of buffoonery I know we're friends but am I that friend you tally on
your list of goodwill a friend of ways are you domesticating
my dear otherness like the lesson on diplomacy and
the lesson on crying and yelling thank you for that but when do
we integrate when do we take it to the next level and stop pretending between you and me
those that pretend because they're still commercial and false hope and Woodstock
when do I pierce my daughter's ears that mutilation I privilege that I earned
through half-assimilation
how do we meet halfway when you own the road and the toll is steep
why is it hard to hear hard to believe hard to *process*
the inventor of alternative text cool and why are the young tossing
words around like they have no currency and it bores me to remind them so
does someone want to take my place for a day walk in my huaraches
that I don't have but some suspect credential afforded to me by guilt
is anyone honest anymore about where we are would I a monkey in my tree a
monkey do I make you laugh am I the monkey on the alligator's back

Cole Swensen

On Walks

5.17.12

On a quiet street, a very busy street during the day, a narrow street, a street lined with shops and filled with no one at the moment, a night with nice light still around and a few people, and all is calm.

I'm walking east on a quiet street, 9pm, warm, and an extremely well-dressed, even elegant, and very handsome young man—mid to late 30s—stops me, I assume to ask directions, and asks for spare change.

The street is calm. The night is warm, though it has rained, and it is not yet dark. 10:15, a man walking his cat. Unlikely, I know. He knows it, too. But it looks like an established routine. Man goes one way. Cat stays at corner; man comes back, making here-here kinds of noises, cat goes the other way, man follows. The street is calm.

5.21.12

The rain has finally let up and though it's cold, it rises, and rain stays on the streets in the way that it sticks. But has stopped. It's May. So I go for a walk

along the river, but it's cold enough that pretty much no one else is out, and the river clouds under, grey and the falling light just gets greyer. But it keeps not raining, so I keep on walking. I pass a man scowling, wearing a top hat, not seeming to get his own joke.

I pass a young woman in a skirt probably too short for comfort, as it is, after all, quite cold. I walk once around the island, pass a older man with two dogs going in different directions, then pass the young woman again (she looks colder), then the top hat. It feels good to walk when it's cold because it makes you warmer.

There goes the top hat again, this time across the bridge that connects the two islands. And then one of the dogs, alone, unleashed, perhaps a little relieved. I walk on. Another time around the island, again the young woman, who smiles, starting to get the joke, then five minutes later, the other dog, simply delighted. The others, I presume, are elsewhere by now.

6.3.12

In the balmy night, is still on the street, is a stillness, steady in presence and the ring of heels. A woman in a hurry and coming the length. It's a long street, which as that term is used (after all, most streets are long) means you can see a long way down it. I can see a long way down the street and a woman walking toward me, hurrying, her head down and her shoulders hunched as if this more streamlined silhouette will speed the whole thing on. It's urgent. And I am leisure. And I sense a collision as she gets nearer and nearer and passes and as she passes, looks up and directly at me, but I know for a fact, that she doesn't see a thing.

I see no one else on the entire walk this lovely evening in early June and think it must be the leisure, that leisure is both invisible and blind. Is folded time, and just a block from home, I notice a rat, calmly walking down the opposite side of the street. We walk in sync until I reach my door, though I have to slow down to do so.

Ken Taylor

what part of my tattoo were you raised?

where you learned the herm & rhythm
of poetics. or are you outside limits all
alone in quiet tricot this side of brown?
sensing serious angler demands, serious
about scent reducing qualities, dreaming
of him under the star card at his desk.
every barista knows that dry cat is code
for dry cap or a drink with too much fur.

aware of dense viscosity swimming in
what might distract me, your pander
to me: the trick of elemental gratitude
& reflection – this with a gander at my
shoes. used to measure my feet until they
grew foot-long. now i walk where i want.

Gale Marie Thompson

Cilantro Blue

Something has been gnawing
at my screen all weekend.
The dress I put on weighs nothing,
is pinned in every place possible.
You can see it wishing us
a public good morning.
This is the kitchen in clean makeup.
This is the sound of a building when it breathes.
The glow of flour, blown sugar in cricket lace.
Dear Retrospect, pick my brain.
We will say anything. You say.
Anything is a harbor. Anything is singing.
Stay close. The drum in me starts,
says, welcome, orbit.
Welcome Horoscope,
Welcome Kissing Gate.
Push on my kidneys, bury my Atlantic.
I will have my hands in this deluge.
Come be swept up & sieved
& enter & enter & enter.

Houdini Poem

This lean house
your other door

What glove
with dust and snow

Whose bed
are you sleeping in
being everywhere

and also here

I missed the fashion
You have your best

and can be beheld
and also expanded

A glass fills with water
and breaks

and when the snow comes
what remains

is the sky
glowing and filled
with black spots

Who are you
when you are absent
from me

Erica Tom

what i learned

I.

what i learned from [reading]
paths of dandelions who'd lost
their heads:

periphrastic lions are difficult
to tend, but do enjoy children's
books bindings —

a solecism, were it
were — i'd sit [at ease]

but, no.

II.

unpinned donkey tails
keep me [blind with] aiming,

a ritual and prayer
i scrawl your cognomen:

[bioluminescence].

transmutation takes
the heart, before the limbs,
still, seedlings germinate wonder.

III.

who draws the straw —

to steal the honey,
to keep us hunting,
and sewing mane;

when will we be done,
no, no — i mean when will we be [done]

remember sugar, she's a hard nut to crack.