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Abstracted Cubism on Humans

Today,
I observed
"lost".

I discovered,
"that"
was missing.

A space
"that was"
is
"no more".

An energy force,
that "gave"
that "shone"
has "shut off".

How can it happen
that something
has substance, space
becomes "no more"?

What happens to their space?

I can't get
this abstraction, of reality
that is taken
by many
as a nod
of the head
or shoulders,
or, one blink
of an eye.

Or,
maybe,
it's the faces
that go on daily,
having "lost"
but never
taking the time,
to stop,
to notice,
that "was"
is "no more".

Frank Allen

**East of Kittatinny**

I can hear a lute
twang in the clear night air
like a throttled bass,
something more than half alive
disturbed and memorable as a first kiss.
Which makes the ineffable evening
a lens through which I see trees and man
transform the old knotted thread—
smoke or candle?
Irreducible bones like twigs
thrown on a bonfire
swim where no prankish drum major
dare intrude. Sleep's
forecast like snow east of Kittatinny.
The City Dances
I lost myself downtown
leaning back through the movement
of all those buildings
gliding on a blue glass and brick
slow motion ocean
splitting the trees
and clouds and flowing
like a river of line
into line into right angles rotting
into the darkness
until an ariel ocean liner
from a dream of infinity
floated in the distance
full of solace and hope
the glittering fire of the city's night
jewelled and turning
for all of the lonely
who find themselves
dancing with buildings

Coming Back
Your stone is set facing up.
Water collects in the etched thistle.
Days tarnish the silver cross
above your name; we took it
from your warm skin.
Last night I dreamt the stone was hot
and you were trying to lift it up.
I wanted to persuade you
to stay underground.
In the dark—
I hurried towards you.
Sleeping with the Fan On

It must be love that makes you chew on my mouth
in the morning before I've brushed my teeth.
love that's made you learn to like sleeping with the fan on.
love or something like a vendetta against infinity,
like the destiny of ice,
like the voices of everyone who ever lived
wrapped around the sun and handcrafted into God's doorstep.

Must be love but it feels like Christmas
feels like bee-bop and watching heat-lightning
feels like marching for peace feels like
confronting Darth Vader feels like

the time I rehearsed answers to the questions
the Monsignor planned to ask on Confirmation Day
as if Jesus was returning for private consultation with me.

Strange, I'd planned to not imagine you and keep distance
but the whole event, like ten thousand heart transplants,
such an unexpected opposite of the plan
to abandon you
to enmesh myself as one of the million and a half
to sleep right through the snow
and the next six months

strange, how the planning brings such opposite effects
as if anorexia could make one beautiful,
and like Carol says,
She's twenty-seven years old
and never had a one night stand.
Once she planned an affair for nine days
and then didn't even come.
and so consider:
How does spontaneity like this
crawl back into one's life?
Consider that over on 12th Street,  
there's a pothole that some guy fell in  
and broke his hip  
and all I can remember thinking is  
there's less room for error,  
more frailty, more finality,  
even the Volkswagon's as beat-up and dry-rotted  
as that ancient Mrs. Berry from across the street.

So consider questions like:  
How does one relate to others?  
How does one justify one's existence?  
How does one live?

And a voice said it must be something like love,  
like fourteen cups of coffee on an empty stomach,  
like learning to speak Lithuanian,  
like Grandma Egnatovich  
swearing that there's a time  
when all goals seem attainable  
even if you don't want any goals,  
and that the fullest sense of meaning  
is reachable as if people are revisable like dictionaries  
and is that possible?

Can a face at the window mean so much?  
Can a touch?  
or a glance?  
Can an inflection or a voice tone, barely audible,  
traveling across three time zones  
across three thousand miles  
change the shape and shade of the world?

yes.  
yes, yes, yes!  
it must be like puppies,  
like patchouli,  
like lilacs  
like love.
The Lesson

i caught
the moon-child,
restless,
held her close to me
i saw her eyes
appeal with silent
laughter

i was changing, i was going
into the wind to find
my way back to basic things
unsung presences, failed
fumblings and misdirections

"we can go the way together"
was her offer, held out
to me, proud to be had
for the asking...

but i was in love
with distant mountains,
horizons i hadn't seen,
so great was my need
to be alone

"you cannot spurn my claim"
she laughed, lying naked
on the couch, her black
lashes light as tiny feathers

"where i am
you must be,
little one," she cooed
like a fond mother
caressing an over-grown babe

devilish her mirth
sweet her scarlet kiss
wild with passion
the sex we engaged in
in the morning
from the covers
she breathed a light goodbye
winking with a smile that said
more than had been given me to know

she slept
and i sat
dressed, upright,
ready to go,
from the chair
watching her
unable to move

Mary Cappello

Like a nun’s punishing eye
the sun
scowling at us all
is Hawthorne’s old Hepzibah
after her transformation unchanged
the sun
like a literary allusion
no one cares to remember
burning at the edges
a hoop for your lion-heart
the sun
makes fools or poets of us all—
but I go to the river
and pretend to be a pattern
on the water’s rowing surface
towards the ocean.
None of the lights
work in this house:
you've been going
out one by one
first the kitchen's
slow morning cold light
fluttered into nothingness
angelically almost—
we fixed that one
and pretended—
two chairs and some
fumbling—
brushing against
one another
and it went on again
for the moment
but then the hallway
light went
and the bathroom
now what's left
is the neon sometimes
there sometimes not
glaring flash
of a face in the mirror—
trying to follow the sound
of water—
listening hard.

