

GOLD WAKE PRESS

Chronology



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THORNS AND ROPES

To bleed jealous colors,
plucking eyelashes like thorns
from
wounded rainbows,

I'll scribble a moustache on
every breathing hologram like
a ghost writer's
gag order (—

I know I'm still using a crayon
but it's too late for omens) —

I can still remember —

Your every word hung
from the rafters
above me,

the thought of any one of them
weighing me down
before they even
fell,
before

you cut their ropes with your teeth —

Genevieve Kaplan

As we passed
on the street, you approached

from behind.
Out of your mouth

came rocks,
stones, grains of sand.

Speak. Bitter breath
loses ground to night,

morning, and tomorrow,
lives on after shiftings

such as time. Speaking, yes
speaking, say yes

yes, as if you knew, back
when you believed it,

that the statement would be formed
in many mouths.

Jeff Crouch

Robespierre

like the flaming eye of a Cyclops
but here mutton is a rare dish

heads roll over the mountain
the sky begins to drift

Kristina Marie Darling

LES TEMPS MODERNES

Contrabassoons, violincello, sing me to sleep as the opera house begins to crumble. Porous with years, its vaults and beams stand skeletal against a greenish night. And the velvet curtains—wilted like petunias, each gold tassel grown heavy with dust. Since the proprietor took up cabaret, chanting indolently in his pince-nez and dark grey suit, the orchestra pit and its musicians have fallen into disrepair. As the instruments rust, their strings still rattle with *Le Chat Noir*, echoing like a strange cadenza in the empty rooms.

ALL THRIVE

The Great Mentor, frailed premature, backleaned against the sidewinds strong, holding upside down an inkpen, so The Boy could study the draining ink downslide through the glass shaft – *fragile! fragile! fragile!* – and tipout as purple blue waves in the wind: a lullaby nightmare occurring; recurring; re-occurring.

Discipline

(E. Dickinson)

Ink effaces her hands—
blemished and white—
smearing the precise manuscript.
The words come
like the happenings
in a dream recalled:
concrete, yet veiled
from their distinct meanings.
A semblance of form appears,
shaping narratives from
experiences imagined
perhaps, lived more
vividly through vicarious
maneuvers. The maneuvers
that give way within
a moderately furnished room—
vistas of swirling ideas—
counter against walls,
blank and unresponsive.
The silence is only
an afterthought.

&

To him, the earth has become a story. This will be the story of the earth. This will be the story of the earth becoming a story. This will be the story of a man, dying, as his girl flies to him or away from him or into the sun, wings of wax, dripping back into it all, tracing her lines into his, the rings of a tree, lumbered and down, made into a chest, his chest, holding his heart.

And this will be the story of a story. And this will be the story of a man, dying in his bed, unable to breath, blinking into motionless space, nothingness, the intrepid shadow of a world. And this will be the story of people made into rings. A man made into wood. Sculpted, him, into a statue of himself. Him, made into a box, a square, the corners of his window, the growing outside dusk, the dusted lines of gray and the limbs of trees leafless and staunch. Him, with his stiff legs and the blood trickling. This man, dying. This will be the story of that and him, breathing last breaths.

Lying Awake With An Empty Space

It is the nearly silent pulse
steady and insistent
that keeps her awake.

One million reasons, as her downfall
lays stiff and motionless.
Sheets pushed to her ankles,
a cold sweat in early april.

Winding roads of indecision and
a desperate, numbing loneliness
as her blood still rages on
turning around the corners of her toes.

Her brain firing shot after shot
of unrealized scenarios,
she resolves to quit him for good.

COMPLETE SUMMARY

Tell me
everything
about yourself

in a short, one
word paragraph

like a cigarette
hovering vertically
over a marble

or the irony of tress
blooming
in graveyards

or waking up
in a mattress
factory...

Quick: the end is,
it's getting younger—

we'll moonlight
as sunbeams
like liberty statues.

672 Hours

*Yes, I try
to kill myself in small amounts...*

-Anne Sexton, from "The Addict"

I.

This rehab's pert landscape never lets up.
Colors ascend each day.

At night, my bed
evaporating gin and chemical lymph.

I watch the inexplicable face
of a dead clock. Chimp-thin, fed bananas,

Valium, the blue apples sheep will eat.
Big Books are flapping like nervous owls.

