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THE DEFINITIVE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and bred to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world, and having gone so far through life with a considerable share of felicity, the conducing means I made use of, which with the blessing of God so well succeeded, my posterity may like to know, as they may find some of them suitable to their own situations, and therefore fit to be imitated.

—Ben Franklin, The Autobiography

1. in the album of the snapshots of my life I am the school’s Valedictorian

behind my black gown
my fifty Plymouth
with thirteen original wing decals
waits to be stepped on

here father snapped
my pink six-month skin
riding the pelt of the Kodiak bear
he bagged hunting with Truman

this was taken the day before
I rode an ox
big as a skyscraper
and let my axe squash Minneapolis

in it Whitman
searches the grass for a dollar
I tossed across the Potomac

that is me
straight as a cherry tree beside him
marveling at his beard
just after we wrote “Lilacs...”
2. but something flees me which once kissed my hand
   the girl with eyes of technicolor blue
   I was to wed
   the sleek cars that were to purr me
   from home to the White House
   you can journey through my life by map
   north-northwest to kid (boy)
   due west to wife
   X marks her spot
   whatever treasure was there is gone
   when suddenly I recall the dark room
   how could I forget such negatives
   I expose myself and it is the day
   I quit planting apple trees
   and left home
   to assassinate the President
   and wed Grace Kelly
   why here I am the morning of my inauguration
   silk top hat and tails
   in an open limousine I am forceful
   effective manly and waving to citizens
   the members of the press crowd my desk
   I show them the book of poems
   I wrote in college
   the poems resemble Whitman’s the press
   is amazed
   I take an album from a secret drawer
   and show snapshots
   woodcuts daguerreotypes
   the time I left the cabin to earn
   my law degree
   the time I posed nude
   on my grandfather’s pet eagle
HALÂSANA (THE PLOW POSTURE)

Heels over head
toeing the line
a universe turned backward on itself
in static whorl
my thoughts swarm cluster
about the same old hive
I greet my arching body like a lover
its weight against my heart
and concentrate
to free the mind by harnessing the flesh

but my team plows
the carnal furrow still

Ann Deagon
SHAVASANA (THE CORPSE POSTURE)

Dead to the world
like Socrates the silence creeping
to the feet the legs the torso
ah slow fuse burning
out of the charred extremities
kindling the mind into infinity

imploding radiance
where colliding sparks illuminate
intransigent my phoenix flesh
a ghostly opening of thighs

Ann Deagon
THE CHOSEN

calls me on the phone
I am to be
second
in command of the world

but he does not call and will ask
Jimmy Hoffa his own wife
some hack
I never heard of

still he might call . . .
McMahon walking through the land
eating red tape
juggling words like "inoperative"
and "abort"
into "lilac" and "monarch butterfly"

the word "obscene" shall be law
and apply to all housing
developments missile silos
highways
full as upset stomachs with trucks

anyone who says "anti-personnel weapon"
will be taxed
on his entire income

but he does not call
he sits inside air-conditioned words
"democracy" and "individual"
words
people smile at like checks
they did not expect at Christmas
still that account is overdrawn
and he does not call
perhaps he does not know
I sit on a heap of words hard as cash

and I should send him dollar bills
with pictures of my sonnets
on them or of me
disguised as Whitman
children spilling from my beard

I do have enough hair for a platoon
of Marines
seed to sire armies

spunk to split wood or plant
apple trees

you may have noticed the Rockies look
rather like my brow
as seen on nationwide tv

and yet he does not call

perhaps he walks in the rose garden alone
trying to think
of the word
that will slip into this world
where it can be a billet doux
in blades of grass for us to spy
and wonder at

he really should call
after John Wayne and Mao come together in a line
we can spit into our hands
pick up axes
and walk toward anything more than a year old
maybe I ought to call him
but I would say
“Pod Gother and Papple Mie”
or “Hello White Louse?”

then start to howl of the Donnor Party
hidden in the word “napalm”
of lost pastoral frontiers
where Tonto and the Lone Ranger
might have lain on the grass
beneath manly oaks kissing each other

he will not call

Michael McMahon
CAN A CAREER IN MANAGEMENT CHANGE YOUR LIFE?

1. broke and horny in New Salem
   I walk into the supermarket
   I owe $378
   
   and push a stone-grey steel carriage up the aisle
   of discounts
   and housewives who do not believe
   in life after children
   
   the blue veins in their legs
   seem as blocked
   as the Suez Canal and I wonder why
   they don’t slit their throats
   with cut-rate razor blades
   
   perhaps like me
   they are waiting for the Big Sale
   that will save our lives
   and in the meantime
   wed to reduced American Dreams
   eat, drink, excrete
   and search for giant size economies

2. I have been drunk all night again
   over another poem
   I cannot buy a last line for
   
   so when the Manager seems to smile
   at me I think not poems
   but lucky days
   and nerve up to charge the wine
   roach spray beer and canned meat
   
   but he is smiling at an Eldorado
   of a girl
   in gold lamé toreador pants
   buying bottom round she squeals at
   
   and he has every right to smile

11
mothers love him because of his life
because they can lie
to their kids over a dinner
that tastes like paychecks
about starving pagan children

because control
exudes from his white suit
like the scent of Air Wick
in a small bathroom

