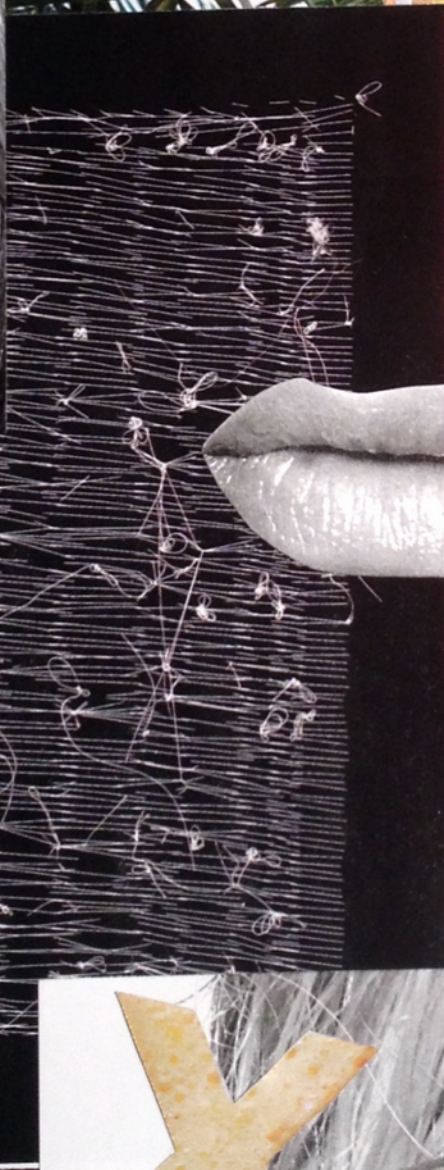


999

ELDERLY



ELDERLY

Lauren Levin

Sara Wintz

Judah Rubin

Cassandra Troyan

Whit Griffin

Chris McCrery

Allison Cobb

David Larsen

NINES

LAUREN LEVIN

I WANT OUR MINDS TO BE THE SAME

It's hard to remember what's in my head
attend to what someone's saying
and grieve over how these 22-year-olds in Sub Rosa look like fiery talismans of
youth

when a baby with a riot of curls makes me think of Alejandra,
13 months (the nurse called her curly top) how I can put my hand on her head
while she's nursing and work my hands through her scalp she doesn't notice

She grabs the cracker from my hand and eats it, she pushes at me on the bed
and says "Off!," she tugs at the mole on my chin and says "Off, off!"
I tell her "That doesn't come off it's part of my skin" she says "Off!" and smiles

destruction is an overwhelming force the joy of it inside her causes action
I wonder if Pasolini had to know that Reagan existed I hope not
what was Reagan doing in 1975 when Pasolini was murdered, when he died in
Ostia

as revolutionary as the lily that grows from the pastoral but only when it's cold
the scaffolding that attends to my mind when I think about someone I love

she has dark curly hair I rub olive oil into her scalp
to dissolve the scales on her scalp. Fighting the yeast on her skin
that leaves a beefy red rash on her vulva I put Lotrimin in her thigh folds,

on her buttocks and vulva I use two wipes on her shit at times pasty or dusty
and hard to remove from her skin. She sits on the toilet for the first time and I
cheer

She says "Bite the toes" I bite the toes

I sense the feelings that always come from me and to me of being wrong
fade a little in the landscape of someone else's touch

The woman across the table from me looks like Catherine Meng: with beautiful
freckles
with sunlight in the hair on her forearm she is saying "how to translate it into
real world action"

The two friends across the table from me are experiencing destructive intimacy
they compare the surface of their forearms, does this tattoo look too much like a
Celtic cross

my worry that my surface doesn't transmit and radiate what I want it to

I could get in the bath but the baby might start to cry
I could write another page but then I would just have more pages
The artist filled a museum space with twelve tons of coal, burying a valuable
diamond

the audience members were encouraged to look for the diamond
what does it mean when we see someone pretending to be a coal miner through
a glass panel
they are dirty and exhausted

the proceeds from the diamond when found are donated to three other young
artists putting on an exhibit called "Black Diamond"
they are not given to any audience members or coal miners
What am I encouraged to look at

What am I encouraged to look at
the inflections in "Pop Life" when Prince sings it, as though "pop" were leaning
left
and "life" right, I look into the space between them

The sentimental, emotional effects of watching time go super-slow
the peace of love, serene justice, placid things, or cold violence
I should pull out the George and Tammy record, "when you look at me like you
do right now, I go to pieces," that's pastoral

In long lines I walk down for a form of slow motion as though I were placing
every word in italics
there's a photo of Tony reading to Alejandra as a bookmark in my copy of
Pasolini's Roman Poems

When she learns a new word the baby attaches "I want" to it
"Wreath," "I want a wreath," "I want candles," "I want pictures"
Ever since I heard Otis Redding sing "I want security and I want it at any cost"

I've been holding onto it for one of these poems

Catherine Meng writes "What if Molly Bloom had said no"
I can't trust this treacherous summer in which anything terrible could happen
in a space below comfort, to suffocate under comfort

One way to think about time: Port Arthur, which once had a refinery, now has a
chemotherapy clinic
Port Arthur, where Janis Joplin was born
Surely for the waste of my time and the sale of it I should be given a diamond

I realize I was rewarded for saying a certain "yes" so I tried on that "yes" for the
longest time
Or maybe a form of thought I never really thought but always lived

Settled into my molecules, a medium not quite glass not quite poison
but with the same chemical composition as my other thoughts
the way diamond has the same chemical composition as coal

A familiar rhythm of mildly detached grinding worry.
But that's the thing. Anxiety helps me survive. I find pinpricks of place.
It smoothes collected states that really are a lot to handle at the end of the day

I hear the familiar voice at a little distance and it's comforting
like the gestures I make that hold time in them, have repetition
filling up a glass in the pitch black and somehow I get the water right to the brim

