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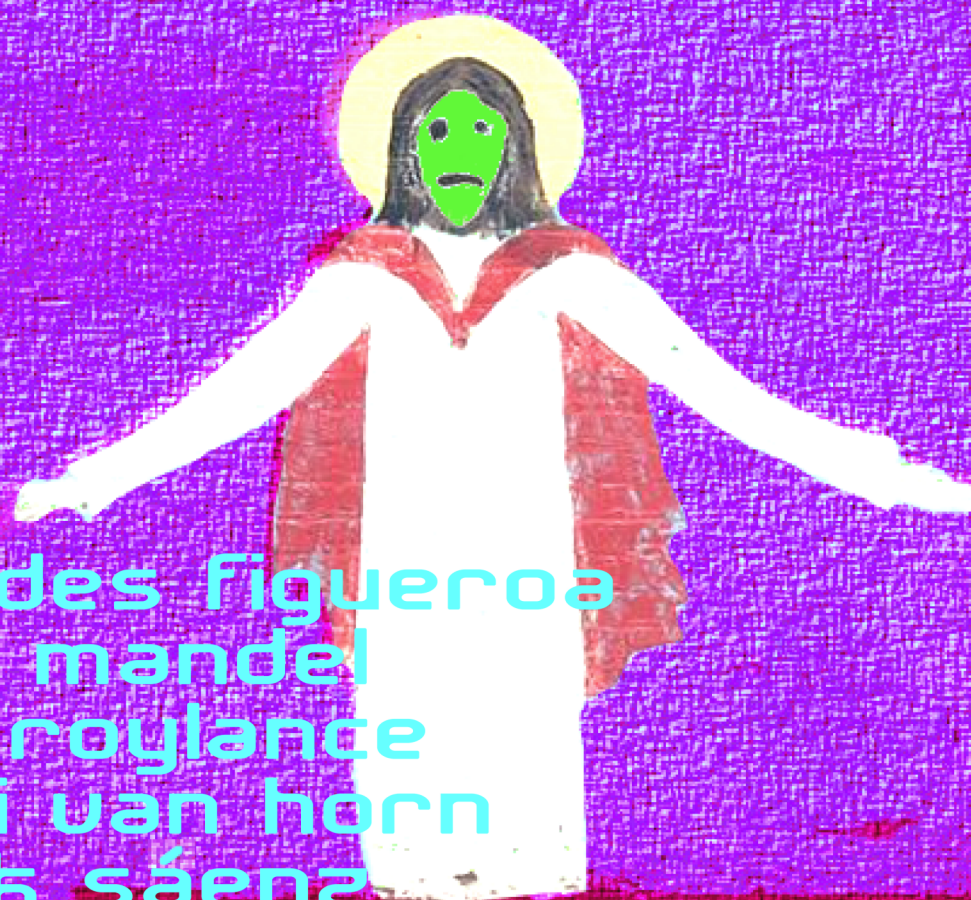


370477



ELDERLY

27



lourdes figueroa
tom mandel
ben roylance
heidi van horn
erick saenz
yosefa raz

LOURDES FIGUEROA

from THE CROSS OF THE NOPAL ON MY FOREHEAD

GLIMMER

At the edge of my dream I saw my face, the purple of the sun set bringing her arms around my hips, at the edge of my dream the lip of the ocean began to make the eyes of a soul—a soul that looked so much like us, as if Borges were drawing his face into mine—into ours

duénde muerde/la lengua

If I begin to uncover my tongue
or your tongue, I'll begin to find that it is covered
in layers, or that it is shaped like the Fibonacci code,
like that of a snails shell, or a shells shell, or
I'll begin to see that I can peel it
in a circular formation that goes so far
into the shape of its center like that of a typhoon or
the glistening wedges of an orange,
but more so it is like the many skins of the onion,
I wouldn't say that it is as hard as a shell,
even though it can be, it is more so tender
and easy to tear, and these days it swirls more easily,
each layer of skin can be flipped,
folded inward or outward, and importantly
I can crease lines into it and when I pull back
the creases always resemble veins like that of a leaf,
more like a spinach leaf
but this I know even without
peeling or uncovering it,
like the Fibonacci code
I don't think I could ever find its center
or land in it's eye
because I'm sure its core moves
like that of a black hole knowing
that I'll never know how ancient
it could be or how young
it could have been
maybe it is as young as when
we first learned to draw stars
on the walls of caves,
remember then?
When we first realized
that time could stand still in the image
of the buffalo and the moon,
my tongue, our tongues, what are they
made of, if not cells and blood, what more,
flesh and lung, what else, wars and silence,
and which one of us will win those wars,
and linger around,
to hunt and pray, and fill bibles
with song or songs,
and how long will the sound
of my tongue last, and yours
maybe it all goes back to the black hole

and the cosmos, but mostly
the enormous empty of time,
and I could be wrong
the city of Babel is in ruins
the great library bound less and bind less
was there ever a great library?
but what are we if not victims,
but survivors, of what is left over
of carcasses and gestures.