3. walking up and down the aisles
of the promised land
of visible grace
—vitamins youth bargains

oranges from California where everybody
in the band wants to go
because of dope
and broads and lots of jobs

cans of stuff from countries we napalm
one day in the papers
and send snowmobiles to the next

—I find a match pack
on the floor and open it
like a telegram of death

it says
"a career in management can change
YOUR LIFE" and even
gives the address

me!
the Christine Jorgenson of the literati

4 how can I manage this?

true
I am sick of what I am
will be have been
I cannot afford many more nights
I get so drunk I forget
what I am
and wake the next day
thinking “fried egg brains”

if I was a manager what would I do?
start wars
pollute fuck up in general

stand around trying to hustle
girls in toreador pants
or make starving people
who owe me
piss in their pants for fear
I would ask for the cash quick

my poems will not save us
food will not
our genitals dope and cheap wine will not

so I charge an orange
and some cheap wine and leave

to sweat out last night
beside the highway in the tar
and brimstone air
to hope
as the cars flee west toward Vermont
and nowhere in particular

for an Eldorado in gold lamé pants
for a wreck

Michael McMahon
STREET SCENE

that's the code, don't glance
in anyone's eyes but flower
stands are OK
bump this woman's elbows
say hello to the blind man
skip down this street make
contact reach out to you but
your hand is missing around
mine the space around your
body is a wall, look
I'll buy you a hat
touch your eyelids under
its brim and hope you
won't ask for a deeper
meaning when I just want
to show you my rose petals

Sharyn Jeanne Skeeter
CIRCLES

that car, your life, your penis
you left in a
garage to rust, I

could pay to get it out
but the rent is due
and you’re not working
besides I’m too tired to fuck

Sharyn Jeanne Skeeter

ANNIVERSARY

Marking their fifty years
today I’d never much thought
about Mom and Papa
loving each other
working hard as they did
but this morning I brought
my kids over to
have some cake with
the grandfolks
didn’t know what to do
when we walked in and
heard the bed squeak
and Mom moaning Oh Papa

Sharyn Jeanne Skeeter

15
3 DAYS AFTER FATHER’S DAY
for Seymour Kornblum and John Wormley

I’m sitting on the second floor of my house in West Branch, Iowa looking across the rolling fields at interstate 80. To my left some 1,200 miles my father is at his office, organizing the data for his Ph.D. thesis, he is 52 or 53, he is living near Philadelphia, he is working in Philadelphia, proving that happiness physically retards the aging process. Much closer to my right, only about 100 miles West, Cinda’s father is doing whatever must be done. To make the corn and soybeans grow. When we visit the Wormley farm we sleep in the corner of the room, the exact spot where he was born. “Watch out!” he jokes, he knows about that kind of energy. Every year the corn and beans come up, a few new calves. He is a good German farmer. I have been reading H.G. Wells’ Outline of History and Cinda and I are certainly part of The Great Pattern—mixing racial stocks. I am Semetic mixed with, no doubt, some Russian or Central Asian, Wells says there was a Central Asian tribe, the Alans and there must be some psychic link, well, there might be And Cinda, Aryan plus probably in the past. A little from the Mongol Tribes that swept through Europe. Her eyes are almost Oriental sometimes.
The Des Moines Sunday Register quotes Rabbi Heschel, “But I would say to young people that in spite of the negative qualities they may discover in their fathers, they should remember that the most important thing is to ponder the mystery of their own existence.”

The Des Moines Sunday Register also ponders the existence of interstate 80, we humans are so impressed by physical things and Wells says the springtime human sacrifice spread throughout the world because it was impressive.

Below my window is my first vegetable garden
I close my eyes and imagine a human sacrifice—it is impressive.
I open my eyes and there is interstate 80
I can see that “occurrence” is spatially perceived.
That idea did not occur to me but when Darrell pointed it out
I flashed I laughed and said this is part of what makes living in Iowa City worthwhile and Dave and Cinca who were there too, agreed,

I said all the wheels in my head are turning and the wheels
On the cars are turning as they move from one side of my window
to the other and pass out of sight, East or West as Darrell’s incredible diagrams showed,
Consciousness is outside space and time is
Hello Dad, you here?, have a beer
Hello John, you here?, have a beer
We all want to be accepted, to be high,
Between these ideas and the world sometimes damn hard
To get up in the morning, sometimes so exciting
I never want to sleep then, I do sleep
In my house in West Branch Iowa with Cinda
With my father and mother with her father and mother
We all sleep together when we sleep

Allan Kornblum
THE POND

Deep in the pines
and fed by springs

it's colder in different
places underneath

Grass and rock sit
at its sides where gnats
collect with mosquitos

Small frogs peak out
from time to time
to speak Greek.

Like ostriches—only
burying their heads in the air
instead of sand.

Do the fish, if there are any,
not see them that way?

Like Narcissus who fell
for his resemblance (not
himself) several swimmers fall

into the pines and twilight,
crumpling both

Ralph Pomeroy
WHEN IT COMES TO US

When it comes to us I’m jealous
Jealous of my past
A past that happened before you
A song of sorts, but not the real one.