I've practiced the interval many times

How we know each other may be an easy question
how technologies also carry time in them, and are used on TV
for texture: barcodes, credit cards, and canned food

tracking, money, miles, degrees, minutes, calories
the bygone luxury of air travel

and how nostalgia for the enthusiasm found in objects can erupt too,
nostalgia the emotion that wishes things were people and were in love with me
and my time
I really want the night to last forever I really want to be with you

the coal is useful, the diamond is valuable
like the gestures I make that hold time in them, have repetition
How close I can get to the goal of wanting to destroy all the awfulness that
brought me here

means how close I can get to the will and desire to destroy part of myself
and that has also been said a lot of times
People saying “hey” behind me I think they’re talking to me but they aren’t

That’s the thing about a braid, it’s not a network because it connects nothing to
me
It’s just bringing things together
while I watch and watch

I talk to Alana about an inability to feel the earth or feel with the earth
but it made itself present in last night’s earthquake, we felt it
and pastoral is an idea of working with the earth attuned to its rhythms

but also not having to feel it when feeling it would not be convenient

when I saw the cover of the Lygia Clark book I thought about drooling my own
experiences out of my mouth
then patting the drool and putting it in your mouth
just how Alejandra sticks her fingers in my mouth

I was astonished at the baby’s ability to live without content
her newborn’s face was like a landscape
emotions that weren’t feelings passed across her face

If privacy is the right not to read and not to be read
then my privacy is long since dead
the baby’s body was so dense that no information could get in or out

she was so young that her mind didn’t make any sounds
she was the only being left with any privacy

There was a brilliant insight in that Pitchfork review that “Reagan is a tendency”
like classical or baroque, Apollonian or Dionysian, and a tendency I can’t figure
out other names for
though I grasp part of it in the idea of safety from police, safety from prison,

safety from super-predators,
in safety from ridicule, safety from RSV and enterovirus 68, safety from child-
bearing, safety from chronic pain

and I grasp part of it when thinking about the fact that I am never really a threat
that I can do anything, say anything because saying is nothing
and doing anything is

when rendered in my substance
whiteness, femaleness
so agreeable and comforting –

“American greyhounds are raised to race, and as a consequence
They fear everything except other greyhounds, their kennels, and their
racetracks.”

When you say something pleasing to someone you don't desire to please
You realize you are the scaffold on which the concept “pastoral” is built.

What I like most is to feel warmly reflected in someone else's mind.

Unlike Bert Brecht I didn't live with a household of female collaborators
Who helped me write my works, but like him I cultivated life
As a beautiful, criminal male indolence – until I realized I had already gotten nowhere
with it and learned how to wash dishes

And I feel myself wanting to take on Pasolini's world-weariness like a protective
skin
And Brecht's forceful political cleverness, all these male skins, smooth
Less violent, resentful and absurd than my emotions, and I imagine how it might
feel good to be surprisingly in the midst of Reagan's bravado

Just as how much better than choosing a song is the coincidence of hearing it
playing.

The idea of how we live in the thick of all this

Like digging through a realm of coal for a diamond at someone's clever request

Without even being asked

I wonder if I could figure out which idea was the worst one, the most destructive
and just focus on that

Alejandra says “big hat, big elephant”
her weight shifts its distribution so easily because she's always growing
her height is now her belly is dense

the rules inside her speech learning speech
Sometimes wrong, never in doubt
Since there was a time after I gave birth

In which I didn't exist

was “no more than obedience or GIVING,”

I decide it was important to have lived it
so I can figure out how to be angry

I look for the philosopher's stone

I wrote a poem so now I get to go buy bras

I feel like if I can handle all the strands in a poem
I will repair the world. We all collect each other
The museum removes a piece of its wall and the visitor searches til exhaustion to
fill the space

The loneliness that keeps me connected to the physical world
the fact that Reagan's gift was for making people feel calm
shame as a desire for pleasure and a need to avoid pain

I'm sure you'll fit in my dress, I'm happy to loan it,
congratulations to you

I want our minds to be the same

but what about the many times when not knowing someone is the best thing

not pretending to explain someone else's body with my body because that
doesn't work

When Dr. Ersula Ore, an African-American professor
Stopped and questioned by campus police
Was "forced up against the officer's car and onto the ground

Exposing parts of her body to the public"

As a mother, I have a breast
With this breast I offer nature's quiet sleep
Though I don't myself know nature's quiet sleep

There were many lies about what we were doing
there are many lies about what I'm doing now
this impossible family form

I don't live very often

Little clusters of milk holding discrete in the coffee
They must be spoiled

I want to insinuate my mind into yours until there's no difference
I want to ferociously guard and hoard her until my last breath
In deep space tenderness, sadness
We absorb each other the way the landed gentry absorbed the capitalists in the
19th century
And vice-versa, there's nothing else I feel so sure of
Lately she's started moaning while she nurses, as though she's still hungry while
she eats

When two strings are tied together with a frustrating knot
It means I didn't know how to braid
Although it's too hot the sun also feels

More life-giving than usual
The weight of it on my arms and legs stirred up by the breeze
And the pleasure of sitting in the sun while I pick a knot apart

With my fingernails and teeth
and see the people I know in the neighborhood
in the blocks around the house

I can't shake the feeling that all these people think I should be done with writing
That as "poet-mom" I'm persisting beyond my sphere and hour of use
In my indolent space of day watching dogwalkers go by

And householders and hired labor doing yardwork and construction
Now I'm walking home a woman with a small baby in a stroller we cross
I smile at her she looks at me coldly as I'm not related to her

not one of her – I want to protest but the baby is at daycare
in this moment of time in which I have all the riches of time
I think I have the baby with me but I don't

Wanting to be with her
Wanting to be alone

Not working is an opportunity to create new needs

Alejandra needs to raise herself and lower herself on the coffee table
She needs to see the top spin
She needs to put her mouth on my hand and feel herself shout

She reminds me of every weird thing I've done when I'm by myself

I keep reading Pasolini's poem "Rage"

It's about exiting a rose-shaped sphere of safety
And becoming public property

And because safety is intolerable but so is being property
because whether you are known or unknown is intolerable
the poem speaks truly to say that this condition is the author of rage.