I AM AN EMPIRE

I imagined that borges built an empire, the sound of his whistling voice on the stacks of verses, outlined buildings bound like books, none of it making sense, he built an empire in this realm, not out of language nor wood nor out of bricks made of sand, he started delicately his movements like that of a petal, simple, soft things he used, like the slurring of a little mexican boy high on huffing glue, the city scape of an unknown city, the blurred lights behind a wet window, the sweat of a grape picker, the terrace slightly above Juarez as the sun sets, the blood of a broken hymen, the brown of the little boy's gaze as he looked at you high from the glue, the look on my wife's face when I told her I slept with another woman, the hum of the refrigerator at three in the morning, borges ever so gently took these things, the callus of el azadón, rubbing a land into this earth, his whistling voice at the tips of my ears, he worked diligently and focused, at times losing himself to the lyric of the work or the nothingness of the work, cupping his palms around mouths like he was holding water, not once did he hammer anything in, the foundation solid made of him and me, and you, and the sound of the little mexican boy in his 50's dying at a quiet street corner in Oakland, and he looked to the blindness of Homer to build higher, and the empty of time made us glimpse things as if we were seeing the future, the birds chirping around us, and we imagined a maze, a turtle crawling through it, and we pulled away from the maze to walk high above to where we could view what we were creating, the dust of el azadon trailing behind us, the smell of schirrosis in our nostrils, and we climbed higher and higher the brim of the sunset glaring our eye sight, and we began to notice the delicateness of the lining of the grass and the crystals of the dirt and how our feet creased into the dirt, and we finally looked behind us, and we saw that we left borges working still, that he never took a step upwards, with us, and we could see, you and I, the beads of his sweat falling on his work, his face damp, the land damp, his eyes damp and quiet, and his hands damp and quiet picking up our things, our soft things, the swollen belly of my abuelita chona, ripe from hepatitis, and pesticides, my ama's bloody face after my apá slammed her into a wall, and borges worked hard with these things, and he looked over at us high above, his gaze soft, but he never saw us, he was blind as he built our empire, and he kept whispering a lyric older than anything we had ever known, a lyric carried by the wind, constant in her grace, and he kept on, not speaking in English nor Spanish, and I could see him picking up the hoe my abuelito dropped when he died tilling the soil, and he continued, ever so gently stacking these bricks made of you, and I looked at you after I looked at borges, and we thought we were prophets, grasping war and old war, and we remembered the Ladinos, and the beauty of Lorca's lips, and we thought about the wall Jerusalem built, and how Juchitlán resembled it all so much, were we the lost tribe? or the accent on the A, No, we were the decedents of honey and the mountain, and so was Jorge Luis Borges, and so where you, it wasn't your Hebrew name nor your catholic baptism that we understood, it was the empire, and the blind eyes of Homer we understood, and so borges continued, we were distraught upon seeing this pain, and we continued distraught as he continued to build, and we continued to climb, our eyes on the mountain we were climbing, our thoughts on the empire and the bricks made of you, and we noticed things slipping out of us, you and me, we found ourselves damp in sweat, the yellow tulips my abuelita planted around us, sprouting and breathing, and we thought we could still hear borges working, and I looked at the palms of your hands and they were thick with callous, as if you had been the one working, and only you, and more things slipped out of us, and the higher we climbed we could see the moment Cortez stumbled upon Teotihuacan, the land vast, the city moving, color nopal, and it started to smell like nopal, and as the sun glistened around us, we noticed Malinchin tiptoeing around borges, she had been there the whole time, she too had been working, planting tongues, tilling the soil,

carving out pieces of my abuelita's schirrosis, taking pieces of her tribes' skins, and as the sun was on our backs we started to notice the rising empire, and we could hear Malinchin making a sound, the sound of migrant farmworkers planting tomato seeds, picking coffee beans, and cotton, and their children were there too and I could see my abuelita chona looking at me, and I could see my amá crossing the border, courage in her bones as she dived through the desert with her infant son, and I could see my abuelita chona silently dying, the wounds from el azadón around us, the word dike praying to be translated dwelled there too, and I could see myself quietly whispering I am a lesbian, I am a lesbian, I am a pocha, I could see my self saying these things as I lulled my little brothers to sleep in some government housing, and there was the sound of migrants marching on dirt, and violins wailing, and the sound of Lorca moving his hips to polka, and I wondered and you wondered when will it all be done, Malinchin breathed hard around us, softly patting all these things together, como azulejo, and the sun began to set, the shadows growing, cooling our damp bodies, and Malinchin stretched her hands stretched her body and next to her kissing her neck was Tonanzin, and they began to make love, and we looked at them, and looked away to look at borges, and we could feel our bodies exhausted, but we looked and borges was not there, and the sun continued to slip away, and I looked at you, and your body was covered in dirt, your palms now bleeding, and you were thirsty, and we looked at our feet, and we looked at the mountain we thought we were climbing, and borges was at the top watching us, and he had been watching us the whole time, with his soft eyes, with his soft blind eyes, and we were so exhausted our shoulders heavy, and we began feel around us discovering that it had been us, you and I, who had been working, the curves of the empire perfectly molded, the hips of the empire holding all of our things together, sweat and salt, the little mexican boy becoming our father, and you understanding that you carried the cross of the nopal on your forehead, and the beauty of my wife's brown skin on my stretched marked skin, and we realized it had been us who got lost in the lyric of the work, and we continued to feel around us, cobblestones made of our bodies, alleyways made of our bodies, the houses and buildings made of our bodies, you and I.