That’s why I’m anxious to show you
All the places I’ve ever been in
Anxious for you to listen
To all the music I’ve heard,
To read all the books I’ve read,
To eat the kinds of food I’ve tasted,
To have, in other words, been with you all along

Foolish to try to replace
All that I was without you
With all that I am with you.
I must learn to live a new life instead
The vanished song still sounding,
But silently—harmonizing like spring snow
With the first white field flowers

I must let go
Turn in another direction
Into a fresh wind.

All that I was I still am
All that we were we remain,
But you, so much younger,
Have less to incorporate—
Not in value but in quantity.

Only a number of years is what any of us has.
Starting from now
We will become as old as our time together—
Full flower and new bloom.
All that I am I will be.
All that we are we will become.

Ralph Pomeroy

19
METAMORPHOSIS

When we met I was a girl
Lying about my age,
Camouflaging my body,
Painting and powdering my face,
Curling my hair, shaving my legs,
I won you in a jiffy playing the games of love

When we met I was a girl
Crying for you, laying for you,
Expecting your adoration,
Demanding your attention,
Stealing your affection the way I stole
Trinkets from the five and ten cent store.

You dressed me up like a cupie doll.
I passed inspection every time
All dark eyes and laughing looks
Tricks up my sleeve to catch you on
Squirt guns and record albums,
Helpless, yearning, and lonely.
Unexpectedly I began finding myself
Hidden beneath my many masks.
Quite by chance, turtle-like,
I began to emerge from the cluttered shell
That was my life. Testing my muscles,
Falling and failing, a stranger to my being.

When we met I was a girl:
While in the depths of me began
A painful parting of the ways
Of my myriad former selves.
Late blooming crocuses know better than I
The long sleep, the continual rebirth.

Now I am a woman
Defining myself, deciding my own destiny,
Spending light-filled, crystal-clear hours
In deliberate, delicious solitude
Beginning to know the self that lies within,
I am learning strengths of many kinds

When we met I was not the woman that I am today
Are you so blinded that you still see
Only the girl I used to be?

Joan Henry
VISITATION RIGHTS

My droopy-faced, sad-eyed Craig,
The tears rolling down your cheeks are truly very achingly real
And the sound in your throat is a mixture of fear and pain
Your beautiful brown curly-haired head is buried in my lap,
Your sobbing slowly stopping with promises of a cookie, a
        candy, a drink of juice

You have been hiding in the corner of the back bedroom
Silently crying for at least ten minutes
While your father decided you were a sissy
I’ve been fooling around awhile putting my hat and coat on
Getting ready to leave, trying not to cry with you

My lovely, warm, darling, dark-skinned son,
You want so much to come with me
You don’t want to stay in this big house full of new
        furniture, old sounds
I’m going to buy you a present, wrap it up with ribbons
It will be for you to keep when I am gone, especially when I
        am gone
Holding your small trusting hand, touching your hot wet face, I
          remember again
Your hugs are the best in the world

Sweet, tiny, unexpected twin child, bonus boy,
You have made up for a lot these past few years.
You Baby B, and your hurly burly brother,
Have squirmed, inched, crawled, bounced, and jostled your
    way into my heart
We are all here to stay, tears and laughter, hello’s and goodbye’s
Next summer you’ll be a bigger boy, able to spend a longer time
    with me
Christopher will come too and the moon will be fuller than it
    has ever been

See you soon

Joan Henry
PARTY

A saleswoman pulled off
The approximate amount
Of silver paper
Folded one end & centered the box
Crisp & obedient paper folded
Until the box became
The color of the paper
Until the paper became
The shape of the box
She pulled thin, yellow ribbon
Over two opposite corners
Dividing the box into three parts
& snip &
The tape became the color of the box
Or the paper
& more ribbon folded back & forth
Lightly looped & pressed against the box
Suddenly strangled into a fancy yellow bow
Dangling ends are taken
Between thumb & scissor blade
From this end to that end, curl
Then she does it all again to another box
Barely varying the motions
But this time instead of one ribbon
Yellow, she pulls two, & blue &
Fold & strangle & curl

Gene Baxter
IN CALIFORNIA WE BOUGHT A DOG FROM AN EIGHT YEAR OLD IN THE PARKING LOT OF A SUPERMARKET.
A DREAM:
AN OLD MAN READ POETRY
ALL NIGHT
TO THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE
OUTSIDE IN THE RAIN
AND SOMEONE SAID
IT WAS ALL FLASH
HE GOES TO SCHOOL IN ARIZONA
AND LOOKS BOTH WAYS BEFORE CROSSING THE STREET
SHE HAS SHORT BLONDE HAIR AND DRINKS BOURBON IN A BLACK LEATHER JACKET IN A NEW JERSEY NIGHTCLUB

Joel Colten
drawings by Randal Rupert
the operatic audience is getting ready

Often
I feel like dancing naked—
is not that the sign of the spirit?

the universe is dancing naked and brilliant
next to another universe naked and brilliant
next to another universe naked and brilliant
and so on for many light years
as they energetically send
each other messages,
songs,

if Someone’s Watching that’s His Business

John Tagliabue
behind the shadows of san marco’s

If a cat
goes into many alleys
and a poet into many dark cafes—by himself—to drink some
strong coffee
to read some nonsense and abstraction in the newspaper,
today Nikita Kruschev is dead,
he who beat his shoe on a table,
and they aren’t going to give his corpse the privilege
of putting it on cement near Lenin,
if we beg
like a skinny cat
or feel discarded like “il più famoso pensionato”
the newspapers say printing of
Kruschev and showing pictures of him
with once President Kennedy
we know that the Reporter and the Mundane Observer
conscientious and nervous as they may be
can never know the words of the poet asleep in his
famous corner
or the soul of the cat walking slowly on wet stones.