A cat-voiced nurse bothers my orchid.
I have no time, nor acquaintance with health.

II.

The dulling nature of bronze monuments,
or the melting of glaciers.

My cellmate's hiatus. His bunk, unoccupied,
the sea without its comprehending blue,

perfectly emptied, below my knees.
He had perched over my detox,

on wet-watch, bucket between thumbs.
These clinic pillows crush

under my perched elbows.
To my sober eye: dry rocks, coarse but sure.

III.

He threw me out like wine glasses flying.
Now, my sad jacket hangs there on the hook,

a fine silver corkscrew in its pocket.
We drank waist-deep, handed our fat livers,

the coronation of local drunkards
with daily liquors.

I popped open like champagne before him.
The tenant mice drowned in beer bottles.

Today, I'm left behind,
a green cherry in a highball.

IV.

My 12 by 12 flayed open.
Parched progress, an inflammation

of the brain in its dead lagoon.
My head engraved with sunshine, indefatigable.

Pieces of bone glittering like broken tumblers.
A blazing kiss, my lover who put me here.

My tidy partner
who revisits his checkbook,

lost in that green navigation,
keeping track of sequins on the ceiling.

V.

Yesterday's eggshell,
palm-smear and thin, discarded.

I suffer sufficiently in rehab, distilling the air to wine.
My patient face is good china, as fine

and clean as the moon in this hospital saucer.
Orderlies circle like seagulls.

I flinch beneath the ping
of pecked glass.

Alcoholics collected, made public,
a display of bottled fetuses.

THE BOOK OF MUSIC

She remembered the book from her prior home, with its damselflies and its blue shutters. And she recalled a passage from within the book, describing the sound of a cello: *...the hollow mumbling. A hum like the cold that undoes one's teeth in winter and rattles the gums.* Those mornings she thumbed through its pages, listening. The shutters flying open as though they were wings. Some nights, she slept in a room with crystal dishes and harpsichords. She dreamed the movement between octaves in electric light.

Susan Maurer

A raw poem

A raw poem
Slides down the honey throat
Like oysters
Like jism
To the belly that lives forever

The vagina of the universe
Spews forth stars
And burbles like la source
The cute
The cute
We must avoid it, baby charm jongleur
Gather horse
The reins and I lean forward
Poised in the saddle
For the leap, the hurdle
The jump into wha?

Café du Monde

After a humid morning walking
the French Quarter, we sink into black
metal chairs under a canopy at Café du Monde.

My sister and I chase warm beignets
with milk cold as snow while our parents
sip chicory coffee bitter like a late-night argument. Popping

the last bites into our mouths, we want
to take a riverboat cruise, walk Bourbon Street,
shop in the French Market, ride home in a trolley car along

St. Charles Avenue. Dad leans back, blowing
smoke rings. *Slow down, there's plenty of time.* Mom
crosses her arms, then stares into her cup, dark and bottomless.

Where The Music Lived

there were three record stores
that almost managed to survive
to the millennium
there was The Pyramid
where I bought many of my 45's
and now exists as a t-shirt store

further down Washington Avenue
I found The Record Mill to be cheaper
with a better selection
which is also where I met Caroline
who probably got in trouble
for talking to me for so long

I was at Soundtrack in Dumont
during the first week they were open
and would come there mostly
to talk music with Pat, the owner
who would order anything I wanted

this personal touch can't be found
at Best Buy or Circuit City
Tower is impersonal and a bit sterile
still, these are the choices left
for old school collectors like me
the little guys have been pushed out

The Record Mill is a karate studio

Soundtrack is a chocolate shop

Adolescents in Western Wisconsin

As if god were truly dead, dim birds
hang their heads casually perched
on the stout powerlines running
alongside forgotten freight rails
cutting across marshes, bogs, and
farms. No prayers just trackmarks;
a litany of crucifixes,
of scars. Summer is a boredom
dangling above a creek ravine
on a trainbridge drunk and dusted
red by rusted iron waiting
for the Amtrak rush. Looking
to pass out, wake up, just for once
to feel alive where you are.