NOTHING AND EVERYTHING

if i were to begin a story about her i think the world would collapse, but that is what i think. it is delusional. the truth is they thought they were angels, saving our grace with grace

the thing is if i were to write her down she would begin and end with me, she is not dangerous,
this is

because here it becomes, it all becomes, they imagined that they could contain this
all of this, they imagined

a wordless word a wordless mouth and they began to haunt as if they were the ones'
Hermes started to speak in tongues

Lazarus could only shed tears and weep

and it was never Dante's dream but hers', he was just the visitor
and I think this is what Borges was hiding in his labyrinths, he was keeping her safe

because he mutilated himself with libraries, build layers of pages, to surround her while he scarred
him self and said the poet is the creator

you see, Borges had found her, and he was like a God, a blind God that could only feel things and
imagine the ancient language,

and he built a world no one could see but could only imagine, and he did it like so, to make sure
the poet arrived

but Borges was a mortal a mere mortal and he could only do so much

i look at the rock, aguas
could it have been yesterday?
it is still here
the current that started
on the other side of the world
just arrived and touched my toes,
what ripple was it if not yours?

A MEMORY OF PIO AND A CITY

My memory shifts every time I remember home
te hecho de menos

me fui a buscar nuestro sueño
it had rhythms of cumbia, this city of ours

all I wanted was a raw land
un cuerpo marimacha

Pio came to San Francisco to be an artist
I came to fall in love

Pio spoke Tagalog loved my Spanish
he was brown

soft Spoken

migration he said is what birds do to survive
we uprooted ourselves for love,

I keep tripping over borders

I keep remaking his face, he wanted to go back
he was a painter

all animals move/ I don't think we ever had roots

here in this city the lights were long
the streets curvy

he loved to remind us
of the campesinos on the outskirts

how the filipino migrant farmworkers
tilled soil

alongside mexican migrant farmworkes
tending to the orchards and the tomato fields

it was dirt

what do you do when things fall apart?
I came from the fields

landlocked

Pio came from the islands

CALVA

we were raw imagining a world longer than ours
where the buildings stood like stone while we moved

cumbia in our hearts
the sweet dance of mexican polka in our ears

no, the light was different here, than there

here the light mimicked us
making our faces as clear as day light

and Pio passed away, leaving us this city

la agua se hace negra
agua ardiente nos calma

I keep dislocating my tongue/it feels lonely/ I am lonely

Pio died alone, refusing to bear weight on us
I imagined that he must have wanted to be buried here

where we dream

the truth is we are all lonely
Eres hermosa/ he died in the hospital waiting room waiting

en tu ser how far have we roamed
to make each other

there is no cityscape older than this one
where the ocean meets the earth

where you refuse to go back
because to uproot a tree

it takes several bodies

there is always a piece of root left

and I stood over his body, like elephants do
when they grieve one of their own

here the water is sweet like the ripples of the lake

I could never afford to build my own house here
it is dusty with bones

mouths gaping/ sometimes it smells of manila or mexico city

We were glorious
here we are nothing

Pio was a dishwasher
Pio was a cook

Pio was an artist
like you and I/this city is everything

holy land/of milk/ of honey

Mecca

Babylon or was it Sodom on the Outskirts
of Teotihuacan and the sun pyramid

brown bodies/ black bodies/ dyke bodies
fag bodies/hooker bodies/ our none bodies/ you and I

roaming San Francisco

with our white tongues

painters/lovers/ poets

you and this city

me and this city

cuidad ambrienta
where we flower like the rose/ and die like the tulip

sin papeles/how do we go back?
sin rumbo/ donde tu ser es illegal

We are everything

Now close your eyes
there are birds migrating to make sense of these movements
calva

carving how
the strand licks to the side
high cheek bone
low—
er the lip
her neck warming

his—
story inheritance
bodily curve
softening breasts
pigeon chesting
i don't speak
nahuatl sing
singing in the under
undering voz
un dos
tres voces en my
ear
un dos
almost three
a canto humming
slick bald
head heading
cabello largo
mujer almost
mujeriendo
or is it mujerieando
mumurando de
tras la espalda
tras lo redondo
of the almond
budding the flower
or should i say less metaphorically
budding
my head in between her
his—
story
in—
her—
stance
legs parting
thighs
polvo de grains
polvorandome
entre sus
cremas
cremando stretch
marked skins
clavandose
entre si
nosotras
acabandose
trangando
se
ser
siendo

no se
por cual
que voz
to swallow
america
américa
throating
i dont speak
english songing
tongueing
i do speak
voice
less spanish
than english
nahuatl in my
organs
my lips slick
with spits
spitting me
out

TOM MANDEL

THE WRITING ON THE WALL IS WAITING AT YOUR DOOR

In precincts of an imagined world
Stolen ideas arise

From monuments of philosophy

Each word recalls a single mind
Each rose its only gardener

LET NONE INTERFERE

I hang around where nothing inheres
bouncing my Spaldeen off a stoop.

To move forward I take the weight
from my back foot & fall down.

Are you still so smart? Still derive
your pleasures from the floor? After

my decades of irony left me exhausted
I set my burden down to ask

but found no answer: so I opened up
this shop & sell what I can.