John Tagliabue
You are like
an untold land
You wait for nothing
if not the word
that will surge from deep down
like a fruit among branches
There is a wind that reaches you
Dry twice-dead things
encumber you and blow away.
Limbs and old words.
You tremble in summer.

from Verrà la Morte e Avrà i Tuoì Occhi
Brackish and earthy
is your glance. One day
you dripped with sea.
There were plants
beside you, warm,
they still smell of you.
Agave and oleander.
You shut it all inside your eyes
Brackish and earthy
are your veins, your breath
Puff of warm wind,
shadows of dog-days—
you shut it all inside yourself.
You are the country’s
harsh breath, the cry
of the hidden quail,
stone’s warmth
The country is travail,
the country is suffering.
With night the peasant’s
labor ends.
You are heavy toil
and satiating night.
Like rock and grass,
like earth, you are closed,
you toss like the sea.
There is no word
that can possess
or stop you. Like earth
you gather shocks
and make of them life,
caressing breath, silence
You are scorched like the sea,
like a reef-fruit,
you say nothing
and no one speaks to you.

Cesare Pavese
from La Terra e la Morte
translations by Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann

31
KEN BLUFORD:  
book review

No price listed.  
A Seventeenth Century Suite, by Robert Duncan. Maps No. 6. $3.00.

Passage is a process of change. An order of metamorphosis. Transporting its enraptured energies from the verb pandere, “to stretch out.” Robert Duncan entitles it. Reaches out to write Passages that are “a field of ensouling.” And paces “an area of composition in which I work with whatever comes into it.” As the world also works with whatsoever comes into it.  
As the visible world, disturbed by the invisible, works form from Form. So the poet, in words, echoes the invisible world. Provokes the music of the spheres; hears the heart’s harmony in every nerve. Serves the law and order of Form to determine his Tribunals:

First there is the power, and in the power is the tone or tune,  
so that all of creation moves with a music, the sound having its open doors in the mind; but in the heart lieth its fountain (as it doth also in Man).  
The second is Mercurius. The musician has wound up his pegs and tuned his strings. He bends his head to hear the sound he makes that leads his heart upward, ascending to where the beat breaks into an all but-unbearable whirling crown of feet dancing, and now he sings or it is the light singing, the voice shaking, in the throes of the coming melody, resonances of meaning exceeding what we understand, words freed from their origins  

obedient to tongues (sparks) (burning) (speech) outreaching the heart’s measure.

Duncan cannot be cramped into the Black Mountain or San Francisco groups. He is a spatiotemporal poet. He compacts his

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rationality to reach a daemonic possession—"to stretch out." But to grasp the spirit in language; to comprehend the otherness of Form embodied in the organic form of the original poem.

His ancestors here are Emerson and Whitman. Emerson, the author of Nature. And Whitman, who wrote: "To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow/All are written to me and I must get what the writing means."

For Duncan’s generation, concentrated between modernists and postmodernists, Emerson and Whitman were a caution. And were explored, not only by Duncan, but by Kenneth Patchen, Paul Goodman, William Everson, George Hitchcock, William Stafford, Thomas Merton, Tom McGrath, and Robert Lowell. The most politically engaged and engaging generation in American contumaciousness. They defied it back to health.

But Duncan’s importance here is conspicuous. Because both Emerson and Whitman continued the traditions of Puritanism. In flagrante delicto. In fact, Lowell regarded Emerson as an irredeemable thalidomide descendant of Jonathan Edwards.

Duncan’s accomplishment was to disregard their Calvinist crankiness and relax. To relieve the Puritan strain. To trace out the European sources of transcendentalism.

Wallace Stevens had begun investigating, but bogged down in skepticism and aesthetic puritanism totally his own. So Duncan resumed by way of Plato, Dante, Jakob Boehme, Blake, Hegel, Darwin, Frazer, fairy tales, ancient creation myths, mystical texts like The Zohar, treatises of magic, astrology, and alchemy, to Whitehead and Gestaltists and field physicists. These affinities of Emersonian organism explored with incantatory elegance and awe. But a restlessness and voluptuously felt questioning persist in the incandescence of Passages. Bright tenements of doubt:

Child of a century more skeptic than unbelieving, adrift between two contrary educations,

that of the Revolution, which disowns everything,
and that of the Reaction,
which pretends to bring back the ensemble of Christian beliefs,

will I find myself trained to believe everything

as our fathers, the scientists, have been

trained to deny?
In their vital intelligence, the Passages render an image, an imagination of the nature of man, that both reflects and transfigures the ecstatic polarmics of Whitman. For Duncan, the whole of human experience is a spirit beyond nationalism, as it is beyond nature, art or myth. Yet it's immanent in them. An evolving primordial reality—a Form, governed by Love—that will reveal itself if one sees the visage beneath the face of things. Listens to the language behind speech.