J. Michael Wahlgren

Canoe

After every *after*, follow suit, were
two women in their swimming suits:

Do me a favor: It *is* your recipe
I savor, one said

to the other;

You are the poem I never finish,
a light
~~diminishing~~ softly

as Night waits for the woman in blue
to complete her conversation. Her last cigarette;

Curtains.

Corey Mesler

Graceland

I went to scoff and, chastened,
stayed to pray. I prayed
that there would be something
at the end for all of us,
something more than a cold
bathroom floor. Someone
handed me a candle, already lit.
Someone handed me a poem.

Pith

Once she swam
bare in the river

where cattails
grew thick over

wetlands that merged
land and stream.

Her body traveled
the watercourse

above rocks nestled
in a bed of mud

below. Bulrush
was all she saw

until the wind blew
a downy blossom

above her naked soul.
Now she feels

the flowering stalk
where small birds nest

and insects thrive.
She slips the stem

between her teeth
and says the word, papyrus.

Self-Portrait With Apology, The Insurance Salesman

As with any commodity, oxygen is worthless until supply is threatened. Did you know your respiratory system is like a ductwork system that loses pressure intermittently? There are many reasons why, but my guess is your tongue. It's a terrorist sleeper cell. It's Helen of Troy desperate for the Grecian navy. The point remains: you hemorrhage breath without a second thought. God forbid the rapture is postponed. The free market favors first entrants, and the elderly have attempted life long before you. Stems cells and bionics mean they'll live forever. 100% of the earth will be a seething blue mass. At this time, your tongue will become an unwelcome bouquet. Smashing it into the pavement will accomplish nothing. No one will look. Why lose sleep—sign this contract. You won't have to worry if she hesitates for a second, if your tongue sticks between your front teeth. Apropos of nothing, you'll always be able to say *thank you for accepting me.*

Act III (of Edward Hopper's Nighthawks; a conversation)

Silver is the color of the sky at dusk. I marvel at the smoothness of your skin as rust stained clouds cover the moon and a shroud of smoke leaves night without a way to escape. Right now, we can outrun fear and remain safe in each others secrets--right now we know we are truly made of the same dirt and fire.

I want to dig below the snow, find a handful of soil and burn it. Mark your body with its ash. Let you mark mine. I search for shards of beauty to give you, ask you to enfold me in your rust stained clouds as I get lost in the smoke of your words. I do not want to escape, will confess every crime, every imagined sin just to be in your company. Fear is a blanket we'll wrap around each other, shed when we no longer need it.

Tell me every story you know, again and again, until I am filled with nothing but you. Tell me about scabbed elbows and braids, morning and bare feet padding to the window to trace frost with your finger. Tell me about your first wish, the smoothest stone that skipped across the water and how you felt yourself in each ripple and wave. Let me cup your voice in my hand, carry it with me until the snow melts and the air smells like wet leaves.

Blocks Behind Bund

Court musicians traded wings
 their brilliant silk-faded pinions
 or just lives
for our khaki gray & navy
(they're not uniforms today
 traded their patrons
 some centuries ago
for grubby yi jao & re-creased notes
in hands still smooth

 by calluses to play
not lift grain
must play at our request
and never at some government
 to eat.

Disco Ball

The moon and its inkblots
swing from the earth and its sidewalks
a rendezvous to the place, to the light side
of the half-dark face, where the souls
of our shoes are made of gold
and we tread, Oh Muse,
as though we were within eclipse—
what a disco oh-so familiar!

We could fly a kite as high as space
is wide and could find as many reasons
as the sea is deep to outcry,
and the marching of little coincidences
coincide with my insides
as if in a real-life play.

What a disco oh-so familiar!
We have flown a kite as high as space.

Trazodone

Slippery little thing, why do you remain answerless?
I nailed the hurdy-gurdies (the ones

my grandfather gave me long ago)
to a wooden slab, hid them in a closet.

I'm too electrical, too full of wired current
to wind their pulleys, awe such simple

machinery – my childhood opera. Your short-
circuits worry me. What if the house catches fire?

What of the dog, his singed tail? What of the kid, her
baby-dolls and lip-gloss? What of my lover, loved-less

and ashy-kneed? What of my lips, impartial?
What of the ripe cedar, the blight nails,

the music? What of the closet door, cooked shut?

last first kiss

he was a violinist,
told her
he would pay
for voice lessons.
she described him as
older (27) and going bald.
she was seventeen
when this rich man
asked her to marry him,
she said no,
she had already been kissed
by my father,
who had no money,
but at eighteen
had long lashes,
blue eyes—
and silky blond hair.