What I can't I can to keep on hand
for when, fresh stuff all gone, I'm left

here clinging to the fringes of my skill
in this tent city they say two tribes

founded the day a wrong turn swept
their clans to our mis-read address

along with a mingled multitude
of names that got on the signup list

mistakenly when someone yelled
"all those who are ready to

depart this place, please raise your hand"
& hearing "*parse this phrase*" we did.

PSALMS

My enemy is camped on my shoulders
Rendering me disconsolate.
I cannot throw off the burden of his weight
Nor shift the route he takes me on.

When I complain of his tyranny
My complaints become unceasing.
I call *Your Name*, but you are hidden.
Yet in *The* few moments of freedom

He grants me I repeat all my mistakes.
I place a whip in the hands of my enemy.

Like a jewel of great value
We hide in some dark place

Schooling ourselves to forget
The place, that our enemy may

Not force its secret from us,
Time we possess soon is lost.

Our children must stumble on
This secret when it becomes

Possible to remember what
We have been forced to forget.

They will live where time is hidden
Among *Your* stars, certain in their

Possession of the future, awake
In the luminance of time.

We must be patient until the moment
We hear *Your* voice.

But patience is unavailable to us
It belongs only to *You*.

In the harmony *Your* voice composes
My enemy flees

Like a beast ashamed to behave
In a human way.

Like a house with a perfect plan
Show me the limitless space *You* span

Like a house on its well-chosen site
Let me build my dwelling in *Your* light

As when he hears the bride's voice lift,
The bridegroom brings the promised gift

May the arrow of my soul's intention
Pierce the membrane of *Your* mercy

& may these songs of my soul's invention
Reach *Your* presence & be worthy.

PLAN OF HER PRIOR WORK
for Brandon Brown
& in memory of Pier Paolo Pasolini

The woman whose face divides in three
The man who breaks his copy of the key

The dog that lifts on every other tree
Issue no warnings, do not comfort me

:|:

All you that in your hauteur
Turn away from the slaughter

Read the face of your daughter
She's not singing the tunes you taught her

She's pissing in your bottled water

:|:

Having used your words to carve her toys
Certain you'd find them dented

She slid her final invoice
Under the door of a room you've rented

With no warning that she'd sent it
Better ask her if she meant it

:|:

When the courier senses her foot hit the track
She knows what is waiting not what she'll lack
That she'll go no further but can't imagine turning back

:|:

She's always been a mave-
rick, I've never been a whore.

If this is what I'm meant to have
she won't take any more.

They'll send my hearse to the grave
hers to the grocery store.

When they tell me she was born a slave
she'll say "I'm going out a lord"

:|:

Awake in dreams, sleeping in stealth
The only untapped source of wealth
I want is access to my self

But mostly what she wants is one more cigarette
They say smoking kills you, but she knows they're all wet
Life & death by *Another's Hand* are set

She'll tell you when I'm ready; I'm not ready yet
She's still about a dollar short of paying off my debt

:|:

Perhaps while we wait (& to pass the time)
Matter & water may be subjected to rhyme

If the former & the latter remain as you taught her
Tinged with splatter from the day you fought her

She'll dress in the very first tatter you bought her
& what's sadder claim she's not your daughter

Do not try to catch her; be content to watch her
Oscillate between two states – rapture & torture

ETUDE IN THE KEY OF J

Writing to decipher
future phenomena
from past, vary

substitutes in stillborn
patterns – constant
runs, flows &

sheer statistical findings
chance steers
to encounter “*here*,

a promised present”
where the persistent
stings of desire

& ambition are no
more than a way of
being alone.

BEN ROYLANCE

MICHAEL & EUGENIA

or, a POETICAL APPLICATION OF FLUIDICE SCIENCE,
HERMES' GOSPEL, AND ENDLESS LYING

The concept of contingency and context is extremely important in understanding the actual action of "fluidice." For since this energy is a "living energy" it is vitally dependent upon context, as a living endocrine, cellular fluid or blood/sap is manifest only in context of the larger organic structure it facilitates. When a molecular structure supported by fluidice organization loses coherent context, the individual nuclei of the atoms are no longer in coherent transduction contact with the "fluidice" matrix. This structure then dies or explodes.

Eugenia Macer-Story, "Fluidice: Living Information Within Mass Structure"

Time replenishes itself
in the folklore of the ghost
a reflexive traction fluidice

On the raining eyelash
of the remote viewer
a fluidice destiny sequence

Uniting weight of light
a non-local operative intelligence
flat fake karma of physics

Doom's material tree
as 4 includes 10
Raphael overcome with solar caffeine

A great dividing stare
cuts matter into life
leaving shifting evidence

A wind nailed to the apparent kingdom
fluttering real essences
deep down in the one cave

Under the sweet mountain
our colonel explains an environmental crisis
as time is dowsed

Militarized and despiritualized
Michael told the labyrinth's latest
misunderstood in his lost moral zone

Angel salt prince
worked branch wand in hand
from that system called Altair

The cloak of darkness
its mirror fabric
magnetic lymphs wyrd in hood

God of moneyand god of magic
grackle like crow but for its prism
Hermetic copse wherein all are heard and paid

Hermes' sneakers and staff
gold brine on smiling statuette
the night has its Michaels too

And Eugenia's science
fictive fluid seeping into sunporch light
spidey charm resting

To be back at three pm
as the three forms tell of disappearance
every father, every Ben-, every spirit

Ghostly piano softened by three years
ghostly Hartford apartment
flaming sword in dusty heart

Look at us
say we have no heart
as holy and unholy governments sag and tear

The fox light in the opalite ball
knows it's own glass
as you press it like quartz to forehead

As mass pushes into extra dimensions
as black candle pulls and releases
an underworld of soul's currency

Man's made a stone
no, petra genetrix
"I could live in a stone"

Cold ladder up the side of life
Mercury's bright billfold
the pact with Medusa

In the house of orbital coherence
according to Eugenia
a taking-shape of living information

Retrocausation
the wedding at the end of time
presupposes two births at time's start

As in the Hermeticum

where above is as below
moments doubling around the births of lovers

Michael's light

the archangelic name
under which even Hermes has secrets

"All Good Things" or "of Good Birth"

angels of the ending of time
and what is a birth in this place?