In the distant
distance
distancing
all tenses merge
when I think about
the pain
in this silent square
of infinite space
and though
sounding amazed
am calm
am like that feather
falling in pendulum-like
waves
onto the silent river—
think about the childhoods
of all of us
branches bent,
broken,
eyes
just becoming brown
too new for harsh light
too soft
the eyes being
pulled in different directions
like a sling shot
the mad
scenes of mad reality
the thunder laid bare
disclosed like a shock
and all of this
happening
without notice
the adults too blind
by the
too mangled
themselves to sense the
detachment—
days pass
like wind through grass
no one sees it happen
but everyone knows
no one embraces
the child so that he might feel
the root of his brain
heart
grounded in some starry soil
glittering snow
no one stops with the child
to watch the simple movement
of flying
perching bird—
only now
alone do I sense some meaning—
some reconciliation:
the feather is white,
the river, dark,
they meet.
In five years
she cries through
the hollow years
her eyes lulling downward
through the everlasting
evening storm of
the past violent
moment
invasion
invading still
of the unknown
violent push into
harsh cry thrust through
her white feather self
black streak
smothering pink watercolor
now her voice is so many tears
to hide the grey
life-torn
empty
fabric of her existence
she weaves sweaters.
The Gathering

and the rose-hue of sleep
comes like red wine
pouring into midnight glasses
the slow swallow-winged
kiss
of light
gone by good-bye
afterglow-ing
moment of moonlit leaves
trailing like my hands
next to you
on the water
drifting
this violet stillness
these red-rimmed seconds
are comforting
so unlike the gathering together
of my belongings on that
last day
of emptiness
hollow mountain crumbling to ash
now a gathering
of fruit through the blue-feathered
evening of always
now a chance to be maroon
dark dawn-singing color
to move on now
alone like the sea.
Marion Cohen

Childhood

"Which out is Jimmy in?"
from "Out of the Mouths of Babes"

The front yard's the city-yard.
That's for sidewalks, streets, and other front yards.
The back yard's the country-yard.
Grass, trees, and other backyards.

Birds don't know the difference.
But when the cows and horses come, it's the
  back they'll choose.
Sky doesn't know the difference
Although it might be slightly bluer out in back.

As for the side yards, well, that's a whole
  other thing.
Briefly, they're the boundaries.
Front and back mix and match like paints.
As for the difference between right and left sides,
  it's a matter of order, orientation.
Although they're similar, the trained eye can tell.
As for underground, that's where they all meet in
  a kind of ghostly vapor.
But that, again, is another story.
As for over-ground, it's there the four ribbons
  tie the knot, and then the bow.
It's there you can watch the four colors rising,
  toward where the sun grazes.

All houses are packages—Did you know that?
All houses are package.
And all packages are houses—Did you know that?
All packages have more than one room.
poem no. 8

from "The angel's wing, the landscape's calligraphy"

On this journey, nothing we already know can help us. Having come to know anything intimately, we begin to possess it, and in possession, to mark it, and then to domesticate it, and finally to grow weary of it.

When the circuit breaks, the eyes tire, the mind lets go that which it cannot reduce to number or name, and clarity breaks us open like pain, and cuts us off from escape into history or private idealization. So we find ourselves bereft of useless fictions, comfortable limits we have adopted as our own. Here the road at last moves downward in more orderly gradation after long jagged progress through dangerous cliffs that even now seem waiting to hurl us onto waves breaking far below.
Donna Debs

Deep
Hat tilted sly
over one eye
deep
stares
at all the women
all of them
who pass his booth
strategically located
lounging
deep
in the leather
matching leather
band
black thick
on a wrist
propped
deep
in a cheek
consumed
self-amused
thick
arms
bulging
stuffed
deep
in a sweater
pushed up
at the cuff
lit camel
heroically
sucked
deep
on the draw
coffee cup
filled up
methodically
sipped
to last
for the women
all of them
who pass his booth
and then move on.
Penelope Douglas

Instincts
You pin a bell on my collar
Tie tin cans to my tail
And call it love.
I have no ravished bird to offer
Want more than measured strokes
And a fine bed.
I haven't learned the game
Set no mousetraps
Bottle no fireflies while you're away
Eat caviar when you return.
Yet I dream of primitive rainforests
Where I run naked through rushes
Proud of strong legs
That speed me past eland
Yak and gazelle
Out of leafy darkness
To grasslands, expansive and warm
And others of my kind.

Greg Geleta

thinking about mortality in northeast philadelphia
it was a day
like any other,
a regular catharsis.
i was driving to my mother's house
& everybody
was passing me & cutting me off.
even old ladies cursed as they sped by.
figuring
the hell with this.
i slammed the gas pedal to the floor,
soared past places of my youth,
made a ninety-degree turn at fifty m.p.h.
when the car straightened out,
i just touched the gas pedal
& the car burst forward.
i thought
wow
what an engine
but when i took my foot off the gas
the car kept accelerating
& visions of the victory kiss at indianapolis
gave way
to the reality of long bus rides
& the assigned-risk pool.
at seventy-five m.p.h. the brakes failed.
i threw the transmission into park,
pulled the key from the ignition
& everything
jerked
to a stop.
as smoke spread
across old newtown road,
i braced myself against the cold
& looked for a telephone.