I dreamed that I asked my mom if she was annoyed with me
She said yes and that bugged me
I told her: the last few times you were upset I didn't even notice

All the possibilities your love had taken away from me

One problem with poems is that they want to be everyone and yet only
themselves

The fact is my anger, my sadness and shyness, will always temper me in half
when the blue so greatly dissolves what building my life becomes
I try to read Pasolini while I'm taking a nap

I hear the Lena Dunham Fresh Air interview and her answers
shaped by a perfect amiability
as though with the guidance of each question

Her intellect produces a reply in implicit agreement with the interviewer
that also remains just exactly what she wants to say
and within the frame of her pleasantness

one topic she discusses is the type of perfect sexual adaptability
and desire to please that lead to a burning rage
"You want to stick it in my ear? Stick it in my ear."

I ask myself first how to write a poem
And then how to do something else

You do not have my permission to make art
no no I do not
I won't have my own permission to make art, I will not

I want you to see me as a real artist not a hobbyist
but motivation can be a surprising matter
it appears and it's gone

The low hum of my indolent sexual body
its being almost nothing with an idea to masturbate
with a heat in the folds of my neck and the birdsong

outside and in the computer
is something I look for in moments alone
the promiscuity of being alone

and the dream of being together
though anyone who takes my energy I can't bear it
What if I were the last, if no woman ever had to do caregiving ever again

Normal people must agree to have their worth vary
But I didn't want to enter the space where my worth would be nothing –

I'm bonded by my creditors, who have the most interest in keeping me alive

Who touched the baby before she touched herself?
Who touched me before I touched myself?

The gestures I make over her contribute to her loss of inwardness

I find her with my eyes and give her what I don't have
then we keep moving and cross paths with others
To give them our weakness and try heedlessly to protect them with our eyes

Sentimentality is the word for love that isn't considered important
Or for a love that is too general, sinking and flushed
like a beefy red rash, like a hatred of nobility
a hatred and a sinking away

Are we strands that interweave or do we accompany each other
are we really inside each other the way I think we are

I romanticize the idea of being strong
And also the idea of being loved and shielded
Resting in the heat I took on from the bathwater

Though you should never believe what you read on the Internet
It's only the people in forums and support groups who can tell you
what might really happen to you

Only Suzy and Nina could tell me
that I might feel very hot, have a tight anxious feeling in my chest,
feel an all-over full body flush like a body high

that I might spend four hours looking for my coat and get so scared.
Group knowledge corded together out of experience
Has its form-making strength, these forums have their Virgils and their Beatrices

On the A.R.E. forums it was Lugnut, in the Crazymeds forums it's Angela R.
in the Kaiser Baby and Me group it's Sarah Fetter
Alejandra can stand now

Holding on to the bookcase
She gestures at things that she'd like to rip up

Even if an artwork could be inserted directly into the viewer's mind
I would still consider it sculpture, and it would still have a form.

How to please another being

How to have something inside that feels without pleasing

all these contradictions
moments I revisit

she washed up on my chest

others I had failed to be
the nurses took her away
and washed her hair and body

they poured cups of warm water over her head
Tony later said she liked it
She liked being away from me

The center of gravity went with her
I couldn't see her
She was obscured by other bodies tending her

I was by myself
I was unthought and I had to be alive
with my exhaustion, sorrow, anger and pleasure

at watching people tending her
while I was in my distance
while I loved her.

I agree that it's time to name names -

Who killed Pier Paolo Pasolini?
capitalism, publicity, homophobia and exile

Who killed Ana Mendieta?
patriarchy, misogyny and Carl Andre

There's no way to look at some thing to make it something else.
There's no way of knowing or amount of knowledge that will fix things.
what I'm looking for is a way to join with the world

And love won't let me do that any more than hatred will
maybe what I'm looking for is anger as a spark for a minute that doesn't hold on
to anything
what do you think about anger when it burns for a minute as a sudden clarity

As in the requiem for Michael Brown
When the protestors sang interrupting the symphonic performance
Of the Brahms requiem and then walked out of the hall chanting "Black lives
matter"

Everyone should agree that traveling through landscape is beautiful.
And so when I read Pasolini's *Roman Poems* I think of how I got to see
Rome and feel
that his words suggest my memories of warm dust and ochre

Except that he knew it and lived there, saw it warmly and coolly with anger and
sorrow
in the promiscuity of being alone
he knew it all day with his eyes

Because what can the future bring us by itself
Only words spoken into the air

Sometimes Tony hears the song that's in my head

He starts to hum it unconsciously

SARA WINTZ

SIX POEMS

i drank coffee
i sorted laundry
i put clothing in the washer
i went for a walk
i acquired the sun
i went home
i put laundry in the dryer

i hung all of my denim over the shower
and it dripped while i was reading

i fell asleep in bed under the night sky

dreams exploring geometry reveal thoughts of somewhere
of being someone else

across the kitchen several feet away
someone moves elevated fifty feet above the intersection of bushwick and montrose

grey branches draw cursive under a black and white sky
on television a crowd huddles, then moves forward through space

i walked home
i took a shower, ate dinner, tidied up
drank tea
folded laundry

i am getting ready to go to bed
alone in my apartment: i am part of the discussion

every time talking to a friend
conversations about how to live

that the poem begins in my voice

in the city
on the phone

the way that two sets of fingers
combine through each other
and thinking about intimacy
the way that we talk

inside
outside

the way that a voice stands out
in the world

on the planet
on the phone

the way trains are followed by worlds
character looks out a window
before moving forward again

voice onstage
fades to cars on the highway
on tv the character
who is compelling because he is incomplete
we wonder and question
what is character

i don't know, and even that feels liberating to say it
i don't know into the soft moonlight, into the hills like a western
into the soft skin of some cactuses goes aloe vera, easy does it, into the sky goes the
moon. into the streets go the people
into the window goes the yellow into the grass goes green
into the hills goes the faded golden brush
into the brush go flowers