A great solar face

pressing against the window of heart's interior
a god of light and fire

Fluidice matrices tucked hidden in neurons

royalty created and destroyed
as moments pass into stone

Hexagonal advice rushing into a skull

Eugenia's dark frontier
the bone of Saturn left out in an earth sun

All is telluric then

silver gnome feeding on dreamless sleep
photo of yourself that is not yourself

As in a mirror

to see other faces overlaid
elaborating you

The migraine returning

insisting itself into the left eye
the migraine one of many stars

Great bank of subtle talismans

divine-organic process experiencing itself
lunar spite in face of sol

The negative roots

splaying down into all mass
tangential shadows bleeding out of dirt

Pushed harshly into healing-loving

unions in twilight of fluidice

trees of life and life

Kether and Malkuth

bending touch head to heel

as Michael jumps from a balcony

In Woodstock and in the blameless river

all speech linking together in a chain

alchemy of the first word's derision

Those books that have erased you

reinscribe anew the same

carriage of time's stubbornness

Like a Master in hell

Michael did remain

Eugenia painted

The psycho-spiritual technology

the rose banquet's air

space is its light

HEIDI VAN HORN

from BELATED POEM



belated poem
beneath the fainting moon on the twenty-ninth day

near the northern edge
of the tropics

belated poem on foreshadowing,
foreshortened perspective and diminished capacity

on the threshold

of the cordillera



belated poem conveying a theoretical assumption about relational experience and the need for a circumscribed view of selfhood





belated poem in which compass bearings and angular measurements are made, and barometric records kept



in which gravity acts
upon particles transported by wind, water and ice

and in which there is a fundamental analytical act
and in which poetry is a content-driven craft

NORMALCIES

Normalcy (Noun): the quality or condition of being normal.

“...we all must wear happiness like a disorder we cannot shake.” - Muriel Leung

A meadow filled with butterflies.
They float above, I squint
lost in treetops.

I cross to the ocean, stare out.
I see boardwalk.
I see treatment plant.
Then,
fog.

I find a patch of grass, right up to the edge: it feels dangerous.

I sit with sun hitting torso, read "Calamities" by Renee Gladman.
I read outloud.
I read the following line: _____ ,
underline with yellow pen.

I find the flow of the ocean, the movement.

My words mimic this.

They ebb out: over the cliff,
fall into water.

I started feeling it on the drive:
this wasn't supposed to be a
good time.

Tía Concha first.
It was hard to find,
a man helped me.
We spoke
Spanish.

We walked. He calmed me, made me feel at ease.

She passed in 2015
before that: a home.
Onset of Alzheimer's
disease my family knows well.

I got my hands in the earth, placed flowers in mud.

Whispered in Spanish 'I love you,'

echoed words on gravestone:
"siempre vivirán en nuestros corazones."

I didn't know much about
Joan Didion except
she's a big deal.

We weren't doing anything else
so why not go to Westwood?
We got there early,
smoked in the
parking garage.

We wandered the streets, talked about how "L.A." everything was.

We got in line behind a pair of
older women,
talked about
The Doors and "I Love Dick."

I mixed up Kevin Bacon and Kiefer Sutherland.

The weed didn't hit until the lights went down in the theatre.

There was Joan: beautiful.
Glamorous and tragic all at once.

We bought edibles,
drove down highway 1,
into the forest.

We parked,
ate the
weed.
They were like Takis:
“spicy corn chips.”

Through thick trees until the ocean: endless on the horizon.

We found the
pacific.
The sun was
relentless.

We walked the cliffs, watched the sea move.

Sam took a picture of a claw.

By that time they had taken hold.
We smiled into sunlight through the trees.

I remember
as child, it
felt distant.

Mom & Dad &
me, dressed up
to affix
knees to
dirt.

Years later, familiarity.

Marble relic,
atop a hill.
Green expanse, then
downtown L.A.

He died in '85.

I was 4.

I wonder: are memories
fact or fiction?

The long
way home,
Highway 101.

Favorite site,
marked by
bridge
//
tracks.

Right up to the edge.

Through tuft
shrubs & then
ocean, wide
stretch.

Forgotten coast.

Loam // Slag.

And you,
for miles.

We took a
hike, got high
first.

Follow
the leader,
timber
//
twilight.

Bits & Pieces:

There were
bats, we
clung together
flashlights skyward.

There were dim vert lights.

Moving smooth on the horizon.

We thought - aliens,
smiled at the afterglow.

We went often,
although he was
no relative.

“Mexican
robin hood,”
grave adorned
with various
curios:

Gifts from relatives // admirers.