Objects
 just outside of freehold, new jersey,
a voice from chicago
brings the first bad news of the season
for mets fans:
bill buckner has knocked a home run out of
wrigley field.
in an act of pure joy,
the cubs fans throw
the last traces of an april snow
into the air / onto the field / &
at the mets.
& though the voice on the radio fades
with each turn toward philadelphia,
just past fort dix
a new voice rises above the static:
ladies
& gentlemen please
refrain from throwing
objects
of any kind
onto the playing field.
colleen a.k.a. sunshine
works the night shift
at the admiral wilson blvd.
adult theatre / put a token
in the slot
& there she is
naked
but for the telephone
wrapped around her ear / this
is not exactly
what her mother expected
after 12 years of catholic schools
7 years of piano lessons
& 3 years of chaperoned dates
with that nice boy from across the street
irving / this isn't exactly
what colleen had in mind
either
strange men whispering secret desires
while undoing their flies /
but the money's good
& everyday
she sleeps till noon & drives to work
real slow
telling herself anything's better
than marrying that creep across the street
irving
in this dream

a girl left me presents
& a letter on top
said
greg
i love you
beth
beth is my boss
& also my best friend's wife
& george always has a stupid grin
when he tells me
how she slides her underwear
up those
rocket ship legs
or how she sits before the mirror
naked
dabbing on eye shadow
& as i tore the wrapping
from the first present
i thought
wow
finally
she's mine
you know
even before i woke up
i knew it wouldn't work out
the letter had changed
to greg
i love you
bev
beth
would have to remain
a blurred fantasy
the forbidden fruit
bev
on the other hand
is a chemotherapy patient
i know
Poem for the New Age

For Etheridge Knight

brothers & sisters
it's not like the old days
when
the leisure class
sat back & read poetry
while maids & housekeepers
did the dirty work
or
when poets
sat in the courts
of kings & queens
with nothing to think about
but the words
springing forth from their quills

no
people
today i am writing this poem
fast
because it's about to rain
& you
in all likelihood
are
reading it fast
on the way to the factory
the go-go bar
wherever the day goes down

so let's get to business

i am thinking
of a poem i'll read
to the pennsylvania
unemployment compensation
board of review
& also
about what someone said to me yesterday:
all poetry is celebration

now
looking for work can be a bitch
waiting for the bus
a drag
& life without t.v.
the worst

but
right now
a girl across the street
is selling flowers

watch me go celebrate

Morris A. Kalmus

Chemistry
He courted her with love and gifts
And her response was flameless kisses.
And then she said,
"There is no love and chemistry,"
But time moved on
With a new loved beau
Who gave her love and chemistry
And the gift of a new born life
And then he fled afar
And now she seeks the absent sire
And will be pleased
With the flameless love
To be parent to the gift of chemistry.
Peter Krok

The Course
No one feeds me. I am always alone, always on the move.
I eye the streets and back yard alleys—anything moving excites my tongue.

My teeth I keep ice pick sharp chewing tins and bones.
I lick pals when a lid is left open.

Today I've been looking and all I've found is bread bits from those who sprinkle crumbs to birds.
There are never enough birds.

When you should hear me on an alley fence hissing in shadows, I have found, ah, a good taste.

How it Grows
It grows like stubble through the pores

Until it forms a beard of black dots on the onion skin.
The Cereus
What lives after?
I asked that here
on this plot between
two doorways, two porticos leading
to where only silence knows.
I thought of that night flowering cactus,
the cereus, whose blooms like a mystery
rise for one night.
I too am as that cereus,
a bud between two times.

With this breath I must
take in all the air
my lungs can root.

The Universe
The moon
beyond
the roll of waves
spins
its silver disk
around
our silences.
Kurt Lamkin

Road
I live where the road divides

Over here, the road is hard:
workdays trip over each other
and impetuous sundowns of december
leave the body beaten and unforgiving
Over there—diamond the road
especially when winter crystals thru
risen night, making city lights
shimmer with stillness infinite
mysterious, indestructible and precious

I live where the road divides

Toward the center icedancers dance
gracefully moving and giving depth
to the tradition of touch,
and further along
fresh horizon and vintage sky bathe
together: with his teeth he takes
gently from her ear the crescent ruby;
as it glows, as her body hums
he covers her to become one

I live where the road divides
and am sabotaged by temptation
every moment blends into another
so which part is magic
which part real

Somewhere down the road, a child
collects stone, pieces of asphalt
and macadam, well-laid plans,
creatures, dreams and ages
The debris describes anxieties of
come and stay and stay and go
it keeps the lonely awake all night
but children are too real:
they check out the middles of things
then go about their little business
The rest of us go the road divided
five senses, a hundred sciences,
a thousand languages—but feeling
is the only sense we have
one is touched as one touches
long before logic has a chance
to take notes we are feeling
the sun never curves, earth never spins
we’re the ones who go round in circles

Seldom is reality more brisk
and clear as when a winter feeling
dissolves, brushes softly against
your face
If you can catch it keep it and call it
life; if it fulfills and overflows you
call it love and share it

All things are magic where the road
divides
but whatever you hold onto
is real

---------

Louis McKee

Pennies and Dreams
We would sit there for long, long hours,
some of the hottest hours our summer would know,
our legs hanging down over the side
of the precipice kicking air, making soft, quiet waves in the wind. We had time, then, to toss pennies and dreams in front of us, and we had dreams for every penny we would toss. It has been a long, long time since we have given the time to await the sound of the splash. It's been too long since I have had my shoes off, my feet dangling to my hopes and their promises. I wonder about you now, wonder if you have ever gone back to sit on that hard, cold mud and make waves with your kicking legs. It has been too long.

For Allison
The phone rings at three in the morning...

an accident, someone in a hospital somewhere had my name and number on a piece of paper in their otherwise empty pocket;

my father is drunk again, this time yelling through the night's peace, cursing his pain and weaknesses, a rifle in his hands, in plain sight;

I am rich, a relative I hardly even knew has died and seen to it;

my wife has changed her mind...

A phone left unanswered finally raises its voice, anger or frustration:

"No, Allison is not here. There is no Allison here, No!"
Jazz

The music is too loud
for this room, this night.
I open the window
but the sky is dark,
dark like the cold glass,
the street below deserted
and quiet, the rain has stopped.