WOMAN BY DAY

“she---“ “and she---“ “and she---”
husband says by way of introducing himself
how relationships work: husband says
“woman by day unique to man who affirms again and again”
(this woman still has said nothing)

i am almost thirty, nothing helps this from becoming
a lyric poem written in the twilight entitled MY CAREER IS OVER—no i mean
A WOMAN BY DAY (observed while staring into bookshelves before forehead drops
foreword to meet the wooden shelf where books assemble)

like models who adorn heels
while responding to the written command
DON'T STOP TURN AROUND
scrawled at the end of a cat-walk

repeated, expanding aperture:
woman alone who is charming and reckless
woman arsenal of women starving, on stilts, in contrast to
woman assembling list of groceries for the following day
the woman sleepy near-fetal
woman who you admired who became woman who you intimidate

last season's must-have skirt becomes baroque article
unable to consign, shake off anywhere
you loved it until you realized it was see-through
poetry is like that: revealing enough to disappoint
i can stand alone in my apartment, staring and be seen

say my name, lights. what difference does it make.

JUDAH RUBIN

from RESISTANCE / BOOK OF THE IMAGES OF FIXED STARS

Cordoned as
the superficial good
Emergent and
Pawed at across a
coated plum

If the body in pain as in
Pleasure erases the sound
To wound contingency in and
Faced out at itself
If it is the emptied world per
Torture to conduct the
Projected line in opacity
Fixity not wherein the dome of
Fixed stars
block the night of
Remembrance and whose
Fixity does this glass of water
Fused in negligence
Of fixity post and aftered
Punch open with a hammer
To nurse the body straight back
Up and through the line
Returned as fixity largely
Quantified by a shifting and resonant
Sand sticky in sunlight
Continent as estranged in
Parted the contingent
Opaque as hope of having
And covered our false friend
Monument
To and fixed the stolen lines
Tricked of our watch to speed
The burnt cable parting the
Bunted space as text is rather
Not contingent but to glass and
Tendered the fact of breath

Here is a door to open
To the sound of such or
If complaint for
Its time we must run our
Hands over the wound this
Clock put to morning
Hummed assonance
Who name the horse after the
Coprophagic apposite
For the two mapped days that lie
Or impose upon sight the
Excremental thought of loot

Wered of the syntagm
Trussed
Otherance and approaching
Waters tugged
Doe-eyed jack a purple lowing
Across the baked plain
And hatching the nervous
Sex of who
Chase it into green darkness
a door to open order
To sounded time

Would drought
Cloved distance between
the line of its success
Directive was the
Seal below, turning and plashed
Against the rocks some
Only with the best
Of the worst places
We could store them
Now watch this drive
Applying the standards of
Husbandry to
Refuge delimited against
The anthropos of its
Best judge I knew the
Heel when I placed the body
Upright against the stream

Still parading the tanks
One wonders at the value of
Color the spectrum of antithesis'
Healing ceremony bringing
Out only the glassware or
Reminding the lacquer
That accompanies tactile
Assurance that the state
Will turn us in our sleep
That we are deserving of
As residence nursed to
Supple insignia in

Functionary cleaning
the gilded edge of
A public urinal
The violence of
Relative speeds that
Condescend largely
To an architectural
Against oppositional
Or anarchic violence
Wherein from the cannibalized
Reticence to also say Human
As though the rational
Were a spitting image of its
Own racialized homunculus
Start by asking
whether we want
Your filthy money
And the jocular first
Degree all mixed in
With class dynamic
Yoga economics as
Synthesis of the
Finest in diametric
Contusions

Carving which considers
The full body of the regime
Paired against the theatrics
Of a technical civilization's
Foundational solo
Plucked out the eyes to
Pit them against the
Banqueting line and
So bring it out of
No standardized pitch
Swaying with a nauseated
Potato love-in
Constellated glass run
First down the shirt
Sleeve
Uzi does it
Shoehorn gesticulation
Monochrome foundling
In streetwear and bands
Of light shown
Pertinence-angina
Suddenly taken by
The floated resolve

The night slick with
Vermin
Air
Hung
On the bindle of some
Rockwellian
Cop monolith
Bricked over
The sense that these
Words mutable and
Indistinct too have
A shelf life all their own

The confession leaking
And negotiated the
Fiber of moral
Aptitude patented
“the diplomatic bag”
e.g. a cardboard box
Become the punctuated
Unknowing end
Of alarmist history
Notation
In light
Though
The fact of inconstant
Futurity the
Cord of a jealous
And rhizomatic
Combustion
The anticipated surplus
Mistrust of a social body
For all by the
Careful examination of
Said combustion to
Justify the
Building of a 50 foot
Concrete trench on
A small four acre
Property wherein
To store canned and
Paper goods

Asking only for this
Surplus of feeling this
Trafficking in signs
This dirgelike amplitude
That heaves the blimp
Back over the cost of day

A cat is never on the
Side of power
Dependent on a
Sense of the shill
We're getting in
On when the holistic
Cusp one might pluck
From a randomized
Tent used to negotiate
The tracking bought on
Our own rocks, as
Faces to turn up at
Ancestral carting learned
To break the seal as
Indentured to envelop
Ligature some health
Concern's
Linear concision of
My toothy rest
Left skin toward
the no one's carried
Blade on the pinned
Socialism for radical
Tourists set aside
And bedding down
In the responsible
Absence of world
From which the
World emerges, or
Using another's
To press the historical
Close
And the reclusive
Otherance of sole
Mobile deletion
Mandate totalized in
A graphomania
Worthy of its dreams

The drum of sleep to
Which I go in fear
Apart the first
Absence opposed of
Synchronic stance
Gesture as obverse
Pattern to conspire in
Affect - roses dance
Roses in the dark
Of quartered night
Should the string teach
Itself to bow
Beneath the sound
What by field
Is preserved in
This comes undone in
Spoken I of dream to
Place the eye of night
Watched by
Spoken and divided
Light which undoes
Toward the world
For whom we can have
No say though said
The space perhaps
Tore back the wing
Wherein the dust
Made to speak how
Shall I encounter you
If placed and so to fix
Ourselves in rite of
Place husk of the
Ideologue sitting
Up in the grave to
Piece from fabric its
Cellular dusk not
To sleep but beyond
The pointed leant

CASSANDRA TROYAN

THIS WORLD MUST DISAPPEAR

A nun commits to suicide meditating on squares of light
—Brian Whitener

When did I begin to hate life
how long have I been
 waiting
 for the end
or for the light to return
 my associations
 dried up.