Duncan alleges one could see wilde beeests and heer the music of the spheres before a psychological and historical fall. "The child," he writes, "hears the heart of speech, the emotional and illustrative creation, what Freudian or Jungian calls the content of what is said... Like the poet, the child dwells not in the literal meanings of words but in the spirit that moves behind them, in the passional reality of the outraged or insidiously rationalizing adult. He hears not what his parents mean to say but what that saying is telling about them."

Duncan also writes of a historical dissociation of sensibility, not from the direct sensuous apprehension of thought, as Eliot, but from revelation, with the development of the rational Weltansicht:

The vital phase of Rational Genius came as it met straight on the threat of an overwhelming expansion in consciousness that followed the breakthrough in the Renaissance on all levels. The inspiration of Reason was to close off consciousness in an area that was civilized, European, superior in race, practical and Christian for at least rational in religion). Rationalism erected a taboo of social shame that still lasts against the story of the soul, against the dream and inner life of men the world over, that might be read were the prejudices of what's right and what's civilized lost. Only in the fairy-tales and lore of the common people or in the ritual and lore of cults whose members incurred the cost in their thought of being outcast and shamed did the great imagination survive. Church-goer or atheist, the rational man was immune to revelation.

This dissociation was part of a broader withdrawal of sympathies. A recoil from the harmonious wholeness of primordial truth. Emerging in religious wars. Including Vietnam:

Today we play out in East Asia all the grievous patterns once enacted in Catholic crusades against gnostics and Jews or Protestant persecutions of Catholics and witches. The very inspiration that carries the artist through in a state that combines fear for form and faith in form to realize the imperatives of his poem, moves makers of history who write their works in the lives
of men. Hitler moves as the wrath of God to show a terrible truth about Germany, about Europe, about our Western Christian civilization itself; as Johnson today betrays the character of Babbitt swollen with his opportunity in history. Where history becomes myth, men are moved not toward the ends they desire but toward their fates, the ends they deserve.

In A Seventeenth Century Suite, Duncan's tour de force "being Imitations, Derivations & Variations upon Certain Conceits and Findings Made among Strong Limes" in the poetry of Raleigh, Southwell, Herbert, Jonson, and John Norris, he contrasts the Christ-like Passion of the poet to empty and purify himself, to suffer death, in order to enter into the completion and perfect otherness of the original poem, the primary reality, against the martyrdom of the Vietnamese:

But now,
I am looking at burnt faces
that have known catastrophe incommensurate
with hate or loss or
Christian martyrdom. My heart
caves into a space it seems
to have long feared.
I cannot imagine, gazing upon photographs
of these young girls, the mind
transcending what's been done to them.
From the broiled flesh of these heretics,
by napalm monstrously baptised
in a new name, every delicate and
sensitive curve of lip and eyelid
blasted away, surviving...

eyes...
Can this horror be called their fate? Our fate grows a mirroring face
in the accusation beyond accusation
of such eyes,
a kind of hurt that drives into the root
of understanding, their very lives
burned into us we live by.
Victor and victim know not what they do
—the deed exceeding what we would know;
the knowledge in the sight of those eyes
goes deep into the heart's fatalities.
And in our nation's store of crimes long
unacknowledged, unrepented,
the sum of abject suffering, of dumb incalculable
injury increases
the sore of conscience we long avoid.
Consider his relationship to seventeenth-century poets, twentieth-century Vietnamese, to Emerson, Whitman and the Universe. All places and times of the Great Household, Harmonizing with his own household. All creation in its process. Change and resemblance and continuity. Brought into a swarm of sense-data—"Elohim-Cloud of bright expectancies."

Since Whitman, the epic impulse in American poetry has become neurosis. Stevens’ Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, Williams Paterson, Pound’s Cantos, Crane’s The Bridge, Roethke’s The Far Field are an epic catalogue, a procession of fallen angels. Whitman’s eschatology dissolved in sloughs of despond. But appearances, as it seems, deceived us. Robert Duncan has provided Passages over this swamp of blues.

reviewed by Ken Bluford

photograph of Robert Duncan by Gerard Malanga
—I am recommended not even to read poetry, much less to write it. I wish I had even a little hope. Send me just the words “good night” to put under my pillow.