Strange how it can be
so wet, the air so chill,
and yet standing in front
of an open window
you cannot feel any of it.

Two figures walk into the light
at the corner; arm in arm,
they sway with each other's step
as in some lovers' dance.
They are young, and laughing—

they look for the music
calling from my lighted window.
The music is too loud.

Not for them, though.
They are what this jazz is about.
Their laughter comes
from my radio. My music
gives them something
to dance to. They dance
past, shadows into the shadows
that lurk in the middle.
of the block. My music
is not loud enough
to reach them there.
And still, they dance.
Infatuation
Morning brings a sun-lit ocean
to your eyes: how wonderful it feels
to lie safe in metaphor. Water
lies calm, swells, then goes low
again, a quiet breathing body
making endless lunges for the beach
where it rolls into waves
white with anger and loud with rage.
Your eyes, they are calm too,
and bright with this new day.
They move in air, some airs move them
to anger, to rage. This tide
of the ocean, your eyes: each wave
reaches for its peak, breaks, then is
no more. Each love, the same.

Sleight of Hand
"Haven't we heard all this before?"
The troubled misdirected roads
of your hair—a wave
of your hand does not set them right,
just stands them up to the wind
only for them to fall again
when the hand is taken away.
These same lines of indirection
are in your heart, there in your eyes.
As we walk in cold November
you hold your hand to your breast,
the strong air is taking its toll
and you think with a wave
and a whispered abracadabra
you can hold the chaos
to a silent and secret roar.
Notation concept for "FOUR" of
CHANGE - GROWTH - CHANGE---a sound poem
in 4 parts by Ba Scata. Audio with accompanying
video recorded in © 1983 by Ba Liata & Yoshi Marithara.
"FOUR" was created for piano, synthesizer & 2 voices.
Ann E. Michael

House with a Red Roof
The house with the red roof makes a beacon in the hills. We watch it constantly; it tricks our eyes.

The storm is bold behind it, an unsettled feud of red and blue; heaven has its slate-colored roof, its Chinese fire. It mounts hills, and before it, the house stands out, a ruby in a charm.

The roof gems back summer sun, red hot, ablaze and searing white siding: when we look away, a yellow house with purple about it blurs our vision.

Autumn, red roof flanked by trees which hold their color against it, slanting westward, northward, ever lower.

A shadow bends the hill. The red roof hangs on winter sky, the only bright for miles.

David Milley

Bicentennial
He brews his coffee with a shot of scotch in it, to keep him from waking too soon. The table he sits at is deep-grained and sunlit. He picks up the coffee with a shot of scotch in it, and circles it with his hands. He breathes on it, to cool it, and drinks it, alone. Each morning his coffee has that shot of scotch in it. It keeps him from waking too soon.
Disguise
Several drinks down, my vision swims. The man
to my left wears a white, striped shirt;
so does the man to his right. I stand,
lurching up from the bar, to lean on my right arm.

The man beside me stands, leaning to his left.
Both men wear gray pants; both have on red ties.
Each man looks to his right, searching out the bar
for a man who, looking back, will stop the searching eyes.

Both men have beards. Both turn back to stare
across the bar, at the mirror hanging there.
One of the two men—I cannot tell which one—
looks them both over and laughs when I do, smiling like the sun.

Crossword Puzzle
Imagine, lover, a room with two men in it,
Laughing. Imagine a brown horse-blanket rug
On a wooden tile floor with two men on it.
Very little else—a cable spool with two mugs,
Empty, on it—that's all that you must imagine.
You may, by now, remember the two men.
One was black-bearded and thick; the other grinned
Under brown eyes in a thick face.

Now, as then,
We stop laughing long enough to look down
At the crossword puzzle between us. Our words
Remain where we've placed them on the page. We've found
"Ransom" for the first word down, "surety" for the third.
Empty squares still fill the page. Laughing, we frown,
Nearly touching, looking in words across for the words down.
Dust

My friend's wife works today. I wait in the den
where he sometimes used to write. A globe is on a stand
in one corner; the morning sun strikes it. My hand
spins the globe, and a film of dust dances in its sky.

All hands cause dust, by labor and design.
A baker's hand spreads flour, sawdust peels from wood,
my hands brush dust from a friend's songs set aside.
Old skin chips from our fingers—so, we turn to dust.

All hands hold other hands, at times. A hand
held in another lends balance. Some, like mine,
are held by other men; some men hold women's hands.
Then we choose what our hands make—bread, boards, songs, dust.

This planet turns each night beneath the stars
that dance like dust above us. Hands, by labor and design,
built ships to ride the night. Dust will go
with those who travel there. Dust will settle back below.

My married friend comes into the room. He sprays the air,
wipes down the shelves, complains about the dust.
He leaves the room to wash his hands. When he returns,
he stoops, to kiss me, then to stop the spinning world.
Robert O'cean

Apartment No. 1407, Sherman Towers
I've wished upon so many stars
that I now search my dusk-ridden sky
for the one Pinocchio lie
that may carry me from this slavic burlap preakness,
one naked hardwood floor, here in my cave, miles and miles from Greece.

The Great Dipper brush paintings swan dive measured fallen stars
rhythms upon rhythms of algebraic infinities.
Oh old and ageless sky
how long must I scan thee for the questions
whose answers I hold in my palms of lard and fireflies?