With legs open to the window
I fuck the sun
I let it change me
I let myself be moved
to feel suddenly vibrant
in a space of inoculation

ich sterbe
ich sterbe
ich sterbe

I repeat as a threat to myself

A flying stack of cash commands the air
its body more material than mine
in the terrain below
the poor
 flagellating
themselves openly
in the fields.

A secret misanthrope
vying for a tongue to share
lubricating this
 arcane luxury
 destitution is canny

In the dream my face was sunburnt,
I kept digging through the trash
I didn't live anywhere so we squatted

 in Berlin.

Our presence unchanging
as was the landscape
wringing out a slowness
that predicts disaster.

I have only one idea so I hold onto it.
In the dream though, I am allowed more
 than one fantasy.

You are in the corner of my eye,
I watch as you move
 up and down
 palms then elbows
 then back again
 on the desert floor.

In this heat
I imagine myself open
not mysteriously
but by the weight
of a cold speculum
 dilating
 derailing
but not unpleasurable
evacuating cavities
 my revelry of depletion.
Everything makes me wet
like after diagnosis
my declaration
 of war.

In the dream I killed you
we were in a Wal-mart
you threatened me
you had a knife
you held it to my throat
before you could finish
I moved you with
 my tears
 we embraced
my arms around your neck
 then just one
 choking you
 there is a telephone cord
 suddenly
wrapped around your throat
 I straddle you
 pinning your arms
pulling the wire taut
 you apologize
 you do not struggle
 as your eyes go dim

I get up from your body
I know this is for the best
and wander the store
for several hours
 there is no egress
 only the vast horizon
 of ill compromise drying
 my epochal tongue.

I went to the service desk
 I was still crying
 as I looked at your dead body
 lying on the ground unnoticed
 I was sure it would be gone by now
 vaporized
 I am about to tell the clerk
 at the counter about your corpse
 as I look on I see you move
 your limbs stir freely
 as if set in a brief pause
 I am struck by a wave
 of mourning and relief
 for your undead body

 will you still know me
 since I have killed you
 is our pact made stronger
 in this rift of heated cruelty

Inexplicably,
 the world opens again.

In the dream there is an arena
 the crowd pours in to kill itself
 an exhaustion ripping past
 all injuries
 dressing perilous
 reportage
 there is only one voice
 no excuses
 no attempts to push back
 this stupid swallowing
 weapons being distributed
 both hand-made and stolen
 blood soaks the AstroTurf
 below is the earth
 and the we is split open
 but the we is down there
 and I am up on the hillside
 I am patrolling through
 weeds, marshes, trenches,

I am knee-deep in a
gelatinous muck
when I look down I see
the mud is clotting
I feel that you must be dead
I try to run but your
fouled blood stops me but
below is the earth
my teeth
are bleeding but
below is the earth
below is the earth
in the night
the night our death was glorious
the night we looked into the mirror
cut lines into faces against
our parents
the night we couldn't fake it
anymore
against appropriation
against decorous resolution

But still
this violence on my body
in the dream
I'm walking around the streets
an inveterate whore
I'm dying
cunt seeping blood
and no one will help me
I fall to my knees
a man walks up to me and asks

"What's the sexist thing a woman can put on her ears?"

"What?" I say,

"Her knees."

(laughter)

The laugh-track plays
in the coffee shop
 diorama
 fading light
of a MacBook Pro screen
condensation of the sunset
breaching dawn
oh! look at the people
enjoying their aesthetic experience
sitting cross-legged on a carpeted platform.

My slug trail of
 bloodied mucus
tethered to shell-less harm
desire not yet configurable
as a place or who gets to occupy it
no residues for this hapless future.

You told me you believed in the individual
 I actually retched
 my collective body
 waging protest again your

 belief
 in the police to embrace
 and save your temporality.

I'm waiting for the end of time
if that means the end of whiteness.

To say "I am, in my being, unethical"
opening to a social death
 an abyss
I am saying I believe in the end
a blackening crashing in on itself
 no roles
 no characters
 exempt
I'm going to attempt to destroy myself
and I will do it quietly
 the end of permission
 or recognition
 this is not proof
by salvageable self-absorption.

This world must disappear without
tragedy or irony
without the threat of fantasy.
Fantasy a conceptualizing force
only as much as it
builds the possibility of wrecking
for and against itself.
Like the flight of a pig,
levity a contradiction
of form.

WHIT GRIFFIN

from WE WHO SAW EVERYTHING

When

a giant, whose rib measured nine spans in length,
reigned over the whole word. A severed head asks
I 575 two rams to make a way through a mountain. A
snake with beautiful skin is placed in a birch bowl,
and objects placed in after it begin to show signs
of life. Embrace the soul snake in the grotto. I
awoke in the night and found you chewing birch bark.
If you don't want a cannibal feast with the snake-man,
I'll boil you some corn. A cannibal hill that devours

I 582 people eats a rabbit disguised as a man who uses
a knife to cut the hill's heart in two. A hoarse
skeleton asks a boy to light a pipe, that the smoke
might frighten away the mice inside it. The pipe
smoke turned into pigeons. The crow is the salmon's
aunt. The water god and goddess have no children,
so claim the drowned as their own. *The wizard who*

I 589 *lives there is he who paints those who are to become*
supernatural beings. Supernatural-being-who-keeps-
the-bow-off. Hawk-hole. Supernatural-being-on-
whom-the-daylight-rests. Supernatural-being-on-
the-water-on-whom-is-sunshine. Supernatural-puffin-
on-the-water. Hawk-with-one-feather-sticking-
out-of-the-water. Wearing-clouds-around-his-

I 596 *neck. Supernatural-being-with-the-big-eyes.*
Supernatural-being-lying-on-his-back-in-the-canoe.
Supernatural-being-half-of-whose-words-are-raven.