Donora Hillard

The Plagiarist

I copied your name onto my forearm. I meant I wanted to accuse rather than remind.

I meant I would have stolen your skin before you turned me into an autistic teenager.

I meant men gave me their teeth before you came. I meant the ink bled. Your name ran.

Pondo Loves Francois Louie

In New York, ghosts do not float.
They shift by
in flickers, to the beat
of Pondo's curdled stomach,

collapsing like kisses in his iris
sprawling against
resistant color

while a tall cat glares hubris
at the foot of his stairs.
The eyes are immense

casting him in their gleam.

And Pondo drinks milk
from cartons so spoiled,
the refrigerator racks
have pressed patterns
into their waxen shells.

He is sick from the stench
of cheese, but the meds keep it down.
Francois Louie is crazy, which is beautiful,
sings Pondo,

and he started slapping me around
wanting to know if there were any
massage parlors that gave full releases.

This is not your typical French boy.

Mustachioed smiles at the milk bar
in the East Village with Francois Louie.

He has to sleep with you.

He is a muscular bird.
He goes to Gothic festivals in Germany.
Pondo sells cheese. He is from Modena.

It is where balsamic vinegar is made,
and he also sells grain. Pondo loves Francois Louie,
and the word *diaphanous* as it slips
from his tongue, ice in a desert.

Pondo cries as he crumbles gorgonzola

into acrylic cups.
Before I am cremated, I want a strand
of my DNA spliced with a white iris.

*I will
live on.* And Pondo smiles
for cameras that are never there.

Francois Louie collects tarantula carcasses,
mounts them on the wall, gyrating
past the sticky moments and smaller bills.

Come on baby. This isn't love.
(Francois Louie
is moving under the red lights.)

*It's just a dance.
Give me a tip,
so I can move on.*

MORE LIGHT

I'm going away tonight. I'm going over the valley.
I must get to the station.

Boy, fetch my fiddle. Where is my clock?
All compound things are subject to breaking up.

Only one man ever understood me.
And he didn't really understand me.

Codeine . . . bourbon.
Nothing soothes pain like human touch.

More light.
Open the second shutter so that more light may come in.

The Earth is suffocating.

Note: Assembled from death-bed sayings attributed to Salvador Dali, James Brown, Cosmo Lang, Babe Ruth, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, Siddhartha, Frederic Chopin, Bobby Fischer, Robert Roy MacGregor, Tallulah Bankhead, and Johan Wolfgang von Goethe.

SNAP by Adrienne J. Odasso

My father haunts my dreams only when he wants things,
which is a welcome change from his normal guise
of latent killer: he's the one who always murders
my mother, my sisters, my brother. He's asking, no,
begging me to write a poem about my grandfather
and the way he's obsessed with taking pictures. Or, rather,
he's describing the way in which *his* good old dad
won't put down that goddamned out-of-date camera obscura
with its lens dense as bulletproof glass and its shutter
swift as the sparrows caught in the chimney, which he
photographed, too, you'd better believe it. And the snow
that fell on my hair, he wouldn't leave it long enough
to melt or even until the next thunder-clap landed
on the grey sky above us with one resounding *snap*.

Cheryl Snell

A call like a rusty hinge
skreaks overhead.

Garden gates open
only to close again reluctantly.

But this is not about redemption,
it's about identity

and how the glazed sky
hurled through with feathers

will sometimes part like water
for one bird.

It comes to perch
on a tangle of branches,

and suddenly there are many birds.

Rutaceae: PRICKLY ASH

(leaves alternate; leaflets fleshy; plant spiny)

manners (demeanor) matter, dear, considerably more so than textures (perception):

and, (grinning) remember:

you will certainly attract more _____ with _____

Simplicity™ pattern aside, there seems a sundress

(finally) to flatter your figure:

(these slope-shoulders, thick-trunk)

(don't slump, give an air of your bearing)

polka dotted, Swiss bib

A-line, Empire

waistline

a classic

(still acceptable for your age)

Smile, Darling

(you're ever the frump)

and just remember:

You may attract more _____ with _____ than with _____

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