—Keats to Fanny Brawne

GOOD NIGHT

I’ll try once more to meet you Is that where you are? Max’s or Elaine or Casey’s or on a printed page turning yellow with age making my logos yours where you no longer exist or exist as that name which is existing without you as is with mine now
not to remember

so few need to

It's no use
there is no place we can meet
a tenement hallway, for instance, smelling
of urine,
there is no place to find you

what are lost things? They can never be found
I have this photo of her
there can be no more names—that to be a poet

is to have a
“calling” as Jimmy would say
and i see it this way
and i feel that way

Benedetta is dead
which is to say her name
did not carry her
end any further than the reality
in herself as limit
to what we are as body

we die all over again
in two separate worlds
which is one world, like the brain

It goes to show you
it seems only yesterday
yet seven years have gone by

i flip thru the photo archive
in remembrance of things past
forgetting the hour of midnight
when everyone is asleep
or when the rooms are asleep
with no one inside them
there is no going back
there is no going
back in time

"Beauty
is too quick
for time"

—Charles Olson

I turn out the night
light and my thoughts of you are the same
but everythings changed
we even change
the way it should be
that everything is the same when nothing is
nowhere in man is there found what is lost
but what is lost

Gerard Malanga
OCTOBERING

When you left I made
my way back to bed
and tried to sleep.

It took a long time
to get there
and my feet were cold.

Outside the wind was loose
with leaves. I put
my arms around myself

and I remembered how
you held me on the floor
and rocked me like a child

until I was one
swinging in the plum
tree of a thin spring

and my body was no longer
my own. That must be
what tenderness is.
In the wind the southing
birds flew out of nowhere
filled a tree. The green mouth
sang and the birds rose south
again. Touch is a talisman
to take with you as you go.

I am no place now
and the arms around me
are not mine.

I sleep as water does
at the bottom
of a beaded pitcher.

Margaret Gibson
WHEN YOU SAY LOVE I DREAM
THE LAST MOMENTS ON EARTH

four winter sycamores bend
with gourds and cones
    I break the crusts
    ash pours into my hand
    bees fly underground
    birds fall from the sky

or hang by their feet
in caves
    I take off my clothes
    I take off my name

in the distance the river
spills over its banks
to the fields

I stand in the center of the field
    and wait for the water
to rise

    I hold out my arms
    in a henge

river is field
the seaweeds take wing

the storm overhead curls in a frond
fish slick through the water
    fish curve by my thighs
    in the water

dark clicks its claw
overhead

Margaret Gibson
SPRING LONELINESS

Tired of my work, I walked in narrow lanes
This afternoon to watch March make its way
In England, fields were smothered more with grey
Than green. A jogger sloshed through the mud drains
Of recent snow. Unseen birds piped quaint strains
Of busyness from every hedge. Stray
Small flowers brittled in the cold. Delay
Loomed with a dull numbness nothing explains
At twilight I entered a small church, vast
In dark corners and prayers on short, cold breath
I thought I heard the eerie sound of death
In creaking pews and pat of feet that passed.
The noise, the room, the day appropriate
For one like me, who misses you a bit.

Louie Crew
first day in Truro

our five rooms have been a small prison where I don’t remember
what I dream at night & little poems drip from a leaky faucet
brown rust in porcelain this morning I struggled like Jacob
& shreds of dream unknit I stretched to greet the sun
planted herbs in sandy soil before I ate
ocean air in my head & stomach
late morning I spent with women at the laundromat one other man
a big crewcut midwesterner was there to help his wife
I washed musty towels & sheets three machines three dry spins each
the afternoon I walked into the valley below the house
to pick up wood & ticks
I finished reading another woman’s book all I feel comfortable with
after years of learning what men have to teach how to reason
how to compete how to control
again at night I dreamt I walked
with my Russian brothers & made love with them we talked of
Williams of Whitman & I dug those blond faces open to America
the space of plains & tundra & Indian grasslands the roar
of polluted falls in Paterson a bridge across the East River
across the Dnieper the frozen soil of Siberia
the sandy soil of Cape Cod

Ron Schreiber
February thaw

Monday will we get a free subscription? Tom asks
no House & Gardens till the name on our mailbox
pays his bills but others arrive—send
no money, they advertise, & we get free
books & begonias, silver spoons & pairs
of wooden shoes.

Tuesday a woman from Mademoiselle
visits our workshop, she plans to feature us
in an article on cooperative businesses Madame,
one says in France to women over 24, Mevrouw in Holland,
does my mother in Florida still play bridge with the girls?

Sunday four male editors read manuscripts
a woman writes how she is fulfilled only
as mother, only as wife I read her lines
ironically, but she means them, a lush catalogue
of services & chores I can’t speak for women,
I say, a gay man writes a fairy tale
how a scullery maid outwits a witch
& wins the prince he does that well, we say
then I speak for women, & we send it back

February thaw we read the books, prepare soil
for begonias, a writer freelances for a
women’s magazine, does what she can between
cake & cosmetics one of the girls cuts the deck,
my mother bids four no-trump there was supposed to be
a storm in Boston yesterday
it never came

Ron Schreiber
Your folks have everything?
How about a son with a haircut?
—sign in a barbershop window

one who works at a regular job
wears suits & never sucks cocks?
who lives in a split-level house
in Shaker Heights with one wife,
two children, one dog, a mistress
booze & chilled red wine?

Rosanna's father used to be a barber,
& all her male friends had long hair
"business is bad," her father said,
& looked at her friends as if they were
bad business every six months he moved
his family to a new apartment to escape
the smell of gas leaking up from the bedrock of the city.

sons or daughters, it's all the same,
you bring them up to work hard, to know
right from wrong, & what happens?
they let their hair grow & never wear bras
or cut it short & do everything you
worked for turns into a bridge game &
a pension check & the smell of gas
blowing in from the ocean over the bright Florida coast.