The slaughterhouse is the same.
A hospital society where some will go to die
breezes are more dark stars
on fingerpainted windowsills
marking the heights of their next summer ritual corner lookout hideaway

MY RUSSIAN SKY IS BURNING OVER KANSAS CORNFIELDS AND L.A. DISCO NIGHTS
MY RUSSIAN SKY IS OPENING AND MOMENTARILY CLOSING ABOVE BACKSEAT HARD-ONS
IN FLINT, MICHIGAN,
Amtrack subterranean vagrant homosexual love affairs
and wide-eyed leopard virgin smiles of first time touch
soliloquy condominiums
carpeted balcony paper plate venus fly trapped me here
hidden away from Mary's awaiting arms.
The Widow Falls Asleep While Reading a Book of Chinese Poetry

Outside her bedroom window,
rushing waterlike sounds—
(tires on black pavement)
bright birdlike chattering—
(children playing a sidewalk game)...

Her late husband comes home
yet again at dusk
and hangs up his coat.
In her arms, the younger child
plucks his tee shirt and
shows off his comic sunglasses.
The older child hangs onto her father’s waist,
giggling for treats.
He tells them he has had milk
and pear nectar for lunch
along with plum cake,—
something patently untrue,—
but the dream does not really lie.

She knows her new lover
will arrive soon.
Perhaps they will take a walk
and admire a ginkgo tree
or gaze at the late August sky
clouding and unclouding itself
With her hand in his,
they will watch the flurry of dry summer leaves
petalling to the ground
From the seven different directions
they will hear the music
of happy wind chimes.
Summer—Vineyard Haven
Where beach meets sound—
creeping sassafras
sand sprawling into
stalk-stiff beach grass—
dry seed pods elegantly
drooping
from distant water—
ferry horn humming
(a glass harmonium)
cardboard boat, Chinese stage—
fifty sail masts ever so lightly
nodding

Snapshots at the Beach
Innocent flesh
in red and yellow and blue
splashing its joy
warm-bellied, content,
the edge of the sand

Reigning mothers
on distant blankets
softened features, windblown words:
"The ladybug wasn't meant
to be buried. She can't
fly away to her home, now."

Heightened sun
rising voices,
bearded hiker with blue backpack,
tan sculpted legs, sturdy boots,
looking long—
striding on.
Mining the Mother Lode

Mother,
I love your upside-down heart,
your left-footed soul...
You taught me
the purloined jewel
is unacceptable,
quite unattainable
without exploding for myself
the last vein of illusion...
Strike pay dirt!

Pandora's curiosity
alone is insufficient,
surface mining,
fool's gold...
And yet, without it,
daughters never can retrieve
the rosy jewel,
the pink anemone,
the ruby onion...
at the base of the world.

Mother...Mam,
I've turned myself
inside out for you.
And you have smiled...
at last.

The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, May 1983
This is the beauty of the black marble memorial
with the fifty thousand names inscribed,
reaching towards the silent spectators.
A dozen yellow and white roses stare,
in the carefully placed vase,
at the smiling photograph
and the uneven writing of the mother's birthday remembrance.
It is covered in plastic, protected from the rain.
There's a smell of wet grass
and the muffled sounds of children's questions.
...It is late,  
too late for all these young men,  
and eight young women...  
The eyes glaze at the implacable black wall.  
The azaleas weep over the rise near Lincoln's monument.

This is a place where heroes should be honored:  
this is where we remember our hypocrisy.

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A Yeatts Perry

Poem for Lizzy's Black Art

Phoenixes rise from South Bronxian ashes  
He warms his hands on. This heat brightens his markers,  
Sharpens his pencils, loosens his brushes for the night shift.  
This volcanic brick-by-brick-a-brackwords meltdown  
Of imperialism's phallic reactor is his muse.

He is the curlian photographer of the no-longer,  
the recreator of the gone, the escorter of the dying to  
reincarnations door: entropy's hired portrait artist.

You vomit Park Avenue's greezy money breakfast allover cadillac windows.  
You stuff the bounced checks of subsidized housing back through  
Wall Street's pin-striped coffee lips.  
You speak fluent languages the U.N. won't recognize  
Be cause your words realize the situation  
And laugh graphic anuses back at midtown's swarthy face, outside, in
The drunken bugged gossamer American dream brain
You shit art at them everyone wants to see
But can’t through constipated hamburger infected rushhour balls.

They can feel it though. The heat of it. The motion. The sound
of your sparkling boozy colored prophecies playing off
Miley Monky Dizzy Dizzy train cars that click past in seconds
counting off the stolen and numbered days of these streets.
Your paint twitch blurr puts a flea on the slow hide of this oversized tiger
Your paint can is a time bomb, a depth charger
That rusts a hook in the craw of these notorious animals
In their murky, selfish dominion
Skips a fisted beat into they clean time with thick lime,
Black and Pink quick strikes come fulla “LIZZY” allover urban walls,
You drip fire on this dried up system, surprised blonds melt at the sight
of your thing and
Moan up the flames looking for roots through misty ignorant city
schmuck
While you swing ART cages around Babylon’s lyon necks
And tame them nextakin.

Your Pssssssssssssssssssshines they can see it in the fire they feel your
Chk chk chk chk fshshshshshshshsh, and your gone:
eatin’ chunks of chocolate night, swollowin’ bulk loads
of Black Manhattan cakes, autographing city rats’ purple rule,
trackin’ crimes to open-mouth scream poses that you snatch and stroke
back to life in wall-rendered mosaics of cream and blood,
they didn’t want to see cream and blood, but they get it back anyway
In a vogue reflecting pool that cries out glistening sweat script
depictions
of self self self self.