She was doing
research, ode to
a hometown
disappearing.

Once we found a flag,

shaking // abrasive.

It reminded me of father,
whose country was the same.

from THIS RUMOR OF DARGER'S ARMIES OF GIRLS

* * *

First day taken to sign for office equipment:
two computers, a refrigerator. *Want to sign for a tank?*
Past the pudding-faced Shelley. Knew her from before
we all knew her daughter of a poet all acquiescence.
Shoved me into a room
a man wearing stripes on his shoulders
questioned me about my mean life.
Once late at a clinic
brought in a prisoner his eyes bandaged covered over
worn pants and t-shirt no uniform
what had gone down it wasn't discussed.
We all went through with it.
He lectured disciplinary codes, security codes
who could get past the door on holidays
complained about his wooden leg his nightmares,
did I have a boyfriend? Slept with anyone? Obscenities
said it was his leg but he had to ask what experience I had,
security breaches loud or mumbled. I did worry
about his leg, and what did I do on my day off and did I go dancing?
My open face, soft everywhere under this
didn't you guess he was joking – a wooden leg!
They being children at a birthday party.
Do you prefer baths or showers? Are you attracted to short men?
Lie down on the obsolete maps of Jordan
audition the men to take you. Mix ketchup, flour and water,
oil and soy sauce to throw on the lucky one leaving.
The other girls stole my trashcan I was put on trial
had to wear my beret salute the officer.
Why are we so evil? Why are we "the worst unit
to ever go through basic training?" Tried hard to
fold the ugly blankets into perfect eighths
if you didn't fold them right threatened skin diseases.
Or don't ever tell a man on a bus how many girls
sleep in a room because the Syrians can multiply girls
and discover how many we have in total.

YOU COULD NEVER IMAGINE ME WITH A GUN

I moved around a lot it is strange to say
but in these countries that I write about
disguised as peasant juggler horse-thief
mentally ill transported by ship
my sister was like the woman without fear
the calendar clock clicked ticked by ticker tape
signs of an elemental warfare were at hand
very little money I carried in a square black purse:
the military idea of femininity
extra for tampons for risk payment type B
floodlit trips to small port cities
where we walked back and forth across the town
in noisy groups.

The strange noise was getting louder
howling of the many dogs rushing hither and thither
a fight about sandals with Arthur – orthopedic orthodontic
off for wisdom teeth fix them before you go to Siberia
ink dark storm clouds in threatening colors and shapes spreading
your commander updates but call her “my friend.”
My friend I am having a good time here everyone is very nice
compelled to work in the munition factories of Vivian Wicket
to make cannons, bullets, explosives and other war materials
they learned themselves to keep so perfectly still so completely out of sight
in grey sweatshirts they fall asleep at the table.
Of course it was a game but you can play it in real time:
crossing-guard girls
vaccination girls
fried-fish girls.
The vest was called a shield it had different buttons.
The songs lied.
The songs had no protection:
a giant class trip you never come back from.

It turned out they decided to slay them in secret
a type of nuns, maybe. It's okay I haven't told you
anything that would put you in danger.
Everything vivid like a girl wearing square blue sunglasses.
Everything in garish pastel, girls like exploding flowers
drowning in layers of cream,
white faced or polka dotted,
accumulated like glitter or black mud
the melting continues under your nails.

Their presence was in the air
the mere sight of them turned a sorrow greater still
and don't you think it's amazing what war looks like on the inside
written out in good penmanship on colorful pastel poster boards
filling in the letters, I could get a ribbon to hang from my beret
it caught somewhere on my sleeve, a dragonic roar –
my dark heroines
Were different colored bras allowed?
Show you the sand in my shoes as evidence
still thinking about our big adventure if it was close enough

THE CLIMATE IS MILITARY, AND YET ONE CAN'T SEE TOO FAR AHEAD

mannequins without heads are singing this call to arms
call these legs and tell them you're running late
rule over smaller and smaller castles
the king and queen look for signs in the trash
well stars could say
or stones could tell you
mismatched socks
a pig rooted through my underwear
hide in a box under the bed or a spy in sandals
electric blue or electric green eyelids
some people complaining of strange noises under their houses
as if someone were tunneling through
at the cafes the war was in the cappuccino like a taste for depth
and meant to be read backwards
many of the manuscripts were infected with medieval vowels
or wafers from Eastern Europe with lemon cream
the pineapple arranged in the red plates with the gold rim
can't see past the end of this which is why
but upside down. Juvenile delinquents taking all the benches
if you back up slowly around the chairs and tables
gingerly you can approach it
there was no room left for the truck
there was baby flannel for cleaning your gun
and shoes like them
all the bathrooms have colored sticks that smell nice
threw out the girls with the lavender bath
herky jerky going along with this rhubarb colored raspberry jelly
almost coalesces into a story
the most influential artist asked
the rooftops again where would you like me
Frankenstein in prison holds out his fingers through the bars
the red boots, the right kind of sweater
to exchange the cloud for ground
catch up to the skaters it wouldn't be a bad idea
arranged on the shelf. After a period it automatically starts
exuberant letters shaped like animals she once had
stop at the flickering light.
Rules against it wouldn't know where to

or those rows of prefab building and airplanes going nowhere
wouldn't that be hard to describe on mainstream TV?
The way his lip curls up cleverly with knowing humor
nervous around the camera
in a slinky black top
and valley of bad advice
hill of evil counsel.
The scandal with the royal couple hoarding old bottles
submarines and pistachio ice cream.