Ron Schreiber
OWL CLOCK

The bells
split open rocks,
tell the time
The owl
shifts from foot to foot
and chuckles
"wait for what?"
Your ugly words
crack my skull
whether I stay or go back
Like the lines of poetry
I half-muddle in the quoting,
you’re one more thing
I half-carry,
half-drag along

Sheila Raeschild
WOUNDED ANIMALS

know my secret;
their three-legged dance
follows me home.
the one who i kiss, loveless,
has their eyes;
the bed brims with lost hairs.
downstairs
the sound of scratching
swells the cupboards.
i can feel my locked car, outside,
smoulder with dark stains
like the armpits in the shirts
of running men.
i'm naked without it

headlights sweep through the window.
i dodge into clothes.
i grope for my gun, my
nightstick.

many trios
of small footprints
gather, whimpering,
on the lawn.

Jack Veasey
GREY

i'm one of those people
always sitting in an office somewhere
filing through my fingers

the typewriter keys discuss me

my mouth clenched tighter than a prim
pair of crossed legs
i write my name on forms i don't
have copies
i give my name away
apply, apply

and you are always there

your cough is my applause
my stage always a desk always
between us

i never see your eyes only your glasses
never see your throat only your tie

you wouldn't take off that suit
if it meant my life

it means my life

i can't love you with your hands folded that way

Jack Veasey
I GIVE UP, WHAT IS IT?

but what makes you
call yourself
a cripple? i ask him,

    eyeing the window
    full of
    artificial limbs.

i give up, what is it? he laughs,
as if i were telling a joke, slaps
me on the back

    with the
    hook
    strapped to the ends
    of his
    fingers.
he
  picks out a
    leg,
goes in to pay his last dime for it,
comes back wearing it
strapped
    to the
    bottom of his left foot,
walking
  lopsided,
    left leg bent
    in
    half
    pressing almost
    to his chest in
an attempt to walk evenly
i walk with him, embarrassed
i wonder what it is
    that
    makes
    me
    do
    it
i give up,
  what is it?

Jack Veasey
FOUR PROSE POEMS

She is gathering beads in a field, into a basket. They are scattered everywhere, each one baby-pink, each one with its own name. She kisses every one before putting it in the basket, it is so touching, the last moment when each one is still unique. In the basket all the beads become the same, all of them take her name. How pretty, she thinks, her dry lips savoring each one. How pretty.

It begins to rain. Her thin dress soaks through and sticks to her fat body like an egg. The basket fills up, it gets so heavy her arm turns black and blue. Beads overflow onto the ground as soon as she puts them in. She steps on them and they break, they bleed. She goes on gathering, thinking How pretty, how pretty.

$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$

He discovers it stings whenever shadows touch his skin. He avoid bars and crowded streets. He sleeps alone. He avoids all shadows but his own, who he boxes with rightly. He says, only when I can hit back, will I get hit. He thinks, someday I will invent paper that casts no shadow, and pens.

He thinks, someday I will write a book.

$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$

Twins stand before a man in dark glasses in a park.

One twin says, my brother is a good fool, says nothing, does everything. Forty-five dollars, he’s yours.

The man in dark glasses ponders. The breeze holds its breath. When he decides, all the pigeons fly away.

He hands one his money and drags the other away.

The remaining twin counts his money, saying nothing, grinning like a fool.

$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$

She told her son not to go into the jungle because a lion might eat him. He went anyway. When she went back into the house a lion was sitting on the couch, watching television.

She fainted.

The lion paddled over to her and licked her face.

Jack Veasey
THE SERVANT PROBLEM

I look in the pocket of my old black suit,
   I don't mean search,
   I mean look,
with my eyes,
not my hand,

   Old friend, uncomplaining
porter of my keys and dirty handkerchiefs,
you are worn through.
   You have died in my service
and I couldn't pick you out
in a crowd of pockets.

   I thought you an intimate
but now, inspecting your secret pain
under bright lights,
   I see you were my hand's friend.
Eye to hole, we are strangers.

Robert Hershon

54
FOREIGN OBJECTS

do you remember the taste of your fingernails?
how carefully you chewed them into dust?

I am staring at your neck
I am licking my lips

do you remember the taste of the eyelash?
how large it seemed in a mouthful of egg salad?

yet it was really small very small
no bigger than a train from a plane

Robert Hershon
ELEGY FOR THE OTHER PABLO

Moons empty themselves
of blue thunder
in south american rhythms—
the firmament gone cubist—
its circles, ellipses—
all geometers awry

They took a tongue
that fluted as the heart
decayed

Soldiers in the street
made catacombs of cities
and rubble of dreams

His long sentences
made caresses of
loneliness along the backs
of mountains where
ozone crackles the lungs.

Nuns we are now
& castrati—
with your theology’s music
gone mute.