You turn cruel real
Because that’s all there is, there
are no others on these streets, they
left you on, with nothing
a mask could do: nothing to hide from or within
or get the hell out of, it’s every where:
this city of jazz you spray into life, the one you
regurgitate into the face of the prison guard
of capitalism that cages your innocence.
National Security
He told me
my love of him
presented a threat
to national security
so he
stamped me
EYES ONLY
and
TOP SECRET.
Now I reside
quietly
behind locked
desk drawer
seeing the world
through tiny key
hole.
No wonder
love is blind.
Ernest Robson

Sepwidjittinknul

You could predict the set of your advent.

You would not laugh when you heard the bell
of that galley little bedpan jockey Sepwidjittinknul

Is what baffles entropy, the universe's noise.
So you cannot hear the knell
in Sepwidjittinknul's bell

Sepwidjittinknul

If the date Sepwidjittinknul knells
were known
in advance

cutters for money wouldn't sell
a stone

For the past
Who but Homo Sapiens can multiply in reverse without changing the product, and so reverse the order of time in precisely occurring periods of pistons, clocks, vibrations, or cesium atoms?

Who else but Homo Sapiens can reverse the day for the night shift, or seek to reverse the fountain of prime de leen? When but Homo Sapiens can make reversible mechanisms transform the whole surface of the earth into an artificial environment? Who but Homo Grabiens could make artificial environments into a garbage economy with a multiplication of population that pisses away 600,000,000 years of captured sunlight in 100 years.
D. A. Scheffler

An Affair of Honor

We shall meet on the Plain of Mars
where the grass drips blood, cleanly,
as for a cause celebre.
We shall dance an artless dance to show respect,
to seal intent. If,
by such means we induce trance we merely
keep the lines between us bent till we regain our soft composure
and can again stumble laterally, civilized.

We shall struggle with huge stones, avid & cuneiform,
our arms, light as peacock feathers,
loosed toward the clouded stars.

Afterward, we may repair to bars where colleagues
challenge coyly,
smearing our faces with jam-drenched gauntlets,
leaving runic impressions on rough blushing cheeks.

We shall meet on the Plain of Mars—
Overweight retainers proceed, clamoring slogans,
ready to staunch should we bleed or rewrite history, regardless.

We struggle, through clenched teeth, to
enunciate though diphthongs trip like vines in the forest;
the tongue strains to mimic the mad whirl of sense from the brain
now trapped in a dogleg of logical, reasoning throat.

We shall meet on the Plain of Mars,
spiral-bound
notepads glinting toward the planets;
well-padded with quotes
we shall dance.
I am the failed Nun; the thin shadow
cast on Skid Row streets while defrocked Priests
wail high nasal snippets of Mass
to rust-scaled subway gratings.
My number, scrawled on toilet tile, abides
to pace bleary nocturne into light's dissipation.
I fear the streets
through which I dimly crawl, ever sweating cold.
I fear elevators; Motion on my soft inertia
within those whizzing tombs
short circuits me. My numbness
still receives no warmth from rosary or candle.
Weep not for me. Though
Life's abominations well and gurgle from my spleen,
yet am I more awake
than all my cloistered dying Sisters.

At dusk. The resonance.
A hundred hunks of lovely, lonely architecture
calling over traffic,
singing over the river to their loves in Camden,
to those rotting, hot buildinigs
with open doorways & glassless windows.
Masonry making music, stone atoms
swinging like Coltrane thru reeds of rain-warped plywood;
buildings breathing deep, boiling up tunes
from the diaphragm. Gargoyles gurgle Gershwin,
buttresses fly. Dusky tremolo expands below the street,
sluicing up thru sweaty metal grate. Teenaged
vampires stir beneath the Art Museum,
licking lips still greased with last night's blood.
O Boy They say
Wonder what's good tonight?
Schema of a Protracted Love in Three Movements

I
For the Reverse of an Ordinary Picture Postcard
I bring to you myself, torn wide, &
gain from you the Robe of True Concealment;
then, lost, displaced, I
crawl till sunrise rancid alleys, moaning
at your memory like a cat.
I had gone fat inside my mind & you just shaped me up,
boiling loose my girth with aerobics of emotion,
purging dead synapses with sauna-snapping bolts of
Yes & No. Let's
have a go, you said. We
never did. I've locked my suitcase.
The critics panned the show.

II
Proposal
Here, in a wring, pledged beyond Time's hot
minute, here,
in the market, unintelligible secrets
whispered by ethnics, now,
with the endives and watercress,
now, encompassed by celery,
lunatic passion draws out me like pus from a wound.
Ah! I am noble, thus savaged;
yes—half-barbaric, civil's thin patina rimmed
ragged at edges—oh!
crust me over like pita, fast fry me
that no overflowing of boundaries my
light-minded moment might pull me deep
into the fetid cold regions of uncharted pond.
III

Geography

Northern latitudes of ignorance, crosstown blocks of perfidy;
biliosness less recompense pressuring the mercury
to fly away, rip thru
the glass & jet out, inky metal flecked across the sky,
grey, massive vapor.
Eastern decibels of bovine blight, western depths of hot harass,
Time drools now on sands of slate while cooly eyeing some young
ass and dreams of hay, a barn
with wood & dung, calm edifice unbowed though worn with rot,
and sick to the heartbeats, alone.
Across the bay some hungry gull is fishing,
and at the lighthouse near the point
an automatic switch turns on the lights.