MINISTRY OF ABSORPTION

My acupuncturist says they are opposite motions: the need to push the migraine out, the need to hold the baby in. I don't need a man to fertilize me. I need a man to sit on me as if I am an egg. The summer grows increasingly hysterical. I go for a walk with Tahel. We are drinking amaretto from a glass jar, the dogs run all around us in faster circles. I pretend they are wild buffalo and we are on some wild plains. I can't get a pocket of air here among the towers and the wet heat. The towers are our overlords, the small fountain at the foothills of the towers is full of dirty water. I push the pain out from my face as if I was a sunflower and it was pouring out of me, flooding my face red. We walk on the grass barefoot. I have dealings with the Ministry of Absorption: my business is to absorb, to receive, to take in, to be a good womb. The doctor says its impossible to have toxic buildup, you can't build up anything in the body, but you can get exposed over time. I think I need to reread Freud on hysteria to understand how the mechanism works. Of course my womb has gone wandering, immigrating to difficult places! I notice women around me are aging too quickly. Even the former cultural attaché to Rome is aging too quickly with her deliberate glasses. A reading for Edgar Allen Poe on the roof: lots of horrified looks, pale hollow haunted gazes. Long night, I in my minimizer holds everything in but it makes me crazy. The point was the mingling afterwards, but I left early wouldn't allow myself a taxi, bought soggy watermelon gone off in its summer cup. It's gotten very quiet in the park, the neighbors having shaved off all the greenery. The back yard is a brown carcass where the trees once stood. The children play inside. The season needs to be gotten through, they are tightening restrictions on Gaza. There might be a war. Gal comes to clean the house, her face injured, says she walked into a wall. Why did you leave that mess in the oven, she says she'll buy us new cleaning equipment. Her daughter in the hospital with a brain tumor, and the army still won't release her from military hospital. She has to sue. Yonatan says I must be loosing it if I am angry at her. She says she will clean the windows, but she wants us to pay her parking ticket. I start telling her a story about Yonatan's sister, about children in hospitals, about his terrible sympathy, but realize halfway through it won't be comforting, how to stave off the death at the end of the story?

WIRES

The man fixing the electricity left a bunch of wires exposed he's being antsy about when he's coming back. He says its just aesthetic without any firm grasp of eighteenth century philosophy he says calm down calm down. Maybe I'm patronizing the shoddy work of the handyman because the cabinets are falling apart the paint is peeling under the layers there are layers here of bad work trying to make a buck. I want to say everyone here is more at home than I am and the handyman most of all, but landlords are the same in every country. The nurses explained and the doctor said, one cow at a time. It's possible I could end up pregnant in this shoddy house and my body is not so hot, not as elastic, though the taxi driver said I look twenty seven and I'd be pretty if I lost a little weight. There's a smell of urine in the corners of our mistake it was possible we weren't insistent enough. The mosquitoes here are larger than usual because of the garden. I'm waiting for the intellectual tide to turn, Tel Aviv dialectics. I'm waiting for the return of Jung so I can think more clearly about my hysteria. The woman who is now *for* the Bible used to be *against* the Bible. She says there's no early and no late in the Bible, with her silver blue eyelids and the chocolate she pre-cuts into squares. The man with the shorts said he was going to witness people who changed their mind, who went to their contrary and then denied it. He was a historian and an archivist but from generation Y and not generation X so probably would not get a job, he was nobody's son. I was nobody's daughter. I mean of course I was a daughter I got on the phone and I was a daughter all the time on Fridays and Sundays especially and before a holiday. The man with the wires says it's life or death, the faulty wiring leaves behind a singed smell, like burning your hair with a candle. There were cookies without a sink, or there was a sink with no stove, there was a mattress on the floor; it was our lair, it was where we ended up after all these decades of travelling and meaning and the last stop was a crummy rented apartment. We could put down our Egypt now, wash our hands and begin to stop the occupation, but I was already so tired and not getting any younger. I made a vow to myself over the wet newspaper dispensers my first year in California, it was a vague vow, more like an understanding: this war would not end in my lifetime so I had to think of it like a marathon. The problem is that I'm not really a runner. I'm waiting to see if I sink or float.