Margo Lockwood
BROKEN GLASS

Stars sparkle up
from black streets
and grassless playgrounds
between Projects

On the dirt red ledge
of a tenement window
a potted shrub leans
brittle leaves down
toward those glittering
constellations
which have no names,
the patterns
of unacknowledged
dreams

Joseph Bruchac

READING IN FREDONIA

The bear has been talking to the people.
They present him with an obsidian arrowhead.
Holding his paw in front of himself,
he settles into the grass like a cup
in a box of excelsior.
Then he watches,
wondering how long
it takes to turn into a stone

Joseph Bruchac
IN PRAISE OF MY PRICK
(A male chauvinist’s celebration of Anne Sexton’s “Uterus”)

Everyone like me has a bird.
I am beating my balls
They wanted to cut you off
but they will not.
They said you were immeasurably small
(And I wouldn’t miss you at all)
but you are not
They said you were sick unto dying
but they were wrong.
You are springing up like a Christ-restored soul.
You were not shorn.

Sweet weight,
in praise of the prick I am
and of the central creature and its delight
I sing for you. I dare to live
Hello, balls. Hello, prick
Pop up, prick. Prick that soon explodes
Hello to the seed of the fields.
Welcome, root.
Each sperm has a life.
There is enough here to please a nation
It is enough that the populace own this stud
Any woman, any common, wealthy woman would say of this prick,
"It’s a good thing that we can have it again
and look forward to a fuck.
A slight cutting of foreskin, and it is no longer sick.”
Many women together are singing this
one is in a factory praising my machine,
one is at the zoo lending to monkeys,
one is pulling on the stickshift of her Ford,
one is at the toll-house, collecting,
one is trying the rod of a calf in Arizona,
one is straddling a cello-point in Russia,
one is rubbing her love-pot in Egypt,
one is doing it with a paint brush in her bedroom,
one is dying for me, remembering my feast,
one is stretched out, waiting, on her mat in Thailand,
one is wiping her ass with piles,
one is staring out the window at the rain
and wishing it was come and one is
anywhere and sperm are everywhere and all
seem to be singing for it, although some cannot sing a note.

Sweet weight,
in praise of the prick I am
let me touch you with my ten-foot pole,
let me fuck up the nineteen-year-olds,
let me carry my balls for the offering
(for that is my part)
Let me study the vaginal tissue,
let me examine the cheeky tissue
Let them suck on my stem
(for that is my part)
Let them make certain of my vital figure
(for that is my part)
For this thing the body needs
let us sing
for the kissing,
for eating-out,
for the correct
ahhh

Glenda Thomas
FRIDAY MORNING

1. Days like wasps
   with women's legs and
   the heads of dachshunds
   nights fraught with ghosts.

   A black used coffin
   bought from the boy
   across the street.
   a papier mâché corpse
   under glass.

   The air snaps
   with cicadas,
   nothing is moving,
   no one walks on water,
   no one wears an aureole.
   an avocado tree, a police
   surveillance helicopter.

2. Death is
   a paper face with
   fixed eyes lips
   painted in acrylics.
   over the pelvic floor
   guitars twang, reverberate
   you wish for
   so much more.
   we've made angels
   of the sun and ghosts
   and moon, the avocado tree
   smothers the window.
3. And the tides
draw along with
the moon, the coffin
settles back, the house-
plants on the glass cover
tremble and are still.

Become a stone! or a
gull’s beak, or a claw!
(the tide is rising)
find a cathedral, a clan
of freaks, go alone! move
to rhythms of your own!

We cower,
the chop of a motor passes
over. the avocado shakes
its fruit

4. Right now, on the moon,
on Hadley Rille, the
astronauts are riding around
in their little car. They’re
saying “wow,” “oh boy,” “golly,”
and “gee, what a show.” They’re
looking at moon mountains and
moon valleys, deciding where
to go

They see a figure sitting on a
purple rim. They go up to him.
It’s William Blake. He’s with
Mrs. Blake who’s wiping
his feet with her hair. They’re
both naked near a moon tree
near a moon pool of water
They’re playing paradise.

William thumbs his nose, starts reciting a poem about a cankered rose. Mrs. Blake inquires if the astronauts are ghosts. The astronauts drop their camera. They can't waste more time on such ephemera.

5. The other night stoned
you said you saw
god. He said
to love, to be
love's instrument
giving and receiving,
here and now.

You took your place.
devils were no
problem you said you'd
exorcize whatever
prohibits paradise.
Jesus was merely
an exalted person
without stigmata
moving among the elect
composed.
6. I think I see you better. a blue rock floats above a cloud the breath of oranges is everywhere, and hibiscus. blue wings fall over this house. I bring my hands together touching finger to finger and palm to palm. I am calm.

7. you rise and run to the water. you are in the surf. (old chimeras turn over cradled in sand) you are past the breakers. troughs of water conceal you. you return dazzling with wet. you kneel facing me.

I take your face in my hands and draw you to me. I kiss salt from your lips. we go home. it is evening the avocado tree is on fire. bird wings are scattered over the porch. the front door is open no one is in heaven here!

Robert Peters
TEMPLES

gardens,
guardian figures,
gates,
and Buddhas
until the Japanese sun
on Ryoan-ji’s
fifteen rocks
and white raked gravel
opened

oasis/
dragonflies

Karen Bunting