---------------

I wanna see what happens.
I wanna see what happens
when the shit hits the fan. When
everything goes down at
once. When big, wet, steamy, rancid
turds crawling with maggots reach themselves
out, stretching
the theories of quantum mechanics and,
arcing past the speed of light, smack square
into those quivering rotors. Those
blades, so long waiting, now
over-ready to do their work in a sloppy orgasm of chaos.
I wanna see. I wanna
be there. Get ready the feast, primp
for the wedding, sharpen the knives.
Will there be bullets enough?
Will it keep raining poop after the last
bomb has boomed? I hide
in my room, dream wet dreams of doom.
I wanna see it, y’know?
Do ya know where to go? I mean,
I know where the shit is—
tell me, where is that fan?
Lamont B. Steptoe

For Jesse Owens

Like some dark comet,
You streaked across the sky
of the world leaving nations
to wonder for generations.
Magic African shaman,
bolting from the blocks
faster than a slave from
a hound dog running North
to freedom.
Ran so fast
that Der Fuhrer
was in a fervor
and jackbooted Nazis
couldn't believe their eyes.
Blew Deutschland's mind,
years before the Allies pounded
Berlin to rubble.
Didn't they know that your
ancestors used to chase gazelle
for fun?
They say you died but naw
you just movin' so fast they can't
see you no more.
Do 'dat, Jesse!
For Gwen Brooks
Ancient Mother,
Nile Woman/Queen Mother,
Nubian Woman,
You, rule worlds like
Cleopatra ruled Upper Egypt.
Yours are the eyes that cap
the pyramids,
Yours are the eyes that are the
fulcrum for the universe.
Stolen African Child,
Your screams of anger
and longing for home are
poetic symphonies that build
libraries and create villages.
You, snipe from rooftops
with your sentences,
You, plow fields and chop
cotton with your exclamation
points,
You, cook cabbage with your
poetry,
you slaughter pigs with your poetry,
You, bake fresh bread,
You, pull up greens from city
backyard gardens,
You, play numbers everyday with
your poetry,
you, fill up the house with your
chitlin’ smellin’ poetry,
You, rub linament on arthritic
joints with your poems,
You, set traps with your words
breaking fat rat necks,
You, hunt down roaches in
tenement kitchens with your rhymes,
You, clean windows, scrub floors,
open doors with your poetry,
You, heal the sick, feed the hungry,
give sight to the blind with your poetry,
You, set chained souls free
and raise the dead,
simply by the things you’ve said.
Horn Player
There’s a horn player in here!
There’s a horn player wailing in the chambers of my heart.
Black notes racing up the stairs of my life running to the truth.
There’s a horn player in here,
a trumpet player,
screeching rainbow vibrations
that heal, heal, heal,
al pain!
There’s a flutist flying notes like kites
in the March winds of my life!
There’s a trombone dropping music like bombs
on ears eager for love.
There’s an oboe and a bassoon
riding in from the hinterlands on albino asses!
There’s two saxophones gobbling up sound
like a million starving humans reprieved
from incarceration and execution
blowing notes that set the flesh ablaze
and explode
the blood in fountains
of eruption!
There’s a horn player in here,
who never picked up a
horn in his life!

==================================================================
Comet Flower

Riotous-Ocean-Storm,
Broken-dam-torrent,
Fleet-footed flame of forest conflagration,
Molten-lava-volcanic-ejaculation,
Whirlwind-gale-force-passion,
rushing across time warps like spooked-stallions-sprinting for safety.

Rabbit death screech.
Thunder-god-creation-scattering galaxies like bowled over pins down the corridors of infinity,

Magic He/She man-superman-witch doctor of life,
Sorcerer-warlord-jagged shard of lightning-
Super nova-sun spot-mushroom comet flower-
Straddler-of-rainbows-cloud dweller-moon dweller
Eater of constellations-the Pied Piper of ant armies.

Rumbling-railroad rockfall,
Toppling timber-titan-cobra hiss geyser-
Angry-bee-swarm, stinger of sadnee.
Healer, Helper. Christ.
Artist of evolution. Poet.
African Butterfly
African butterfly...
African butterfly...
African butterfly...
African butterfly...butterfly...butterfly...
African butterfly,
your beauty does not lie...
your beauty does not lie...

In a land of steel and stone
you can only be alone...
In a land of steel and stone
you can only be alone...
Across mighty waters you flew
but not with wings of self,
Across mighty waters you flew
but not with wings of self.

Wings pinned back to decks of old,
hot sun fading colors of gold.
Crowns and kingdoms
and thrones so bright
scattered in the dust
for a starless night.

Rivers of scarlet blood
staining the sea from shore
to shore.
Rivers of scarlet blood
staining the sea from shore to shore.

O' African,
O' African,
what do they call you now?
O' African,
what do they call you now?
Where are your mango trees,
Where are your cowrie shells,
Where are your happy children bells?

African butterfly
your beauty does not lie...
African butterfly
your beauty does not lie...

When they brought you to these shores
you were neither criminal nor thief...
You were a conquered king,
you were a conquered king.

And now they tell you, you are worth no-thing,
And now they tell you, you are worth no-thing.

Beat your wings against the web
and flee before the spider comes home.
Beat your wings against the web
and flee before the spider comes home.

Like some Nubian drumbeat
break free, quaking the earth with your Gods...
Like some Nubian drumbeat
break free, quaking the earth with your Gods...

Sarge Sterling

Words
The use of words
Is not necessarily rainbow,
Or the warm sun low
In the distant hills.
Sometimes words are cold
And must be thawed
Like a frozen river
And melting in the afternoon.

Morning Talk
Coming down the park, just off the hospital,
the woman said, you look respectable
May I talk to you?
You see I am on my way to the shore,
I've been raped, beaten and I am on welfare,
But my face looming down on you
It is strong, and sunburned, my eyes are clear and blue
But my teeth they are rotten in me.
What I mean is let me take your hand
I will kiss your cheek
Or your lip, or your chin
Let me have a bit to take the train
She folded the bill and said
You can make love to me anytime.
Senior Citizen (Lady) in the Dark Glasses
What eye are you hiding?
The one that saw the haystack
And the dancing boys with the bright cheeks.
What year was it?
Is it darker now that morning is here,
And you lean on your withered arms
And drink sweetened coffee at the old corner restaurants.
Are your eyelids closed?
Are you seeing your mother with her tall birch rod
Your father in the cornfield
Falling over in the hot sun and you in your only dress.
Lady pull down your glasses and find the world as it is,
It will get you sooner or later.