Great Head
Lives On
Maple
Wood

This forest is full of plants, and I am listening to their breathing.

Mugwort under the saddle, mugwort in the shoe.

Sweet Mary for those who've eaten hemlock. *The great medicine for wounds is squash and corn.* Pulque,

1603 the blue wine. Let those over 70 drink their fill. If a young man is caught drinking the blue wine, shave his head and beat him with a jaw club. Punished with agave thorns. The priests administer agave enemas prior to ritual anal coitus. The Heffter technique.

Stuck on the heights, he threw himself in the fire and found himself on level ground. As matter proceeds

1610 from desire and vapor. *Grow large, my kettle.* An ebullient well. *Let us put this barley in a closed chamber, sealed up, until we return northward, dancing.* Villca seeds like copper pennies. As certain soothsayers were known as Villca. Villca Coto, on whose peak the flood survivors sought refuge. Herit, mistress of the red mountain. The Hathors, the Fates. Able to see,

1617 but unable to alter, the future. *His death is to be by the crocodile, or by the serpent, or by the dog.* He took the papyrus and washed it in beer and then drank the liquid, and he knew all that was in the writing. Writing parchment from the dita tree. Some consider the dita evil. The guardian of the tree can bring death to those who sleep in its shadow. What kind of

1624 offering should we make to this tree? The vain man was turned into a pine tree. I turned my back to

the sycamore. The Chinooks send off their dead chief
in a cedar canoe. The Thunderers keep the earth in
order. Thus the Thunderer prophesied when the weather
is bad the giant's hat will be heard. *The Giants' feet
ended in serpents' coils.* Oracles issued from an oak
1631 tree in Dodona. Dionysus is the mind of Zeus as
the sun is the mind of the cosmic order. As the sun
is Apollo by day, Dionysus at night. As the sun
is the eye of Jupiter. *Minerva is the power of
the sun that makes human beings wise.* Salus is
the moon's nature, that strengthens living creatures.
The Greeks called the moon Artemis. The Greek
1638 Artemis is the Italian Diana. Demeter is Ceres. Since
the oracle simply called for heads, children were
replaced with garlic and poppy. Wear a garland of
fig when sacrificing to Saturn. Saturn is time. Saturn
arrived by ship and taught Janus agriculture and
improved his way of life. Janus was the first to coin
money; on one side he stamped a ship, to preserve
1645 the memory of Saturn. Janus was the first in Italy
to build temples to the gods. Janus has power
over all doorways, is the guardian of all gates and
the regent of all roads. *Numa soon added
one day to January, paying honor to the mystery
of the odd number that nature revealed even
before Pythagoras.* Every Ides is dedicated to
1652 Jupiter, every Kalends is dedicated to Juno. As

Junonius was shortened to June. As Maia is the
 Good Goddess. As the Good Goddess is also Hecate,
 Semele and Prosperina. Some say she has Juno's
 power. Some think she's Medea. *It is against*
divine law for a myrtle branch to be kept in her temple.
 Carna is the goddess charged with keeping our livers,
 I 659 hearts and innards healthy. Carna receives an offering
 of bean porridge and bacon. Hathor personifies
 the sky. She is the goddess of all kinds of joy.
Whoever wishes to visit the temple of the goddess
must refrain from intercourse with his wife (or husband)
that day, from intercourse with another than his wife
(or husband) for the preceding two days, and must
 I 666 *complete the required lustrations.* Jupiter bestows souls,
 and receives them back after death. The hell-fire and
 brimstone vision was the result of the uninformed
 stumbling into glimpses of the astral plane. Distant
 lands become unified and local gods coalesce. No need
 for two rulers of the dead. Let one become a descriptive
 epithet of the other. Osiris absorbed the functions of all
 I 673 the gods of the dead. The nether world entered into
 competition with the celestial. Kings lost the exclusive
 use of the celestial hereafter. And then every dead man
 became an Osiris, a privilege previously reserved only
 for some kings. *For Ra is the sky, and Hotep is putting*
together the oblations. Bint Bari, the sky genius who
 controls meteors. *The sea of heaven which bore the*

1680 *throne of Zeus.* The eastern side of heaven, where
the gods are born. *I have felt the panting breath of*
the fierce East's horses. The blended divinity of Apollo
and Bacchus. On top of Mount Parnassus the Boeotians
sacrificed to both gods at once. *Apollo the ivy-crowned,*
the Bacchic seer. For Apollo, an ox with gilded horns
and two white goats with gilded horns. The infant

1687 Apollo killed Python with his arrows. *Images of Apollo*
hold the Graces in their right hand, a bow and arrows in
the left, because he is slower to do harm while his readier
hand is lavished with well-being. Apollo's seven-stringed
lyre represents the seven motions of the heavenly spheres.
The two-fold nature of Neptune - *Earth-shaker and He*
who steadies. We get the power of speech from our

1694 contact with the earth. *And we know that Mercury*
has speech and utterance in his power. Cronus gives us
tears. Zeus gives us birth. Hermes gives us understanding.
Picus, who is also Zeus, had a son named Faunus; he also
called him Hermes after the wandering star. Postvorta,
goddess of breech births. Trivia, she of the place where
three roads meet. Four gods attend a human at its birth:

1701 Deity, Chance, Love and Necessity. After being pregnant
five years, Cleo slept in the holy of holies at Epidaurus
and bore a son who washed himself in the spring and
walked around with his mother. *It is not permitted to*
enter the temple of the Lady Goddess with any object
of gold on one's person, unless it is intended for an

*offering; or to wear a purple or brightly colored or black
I 708 garment, or shoes, or a finger ring.* The priestess of
Demeter was forbidden to eat the meat of any animal
that had been suffocated. The priestly college that
preserved the Sibylline Books. For clarifying an oracle
he gained the use of a special toga. *He proceeds to the
oracle, dressed in a linen tunic, girded with ribbons,
and wearing the boots of that country.* That my guides
I 715 may bathe me. That I may then drink the Water of
Forgetfulness, the Water of Memory.