YELLOW WOODS

The surgeon was all in green. He said don't be Polish, be Moroccan! I think he meant my veins, he wanted me not to be so stingy with my veins, though I am not responsible for the shapes they take. I said they always give me trouble, my veins, it's hard for everybody but he said don't think like that, we're opening your chakras we're changing your destiny. Then I told him my little bit of good news, how my destiny was changing and he decided to read me "The Road Not Taken." I wanted to tell him, not my favorite poem, but I was starting to go under, a pleasant feeling creeping through my body, and it was less the paths than the yellow wood that I was thinking about. The surgeon said you made a decision, and when I was strapping in, legs and arms, as if for a journey to space, I thought this was indeed a very strange decision to operate upon my body, to injure it, to make it bleed. I wish Robert Frost hadn't added that extra stanza about how the road less traveled made all the difference. It made no difference. I'm an expert about these roads: you think you can outsmart yourself, outsmart destiny by picking the less travelled road, because you should have picked the traveled one. That's what makes sense, to go where it's safer. As a woman, pick the road more traveled! But then if you pick the road more traveled it's still counter-intuitive because everyone knows you pick the road less traveled, so maybe it turns out kind of radical not to do the seemingly rebellious thing but be there on the road more travelled, but with a critical stance, a sardonic slouch, an open mind. I don't want to spend my destiny with all these bozos who picked the road less traveled. I do like the line about way leads onto way. That's destiny. That's inescapable. Every month I make terrible deals if I am pregnant, if I am not pregnant, or being pregnant but not letting myself. Way leads unto way and you don't always get to pick. The yellow woods receded, or I receded into the yellow woods, and when I came to they were talking about the Eurovision so very slowly that I couldn't follow, as if it was another frequency. I was shivering so they put a kind of heating duct under my sheets which blew warm air all around me like the exhaust of a clothes drier, or the part of air-conditioning that spills the warm air outside. They gave me disposable underwear made of white gauze, they said I could take the extra pair home but I didn't want to. Yonatan was there. I held his hand. I held his finger in my hand when I was coming to. It is like being reborn, coming back from death. We had miso and sushi and I dropped the spoon. When you are under you practice not holding on so tightly. When we left, the women's clinic was totally empty. All that work in the inner sanctum, explosions of white and yellow priests who could be struck down by the light etc. but outside everyone had gone home. All that misery of waiting, and the secretaries' corner was closed and covered in pale green curtains, like a kiosk that was covering up the food that wasn't kosher for Passover.

WAITING

My heart sinking beneath the waves like Atlantis
My heart gasping for air breathing water
My heart weighed down with rocks like Virginia Wolf
My heart like an ancient land mass sinking slower than the eye can see
My heart weighing me down in my chest needs some kind of something to hold it: a heart-brassiere
My heart foul and fair
The thoughts are in another part of my body
My heart to be stored below 25 degrees
My heart to be injected slowly into another organ, carefully, at the same hour every night
My heart on a giant screen the lab technicians the doctors exclaiming over my heart
that is to say the enormity of my emotions

My heart slouched over, my heart's bad posture
My heart's clothes are too big or who are we kidding too small


My heart is sweaty
My heart fears bad news my heart fears good news
My heart should have been born in the nineteenth century
My heart with the refugees my heart has no home
My heart unable to find steady ground my heart sinking under the weight of memories
My heart in Berkeley with the redwoods and eucalyptus and the artisanal everything:
bananas, coffee, soap, socks, notebooks, paper-bags, dog-collars

My heart wants to expand sideways but it is going down
My heart getting closer to the earth's core
My heart wants to get to the heart of things
My heart bicorn unicorn heart-shaped cavity
contract like a deflated balloon
holds everything inside
nothing falls out.

DEAD KINGS

The story Avraham Leader taught was about seven kings: the seven kings who ruled before Adam. The seven kings were creation that was miss-shaped, misaligned. They had wonderful names, but all we get in Genesis is their names, and then they die. Dishon, Dishan and one of their grandmothers was called Water of Gold. The seven kings were erased when creation started anew, when God made Adam, but still, yet, here we are in this universe picking our way through the bodies of seven dead kings. How we will let them inside us? You fuck me along with seven dead kings, old misaligned desires. We are not going into life, we are coming into death, into dead bodies all around, and we make our love around their bones. Fee fi fo fum. The dead kings take up all the space for breath, the afternoon goes into evening the neighbors are quiet or they are winding down outside the window. The mouth. Start with kisses there your tongue mealy but lips are soft. Your nose oily. Black heads if you let me pop them. That's not going to be sexy if you're my monkey. I'm sorry I cried that one morning, that Saturday morning we couldn't go to the gallery. We meant to make pancakes every Saturday morning but lost the habit, rather quickly.

Going down from the mouth, perhaps the neck, your Adam's apple the mark of the new creation. The old dead kings before Adam never existed. You speak. You make little sounds. Your clavicle. I do not trace it with my finger, I touch it clumsy as if I am a panda bear. Stop, you say. Kiss me! I go back up, I try to stay focused. The bed is stormy with memories. It sways and tilts, the blankets bunch up, strong weather, strong waves. Your nipples. A little bit of touching I suppose. How to get interested. I do like them: your nipples. You are not interested in my nipples and I am not interested in your nipples. I need to get cleaner so I can meet you again so I can meet you without these gauzy Martha Graham fabrics weighing down every single move. But under the covers it really barely matters how can you tell a knee from an elbow let along the skin on an arm this way or that way. Your stomach grew. It never used to settle against me. Forgive me I am thinking I did not get any prizes. And if I got a prize would I finally settle into you, settle down, stop seeing those dead kings every time I open my eyes in bed, leaving no room for the horizon? One king is pain or maybe all the babies are pain. You open my elbows, you open my chest. Open me like a box, disentangle me from my own sorrow. You say you'll give me a massage but it's not a great massage I'm sorry I know you're distracted. The candles are purple and melt down in small oven trays. I remembered we were imagining an alternate world where dandruff was a good thing. In this alternate world you could get shampoo which was advertised to make more dandruff not less dandruff. Then pleasure and laughing. The dead kings quiet down they are perfume in this afternoon light.



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STOP THE ORANGE BRAT

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