Sing Song Wholesale Retail
I heard him say, I get it wholesale
I said what, he said hours, they are wholesale
Minutes I get retail, and no returns,
What do you do with your days, if they break down,
I return them to the dealer, he says, sorry
The warranty is over.
I heard him say, I'll do my days like this
From morning to noon; noon to evening;
Sleep away, man, sleep away;
Tomorrow you can get it at a bargain counter,
Days, hours, minutes, seconds,
When you buy a bundle; lend me one,
A minute, he said, Where can I get it wholesale?
Jack Veasey

Chameleon
A lizard much like
the majority of men, adept
at blending in with backgrounds,
istantly
invisible
like any proper individual,
like any lizard in the business.

Invisible
and voiceless, one
without its brothers makes
a perfect pet.

But gone grey
against a tweed lapel,
the leash it's on
gone limp, the creature
sleeps and seems
to dream, its tiny eyelids
flickering, its torso
twitching.

It dreams of
a mirror, of
a vacant shade of silver
all its own, of
a floating face whose color
is no color...

of its own eyes
peering back, wistful
and wise, as if
to say, "I am,
I am."
White Wine, White Light

Though only
in a photograph,
in black-and-white
at that, somehow
the bird turns
iridescent
and begins

to beat its wings, freed
from the frame...
startled alive
by the wild
mind

of one drunk
man, watching, one man
wondering why only
he can see

the bird set free,
the bedclothes breathing, or
the firestorm
on the turned-off
TV screen.

Though stoned, he knows
no camera
can capture this
great kindness; time
erases graces gleaned
from bottled God.
So, sobered

by the beauty
of the bird,
he plucks
a quill
and
pens
this
poem
About the People in the Paperweight

The world where they live
is a glass ball
I hold in my hand

Their shuttered hut
sits
on a mountainside
where there is light
but never wind;
though they know of
no such thing as
sea, somehow
it's underwater

When I shake the ball,
I make it snow
like God,
though this snow
rises from the ground, unlike
white flakes in nature, sky-
less,

made of plastic like
the people I imagine
in the house,
behind shut doors

Their door is not disturbed
by knocking's noise, nor
by the shoulders
of intruders, nor
by prying key nor
finger-triggered
bell

Their faces and their figures
I envision
through a fog,
faint as the shapes
most people only
fear, unformed
but full of force
from our unconscious
minds,
ancestral faces
faded from mere memory,
unfocused faces
full of implications

I can only wonder
who
and how
and where
their other
missing
children
are, though I imagine
we
are
many

as the dreams
they don’t remember, as
our own dreams...we

who walk in a world
without walls, where the snow
melts in merciless sunshine,
under a wide sky whose weathers
emerge from no
eyes—

not as tears, not
as terrible
glances—
no pity, no
suspicion, no
sent
vengeance,
no religion but
a cold
reality,

drawn down
only by the simple
fact of
falling

on an unsheltered globe
with no
God


In Memory of Jan Sergienko

Before your final suicide attempt, the open note you wrote me read:
"Dear friend and double,
I will meet you
on another planet."
The note still reads the same, now filed away
amid the safety of
old lovers' letters, paid bills, state certificates, fixed photos
sealed in plastic.
The note is
still, will
always be, exactly
as it was
in your live hands.

But now my face has changed, despite its surface sameness;
like the bright speck of a distant planet, when the earth has turned away,
the light remains but now gleams out of sight. I wait,
or so I tell myself, until it is my night to shine again.
Dear Jan,

what planet were you thinking of? It must be one that still shines unexplored, where our resemblances glow clearly, where the differences are prisms for the inner colors, prisms and not prisons. Where time is one unending moment, distance nonexistent, where we whisperers are free to love and listen, where what once were secrets glisten for a sea of still-wide eyes... where the atmosphere is breathed in peace by equals.

How is it that they forced us to be narrow, spiked our minds with tiny knives? How is it that our one song came out strangled, sounding like half-hearted lies?
Like me, you were an only child,
yet strangers took the two of us
for twins: perhaps what's felt's
where one's true face begins...

What we felt was true:
that much we knew,
we knew
how full our dreamy-seeming heads,
how full our empty-seeming hands,
how old our oddest childhood ways,
how new the picture all this drew,
how new

I don't know what you saw
that made you turn away
the way you did: I don't know even
if you knew

I only know that,
in my mirror,
I see something of you
still alive...
that part of me
you reached,
that's not afraid
to live forever, nor
to die...

Dear friend and double,
every day
I meet you
on this planet, old
and deadly dull, yet
frighteningly
new:

this planet is
another planet
now, since
there is me since
there was
you
Tokens
These small tokens rest in my bureau drawer
hidden under wool socks, I cherish them
as a cache of emeralds and diamonds
periodically I dig through the socks, sparks,
sparkles, glints
her face flashes toward me over her shoulder
her thick back, soft, smooth, strong

These tokens, mail sent or found inside
of a pocket
sometimes her fragrance engulfs me as though
she sent it to seek her target, find it, explode
around it, me

I want my bureau drawer to fill,
be overtaken,
crowd out my socks,
spill onto the floor, wash me
away through the streets to her

h. l. zlatkin

tallulah
darling darling darling
i must tell you
everything
about my new romance...
i love your hat
$3.00