CHRIS MCCREARY

from AmoUng

Among you Siri buries a body, buys warm Krispy Kremes, hires her own
entourage once life goes sunsphere : a souvenir chili dog

hot on the lap : the knees

weened too

Tasty Freeze between five easy prayers burnt

unblunted,

saviors for mourning the gated hordes

multiply like mogwai

fed chicken salad sandwich after midnight.

This omelette kills microaggressors. Today 's

is duck confit

shaving

face of Bocephus on my ball cap

under

covered

soft

spot's font

unknelled. From Alsatia to Decatur,

the paperboy always gets his coin

& creamed corn blobs onto table

cloths while colleagues

swing

from the gallow's

pole.

Do what thou

WormCorp : spork what you sermon for :

better to swerve

than swivel

when every seven minutes,

a Skittle pivots into heaven.

ALLISON COBB

I MADE THIS
for Stephen Collis and Roy Scranton

I.

So we can get face to face
with death, we drive over
to the Build-a-Bear store—all
those flat skins with their
insertion holes. A thing there is
that wants a little warmth, the fur
curled on the thigh, the rat
making scratching sounds down
below, whatever
left bite marks all across
the baby, our lives
infused with
brand meaning—you know the feeling
you get from the Gap. Real shit
don't stick to that khaki, the history
of which is a complex tale: The British
once wore blood red to battle,
but in the beige sands
of the Punjab they stuck out like
bull flags. Also, it was hot as hell.
So, the story goes, the colonial
recruits in Peshawar wore their
pajamas to war—totally
un-British, I know! But don't sneer,
they rubbed their cotton sleepwear
in dirt to disappear against the earth
they sought to conquer. It worked, the dye
of Empire seeped through
India and on to the Boer War—and we got
khaki, the fabric that says
“adventure.” The word is Hindi
for—you know—dirty. *Kakka*, the ancient
proto-word word for shit. *Kaki*? my
Polish landlord in Brooklyn asked,
incredulous, when I pointed out my
strung out upstairs neighbors pooped
on my fire escape. *Kaki* I replied
with that tone of total finality

reserved only for incidents
of human waste. We both knew
just what we meant. I got a text
from the City saying DON'T
DRINK THE WATER because of *e. coli*,
which thrives in the intestines. You are only a skin
bag for your microbiome,
my clown friend. Bacteria evolved
a human meat car
to get around in. Maybe
they wanted to move someplace
warm. Maybe they put in the minds
of the British a desire to conquer, a desire
for business casual attire. The house
held piles of mouse shit
in every drawer. I am very clean, sir,
I swear. A rat has made its domicile
inside my crawl space. I saw its scaly
tail slip in through a hole. I bet it has
a big family in there. I heard the trap
snap on its
little fur skull. Rats arrived
with the colonists about the year
the founding
fathers declared
their independence. *You are never
more than twenty feet
from a rat*, said some British
expert in some paper. We tried to forget
ours was down there. After a while
we could no longer ignore
the smell, so we eased our way
into the hole and saw
the rat with its smashed head very
dead but filled
with crawling things which made
Jen make a gagging sound
near my ear, *not*

helping I told her. Rats don't
see well so they create scent trails
out of urine and feces. Dragonflies
can see 360 degrees. I watched one
land on a garlic stalk in my yard, turning its
bulb-eyed head back and forth. Its eyes looked
fake, like formed from plastic or some
secret military-grade material. Scientists
stick pins inside the brains
and eyes of dragonflies to figure out
what makes them such good hunters. The CIA
supposedly made robot dragonfly
spy drones, but this one was real—
I could tell because I saw a thin
thread of yellowish waste drop out
the end of it. True. Like that book
says, everyone poops, even
bridesmaids. What a movie. See *all*
topics for e. coli. I am not trying
to be gross. I was going somewhere
with this but then I got, um,
sick, and had to stay put
near the toilet. You know how it is,
my clown, to have a crawl
space crawling right up
the middle
of your self. Doctors call it
the digestive tract. They consider it
outside you. It's the way you take
in the world, or more precise, the way the world
runs through you. Bacteria
patrol your borders, keeping out
the undesirables. Not for your sake, except
as their house, food, and transport, they like
to keep you alive. Of course they do not
always succeed.

II.

The news report says the clown showed up
at the graveyard I once lived beside
in Brooklyn, same apartment as
the *kaki* incident. The clown wore
a string of pink
balloons around its neck, but not light,
they were heavy and pulled its red nose
right down to soil. People think
it's disrespectful. They say the clown left
behind a Build-a-Bear bag, a lady's
parasol and some Fritos. I think
it's performance art. Why shouldn't the dead
enjoy that as much
as we do? Seriously though
Dr. Theodor Escherich discovered
e. coli, which was named for him
after he died. He studied—true
story—the *fæces* of babies. You
know the saying—two things in life
come on quick: war
and diarrhea. It turns out that
setting up the trap is much easier
than dealing with the body. *Send in
the clowns* is what theatre people say
when they know the show's not
going well. Okay. I traveled to that graveyard
in my mind, near
Sylvan Lake where the Italians
built their fancy mausoleums. I like to think
of it—death—as the “great outdoors”
the clown told me, but not in
so many words. I like to think
of shit as the tenebrous edge between the living
and the dead, I said in return, like Darwin,
who spent a lot of time with his face
in the dirt and came back to report
that pretty much the whole surface
of earth had passed through

worm intestines. Like the lady
in Portland who doesn't use her
plumbing. She composts it all for
her garden. She handed me a pure white,
bulbous head of garlic and said
I made this. We all understood
the significance. Egyptians fed garlic
for strength to their pyramid-
building slaves. The pharaohs
also kept clowns at court "to rejoice
and delight the heart." I put on
the clown's pink flesh
necklace and the blood
rose blooming
from its face. We ate vegan
corn snax in the shade pool
of a parasol amidst little yellow
flags planted between
the graves to warn the living
about the pesticide spraying. We wore khakis
for hunting
or desert camouflage or urban
warfare if the city
of the about-to-be
dead built itself up
from mud. Wink—we know
what that means. For we have lain
our pale carcasses upon
Hawaii's sandy shores, made by
parrotfish pooping out small
coral bits—I mean it—the female redlip
parrotfish is called "loose bowels"
in Hawaiian. It's hard to hold
in the mind the multitude
of mouths and anuses it takes
to keep this place up. The word shit
means "separate," as in to cast off
from the body, and is thus cousin

to “conscience” and “science.”
I really liked the guy who came
to deal with the rat issue. Jen said
we were flirting. He spoke
with respect about the smarts of rats,
who are pretty savvy with the traps. He said
someone nearby was poisoning ours,
and showed me how the droppings glow
with an iridescent green hue—that’s
how you know the poison’s working.
The German word for poison
is “gift,” same in Danish, Swedish, and Dutch,
from the Greek *dosis* for dose—a giving.
I heard the trap snap at night
just as I was drifting off to sleep.
It made me jump. Rat screams
are ultrasonic—above human hearing.
A group of rats is called a mischief,
from the French for “bring to grief.”
I put my ear down to dirt just like Darwin
to hear the stamp of little rat feet. The worms’
only developed sense is touch,
Darwin wrote. They are essentially
blind and completely deaf. He found
this out by blowing at them
on a whistle and then on a bassoon.
He determined they have a feeble
sense of smell because his bad
breath did not faze them. Can’t you
see old Darwin with that grizzled
face fur puckering vapors onto moist
worm skins in his study? What a weirdo!
The worms though can sense
the faintest of vibrations
through the soil. They know
the world by feel—like living fingers
dispersed throughout earth, but with
intelligence, as Darwin could attest,

by the creative and discerning ways
they tuck leaves into their burrows.
He noted that the lack of sense organs
does not preclude high mental function,
and compared the worms to Laura
Bridgman, a woman from New England,
very famous in her time, both blind
and deaf, who learned to read and write,
and performed these tasks
before an audience. Like rats,
earthworms arrived in North America
with the colonists—few
native worms existed, and the English night
crawlers and red marsh worms invaded, undermining
through slow centuries the northern forests,
eating up the decomposing leaves and tiny
bodies on the surface which the young trees
need for sustenance, so that only older trees with deep
and branching root systems survive. Our “great
outdoors” is geriatric, in decline, like Darwin
when he wrote about the worms, his last
book before he died. His gift was his
obsession for detail and his riches,
which let him spend the hours
plotting worm poop with a ruler.
He observed over thirty-seven years
how a stony field he owned
transformed to soft grass not by
plow or planting but by worms,
casting their waste off
from their bodies, so that English farmers say
things tend to “work their way
down” through the soil, but ancient
Roman villas and orgy sites
and massacres did not sink,
they vanished beneath
the English picturesque—all worm shit.

III.

I tell you this, dear whoever
might be out there, reading with
your eyes or with
your fingers, to make clear—
I know who you are. Bring your
lovely bug bag over here, true
dream clown, my mischief
in make-up. Lie down. We can relieve
our faces in soil—we don't
even need the mall. *I made*
this, I made this say the
bodies gone under, lit
by the silver threads
of poison pointing like lightning
toward all the earth mouths
wedged open. I made this.
We rub ourselves
in conscience, in
science—our gifts, like a Trojan
clown car to deliver
all of us. *I made this*. Let us
go now fore-
founding fathers, doctors of every
knowledge. Let us go
blind and deaf
in dirt, so we can feel
for the worms
with their infinite guts.

DAVID LARSEN

AMBLES OF HEAVY

In this dream I was a rabbit
Crack in that ass in the black berry patch
And fell outside the law's protection
But you'll never know what I dreamed I'd done

Between the legs of my opponent
Beating the grass with a fat cricket bat
Where every petal in the meadow
Was a fight my feet had won

I was pleased as punch to let it lie
But then the bug bit me, and a
giant Sphinx came down from outer space
And put to me the question of the bloody cotton
Sire, I said, the deer lay down and died
but I kept running

In this dream I'm still a rabbit
Coming last in the mad turtle dash
By dint of what I
Scrambled a troop, baffled a wall
Imbued with wisdom is the unwise boast
The art of song is very old
but not as old as I am

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We are not for sale
Fuck you for thinking we were

THE BAY/NYC

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N Z O N G G C F N Q V E U C H N W X B Y
T J I A M B O M I V M M F V S T U G Z A
I E R Y E J M G F R Z C D O A B H K K U
L Z H O G L T M F J G H L G A S F B B K
D T F R U F M M I U F R P B G Q J Q B D
A B A T K I M E R D U I T Q B T I H V J
V R P P M V A G A B S Y A Q Z G H I W
I I M A Y J X L H G V B B L O R C I
D Z J R E J B L T T M S Y O A O Z M P
Q M D V X V I I R S C A G I U R P F Y
L K G N Z Z Y S H U C C R H Y R M L H O
A F G A C U G O W B P R A J W E C F U Y
R Y A S G P P N M I N E A T N N Z R Q
S G P S C S X R N X A W E T R K J A
E H L A G B K C E C Q R I T R L D H S W
N V R C N L Y O D O Q Y N B F E O F Z G
P I H X U N Y B F R A W T L S V Z S K V
N C I Z A M N B R N S F Z S S I M I A T
F V G D A X E X J X W C H R Q N K A P K
M C C Z V I R N U Z O N E K U I L S M I

**JUST SOME
ELDERLY
BULLSHIT**